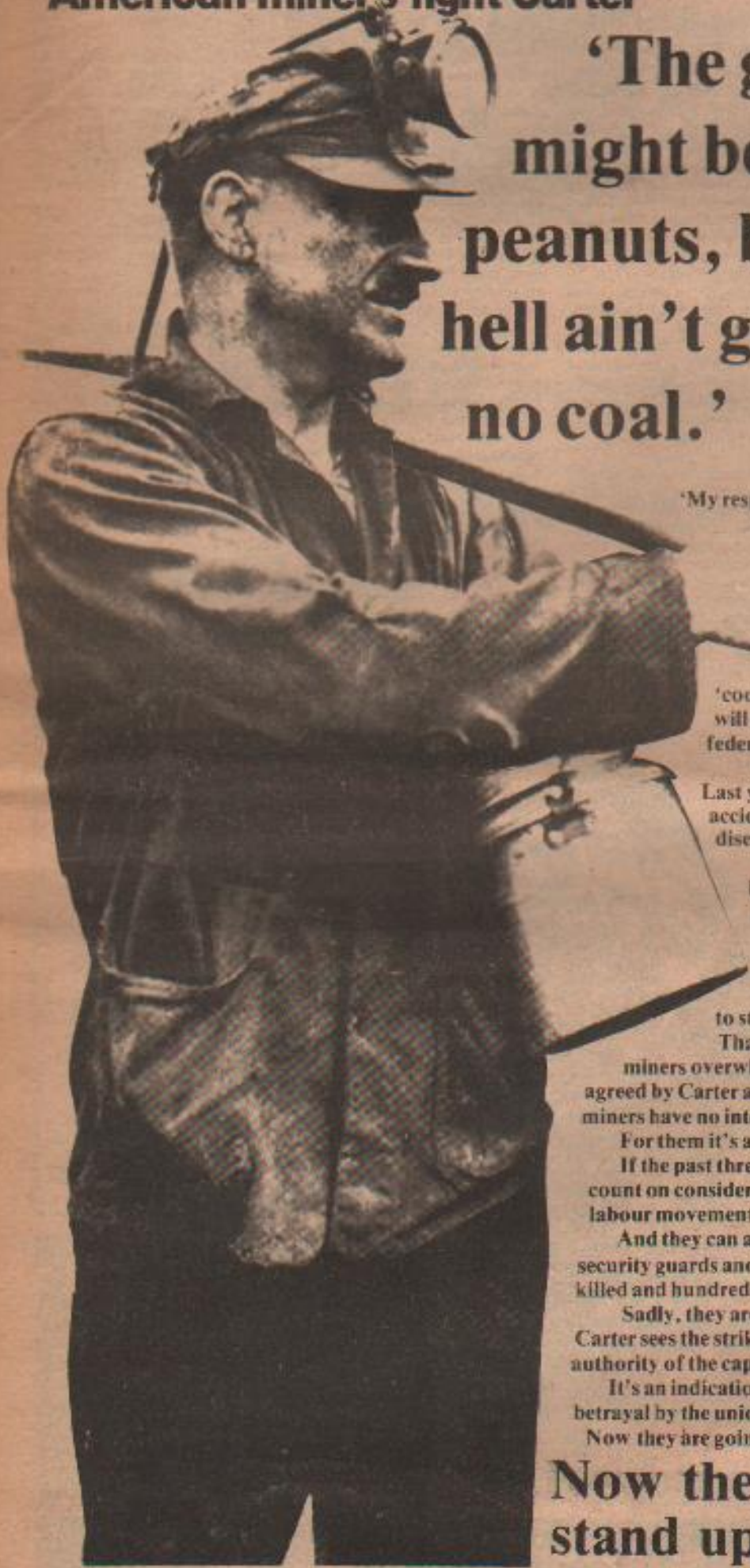


Socialist Challenge

American miners fight Carter

'The government might be able to plough peanuts, but they sure in hell ain't gonna mine no coal.'

—Donald Lawley, United Mine Workers Executive board member.



'My responsibility is to protect the health and safety of the nation.' That was Jimmy Carter's excuse for invoking the Taft-Hartley Act against the three month US miner's strike.

The Act requires strikers to go back to work for an 80-day 'cooling-off period'. If they don't they will lose all welfare benefits and face federal occupation of the mines.

Whose health and whose safety? Last year 125 miners were killed in pit accidents and 4000 died from black lung disease.

US pits are hell holes. Private capitalist mine bosses hold even the present scanty safety laws in contempt.

And last summer they cut off all payments to the miners' health benefit fund. Now the bosses are trying to take away the right to strike over safety violations.

That's what the strike is about, that's why the miners overwhelmingly rejected the treacherous contract agreed by Carter and their union leaders, and that's why most miners have no intention of abiding by the Taft-Hartley Act.

For them it's a matter of life and death. Literally.

If the past three months are anything to go by they can count on considerable backing from other sections of the labour movement.

And they can also count on violent attacks from the scabs, security guards and cops. Already two pickets have been killed and hundreds arrested.

Sadly, they are unlikely to be the only casualties, since Carter sees the strike as an affront to his authority and the authority of the capitalist class as a whole. It is!

It's an indication that after long years of passivity and betrayal by the union leaders US workers have had enough. Now they are going to stand up and fight.

Now they are going to stand up and fight.

Solidarity from Britain

ARTHUR SCARGILL, the President of the Yorkshire Area, National Union of Mine-workers, told Socialist Challenge:

'We are in full solidarity with the American miners. We will aid them in every possible way, including financial support. We hope that a delegation from the American miners will attend our Miners Gala this summer to tell us about their victory. Because we want them to win hands down.'

I have met many rank-and-file miners from their union since 1960. They visited us again in 1972 and we discussed in some detail what happened in Salfley and our use of flying pickets. I've no doubt that American and British miners can learn a lot from each other. Their struggle for better safety conditions and social welfare benefits; their fight for more union democracy and their fight against the coal bosses and the Government deserves our fullest support. I hope they win.'

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WOLVERHAMPTON: ALL OUT 11 MARCH

Editorial

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Britain in the year 2000

A RECENT PROGRAMME on BBC-TV, suggested that the present level of unemployment in Britain would never be reduced. On the contrary, it would go up, and by the year 2000 it would be somewhere between four and six million. The programme, of course, presupposed that capitalism would still be in existence.

The failure of the left wing of the British labour movement to institute any serious fightback against unemployment indicates the measure of the problem which confronts the working class. The assembly organised by the Communist Party last Saturday under the banner of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trades Unions could only muster 415 delegates.

Apart from rejecting a resolution calling on the LCDTU to oppose the victimisation of Alan Thornett ('It was an internal Transport Union matter'), the conference was remarkable for an absence of politics. It was a far cry from the campaigning LCDTU of 1969-72. The only action proposed was a lobby of Parliament at some unspecified date. The workers in British Steel, British Leyland, and Swan Hunter will no doubt be relieved to hear that the Liaison Committee will be lobbying MPs on their behalf.

The Tribunes in the Labour Party have also failed to suggest a way forward. Richard Clements, the editor of Tribune, and Jack Jones argue for more investment in British industry as the panacea for unemployment. That this is sheer nonsense is demonstrated on the pages of Tribune itself, in which Barry Sherman of ASTMS argued quite cogently that technological changes mean that increased investments can no longer guarantee jobs. Sherman suggested work-sharing, but explained that this would alienate the multi-nationals which dominate British industry.

The fact is that problems such as unemployment cannot be effectively solved by a capitalist system operating within the framework of bourgeois representative democracy. Technological changes will make matters worse in the sense that they will demonstrate the irrationality of capital, as well as its archaic character.

A planned economy is already beginning to be seen as the only way out of the present mess. Increasingly we are seeing left-wing shop stewards eager to collaborate with socialist economists and prepare alternative plans to those envisaged by capitalism. Work-sharing without loss of pay and other similar demands can even appear utopian unless they are linked to a broad overall plan.

The question of nationalisation thus becomes central at this period as an agitational demand. But it cannot stop there nor should we imagine that the additional phrase 'under workers' control' solves all the problems. We have to insist that the existing nationalised industries are not run as state-capitalist firms, designed to aid the profitability of the private sector. There must be inter-sectoral planning.

Thus in Tyneside and Clydeside it is obvious that the nationalisation of North Sea Oil could be linked to creating jobs in the shipyards. Such a step would be resisted by the State because it would threaten capitalist accumulation in this country and challenge profits. Moreover, its dynamic could be explosive. It is in areas such as these that socialists should be concentrating their attention in the coming period, for this would provide a serious basis on which solidarity actions and mobilisations could take place.

A capitalist Britain in the year 2000 will probably have 5 million people out of work, but it will also be a Britain where democratic rights will have been whittled away and where the State will have become all-powerful — in other words where the only technology which will have been 'productively' used will be the technology of political repression.

Those of us fighting for a socialist Britain must realise that the mere mouthing of correct slogans or demands is not sufficient. We have to go beyond these and offer a socialist alternative in the real sense of the word.

The big tax dodge of leasing

The next time you're around your neighbourhood social security office, drop in and ask for £3,000 million.

You might not have much luck, yet since 1970 this sum has been ripped off the Inland Revenue. The trick is known as leasing, which also has the 'merit' of boosting unemployment. CPS, a group of Socialist economists, explains.

In 1970, the Heath Government introduced 'first year tax allowances', as a means to stimulate investment. Whereas normal practice is to depreciate corporate assets over a number of years, under this system the entire cost of an investment can be offset against profits in the first year.

Take a company with a pre-tax profit of £200,000, purchasing equipment for £100,000. At-a-stroke the taxable profit is reduced to £100,000. Given a corporation tax rate of 52 per cent, a tax saving of £52,000 is made on that single investment.

INCENTIVE

This saving is designed as a selective investment incentive, insofar as only profitable — thus 'efficient' — industries could benefit from the first year allowances.

In reality, things have worked out quite differently. Investment has remained low, in spite of the incentive, and 'tax sheltering' was soon invented. Tax sheltering is a method enabling unprofitable companies to offset the cost of their investments against the tax liability of other — profitable — companies. It is normally done through leasing.

Leasing a machine is a bit like renting a flat. Someone else owns it, but you can use it for a given period, at a pre-agreed rental. The leasing company (lessor) buys the machine and claims the full tax allowance; the user (lessee), pays a monthly or quarterly rental over the entire period of the lease, which is usually five years.

As the rental takes account of the lessor's tax gain, a lease is often cheaper than a bank loan. Furthermore, as the rentals are tax-deductible expenses for the lessee, the same asset is, in fact, depreciated twice.

Most lessors are banks, acting through subsidiary companies, whose huge tax losses — arising from first year allowances — are entirely offset against the parent's pre-tax profits. Towards the end of each financial year, there is cut-throat competition among the leading banks, to generate as many tax losses of this kind as possible. They call that 'tax planning'.

Since, for any capitalist, a penny paid in taxes is a penny lost, it is not surprising that profitable industries soon

copied banks in the field of tax planning! They too started acting as lessors, in their own right, to minimise their tax bills, often with the help of banks and broking houses acting as go-betweens and picking up huge fees for this service.

An early example was provided by the Distillers' Company — of Thalidomide notoriety — which leased several million pounds worth of rolling stock to British Rail's freight division. A leading merchant bank in the City arranged this deal.

So, we see that the alleged efficiency criteria to stimulate investment in profitable industries, through tax allowances have failed abysmally. Instead 'tax planning' has grown on a massive scale and the only tangible result has been a sharp reduction in corporation tax revenue.

Furthermore, the artificial cost-reduction of capital invest-

ment — through the tax allowances — has altered the relative price ratio between machinery and labour-power. This favours the introduction of capital intensive production processes — even in declining industries — and accelerates the growth of unemployment.

But the tax loophole is not confined to corporations; wealthy capitalists, as individuals, also have a vested interest in tax sheltering. Indeed, individuals acting as 'sole traders' can also be lessors, and offset tax allowances on investments against their personal income tax at the marginal rate.

Since this rate can reach 83 per cent on upper income slices, the tax saving on a £100,000 investment is, potentially, a staggering £83,000... and they get rentals into the bargain.

Needless to say, banks and tax consultants are increasingly recommending leasing to their wealthy private clients. A real tax avoidance bonanza indeed! Provided the trick is repeated year after year, large chunks of personal income tax can be deferred indefinitely... no doubt, this is seen as a just reward for 'abstinence'.

What is the net effect of all this for the Inland Revenue? From 1970 to 1976, total first year tax allowances reached £25,500m. Figures published by the Equipment Leasing Association (which accounts for 90 per cent of the business by UK leasing companies) reveal that

its members transacted £410m worth of business in 1976.

In other words, total tax sheltering by leasing companies alone exceeded £450m in that one year. To this should be added similar tax allowances claimed by industrial corporations and sole traders.

A conservative estimate would put the total tax sheltering for the 1970-1976 period at around £3,000m. Since we know that the rentals on these contracts are also tax deductible, the total impact was roughly £6,000m! Taking an average tax rate of 52 per cent, the net loss in tax revenue was approximately £3,120m.

Since public expenditure cuts are closely related to the State's shortfall in revenue, the fight-the-cuts strategy should also focus directly on such obvious tax loopholes.

Tax sheltering is a direct tool for the restructuring of capital at the expense of the workers. Hitherto unprofitable industries can switch to capital-intensive processes at minimal cost. Profitable industries can vastly improve their profitability, without expanding production, by merely reducing their tax bill.

Unemployment rises as a result, and further strident calls for even greater cuts are made by the bourgeoisie. The total onus of the process is put on the workers and on those who have to rely on 'welfare' expenditure to merely stay alive. The latter are known as spongers.



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

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

I am interested in more information about activities in my area.
 I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs.
 [Delete if not applicable]

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to Socialist Challenge, 328/329 Upper Street, London N1.

OUR POLICIES

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

Socialist Challenge believes that the two vital tasks confronting revolutionary socialists are: * To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

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

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

News from nowhere

What was that Brother Dromey?

THE ORGANISATION of last weekend's one-day conference called by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU) left a lot to be desired. The turn-out was pathetically low, considering the needs of the working class at this moment.

One delegate to the conference from Brent Trades Council received his credentials on the morning of the conference itself, though they were dated 24 February. More to the point was the message contained in the letter accompanying the credentials: 'Finally, all delegates are asked to consult the Officers of the Trades Council before voting or making an interjection at the Conference. Both the Chairman and I will be present.'

The I in question? None other than Jack Dromey. A question for him: Dear Jack, if delegates have to get permission from thought-commissars why bother to elect them in the first place? Why not restrict attendance still further? It's obvious that some of the more crucial lessons of Grunwick have yet to be assimilated by Brother Dromey.

Governor's participation

AT THE meeting of the National Executive of the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) an extremely important announcement was made. Its General Secretary, Geoffrey Drain, was shortly to become a Governor of the Bank of England. A few ribald notes were exchanged by irritated members. However the members of NALGO, once the report is officially confirmed, should make enquiries as to whether Drain can effectively fight for the interests of his members while sitting on the Board of Governors of the Bank of England.

Right of reply

THE BROAD Left, whose presidential candidate in the Engineering Unions elections, Bob Wright, will now be facing the poisoned pens of B. Levin, W. Wyatt et al, would be well advised to study the National Union of Journalists' code of conduct.

As *The Guardian's* industrial correspondent, Keith Harper, noted on Saturday: 'If Wright wins it will be because the membership have ignored all the odds which some sections of the union and the media will set against him.'

Yet all NUJ members, including Levin and Wyatt, right-wing luminaries of the London Freelance Branch, are bound by the union's code which is explicit on the right of reply. Clause 4 states:

'A journalist shall rectify promptly any harmful inaccuracies, ensure that correction and apologies receive due prominence and afford the right of reply to persons criticised when the issue is of sufficient importance.'

Without wishing to boast, *News from Nowhere* would point out to Wright's supporters in the AUEW that B. Levin does not totally monopolise the features page of *The Times*. When this nauseating column-

ist attacked Peter Cooper and Tariq Ali over the Dobson affair, Ali secured a 1,100-word reply after *Socialist Challenge's* editorial board reminded *The Times* management and NUJ representatives about clause 4.

The opium traders of Hong Kong

DAVE CLARK writes: EVERY YEAR the Hong Kong weekly business magazine *Far Eastern Economic Review* issues an 'Asia Year Book' which summarises all the key information about the countries of the region. It's a standard reference source and, because it sits around for twelve months, companies like to take a prestigious advert in its pages.

The best place of them all is the full-colour glossy back-page, occupied for 1978 by the Hong Kong multi-national, Jardine Matheson. And it's a masterpiece of doublethink.

They tell the readers that, in the fifteen years since Jardines were listed as a public company (and thus forced to publicly display a few rudimentary figures), net profit has increased by 3,200 per cent.

That's getting on for 200 per cent per annum. What they don't tell is that it's achieved in a colony where there are no minimum wage rates, child labour is the order of the day, industrial accidents are more than twice as high as the United Kingdom, there is no sickness benefit, no paid maternity leave and no unemployment insurance.

But perhaps the most audacious piece of eyewash is the company's glowing account of their own history in which they tell of the day in July 1832 when a public notice appeared in the 'Canton Register' to announce the company's formation.

Two years after Jardine and Matheson had put up their sign in Canton, flows the copywriters' drivel, 'Parliament abolished the East India Company's monopoly of the China Trade. That same year, Jardines made the first private shipment of tea to the United Kingdom and the pattern had been established, a pattern which was to see Jardines emerge as the greatest of all the Far Eastern traders.'

What that sentimental, dishonest bunkum doesn't tell us is what was travelling the other way in those great traders' ships — opium from the poppy fields of India to enslave the Chinese peasantry, which Jardine sent into China by the hundreds of tons.

And when the miserable efforts of the Ching Emperor to stop the vile trade got in the way of the company's enterprise, William Jardine went to London himself to lobby Palmerston into declaring the first Opium War. Backed by the firepower of the Royal Navy, the traders gained access to even more Treaty Ports, opened Hong Kong as a base for their operations in 1842 and proceeded to flood the market with dope.

By 1900 there were over 15 million addicts in China, and millions more among the Chinese peasants who had fled into South East Asia in search of work. They got their stuff from Government-run Opium Monopolies; and who supplied most of them? You guessed it.

Ask your children these 3 straight questions

Where are you going?

Who will you be with?

What will you be doing?



CHECK ON YOUR CHILDREN

ISSUED BY THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

Goebbels is alive and well and working for the British in the North of Ireland

THIS POSTER is the latest weapon acquired by the British war machine in the North of Ireland. Its message is simple—it tells parents to spy on their children, writes GEOFF BELL.

In the Third Reich in Germany, the Nazi minister of propaganda, Josef Goebbels, preferred to tell children to spy on their parents, to report them if they were up to any anti-Aryan activities. Roy Mason and the rest of the Northern Ireland Office have merely changed this round.

As well as the poster, the publicity machine has produced

ed television commercials on the same theme. While these are not permitted to mention the IRA — that would be 'political' and political commercials are supposedly banned by the Independent Broadcasting Authority — their meaning is clear. The closing seconds show a gun.

Everyone possible has been roped into this 'spy on your children' campaign. It was put together by the Northern Ireland Office with the assistance of a Belfast advertising agency, the London Metropolitan Police, and the Inner London Education Authority. Jimmy 'Mr Fix-it' Saville has added his services and he speaks the commen-

tary. The whole campaign is costing £50,000.

But there are a number of children who even the most zealous parent will find it impossible to spy on.

These include: Patrick Rooney, aged 9; Sean O'Riordan, 12; Philip Rafferty, 14; Gerald McAuley, 15; Frank Maginness, 15; Desmond Healy, 14; Francis Rowntree, 11; Margaret Gargan, 13; David McCaffery, 14; John Scott, 12; Martha Campbell, 15; Stephen Geddin, 8; Brian Stewart, 13; Marjella O'Hare, 12; Michael Neill, 11; Peter Waterson, 13; Kevin Healy, 12; and William Warnock, 15.

The reason that even Roy Mason will find it difficult to

spy on these individuals is because they are all dead. They have been killed in the past nine years in the North of Ireland by members of the various Six County and British 'security forces'. No member of these agencies has even been imprisoned for any one of these murders.

That is what the British Government is up to in the North of Ireland — Nazi-style propaganda and child murder. Add that to the countless tortures, adult murders, and imprisonment without trial committed by the British Army and its agents, and you will appreciate why we say: Troops Out Now.

**Speke:
time to
fight
back**

Leyland: huffing, puffing and doing nothing

Officials fail to fight Edwardes plan

WHILE MERSEYSIDE faces the loss of 3000 jobs, and Leyland workers confront the first brutal stage of the Edwardes' plan, the union leadership huffs and puffs, but does nothing, reports PAT HICKEY:

National officials have declared their total opposition to the closures — but it has been translated into complete inactivity.

The British Leyland Combine Committee has also passed the buck in two directions. On the one hand, it calls on Speke to resist and Canley to refuse transfer work. On the other, it is content to leave the matter in the hands of the officials because they have 'declared their opposition to Leyland's plans.'

MADNESS

No one should be surprised by this. A leadership which voted to do away with over 20,000 jobs because 'it would be irresponsible to vote against' will not take a stand when the company starts shedding jobs. Relying on the BLCC or the national officials to lead a fight is madness.

They have gone so far along the road with management they won't turn back now. Speke workers must take the initiative. A determined lead from them can start the

fightback. And only if they start to lead will the combine committee make a move.

SOLIDARITY

The shop stewards there — given that there has been a return to work — could win a mass meeting to opposition to closures and for the occupation of the plant. They could set the date for the occupation now and use the intervening period to organise in Liverpool and throughout Leyland for solidarity action.

Liverpool Trades Council could call a strike in Merseyside on the day with a mass occupation and delegates from other sections participating. In Leyland the fight must be for delegates to assist in the takeover of Speke and plan collections and levies in all plants. Speke shop stewards should organise a tour of Leyland's plants and of the components industry in the Midlands.

In the absence of a determined combine-wide leadership Speke is in the saddle. And it will take strong



'Merseyside children deserve a secure future'.

leadership to win Canley to boycott the transfer of work.

INFORMATION

The campaign must put at its centre opposition to the Edwardes' plan as a whole and the need for detailed infor-

mation about the company's plans.

What, for example, is the future of the Speke No. 1 plant, of Canley, of the TR7 model itself? What is in store for Cowley and for Longbridge?

This kind of information is needed to show Cowley

workers that 'Defend Speke' and 'Fight the Edwardes' Plan' are two sides of the same coin. Speke is not a one-off situation. We must demand that Leyland opens the books to an elected trade union committee so all workers have the information about their jobs they are entitled to.

Speke can be saved

Within hours of the return to work at the Standard Triumph plant in Speke last week, the shop stewards committee was already under attack from Leyland management, reports TOMMY HEALEY.

Terry Danner, the Transport Union deputy convenor, discovered shortly after the 17-week strike had ended on 27 February that management no longer recognised his stewardship.

Mick Everett, the T&GWU convenor — fresh from one of his many travels around the country chatting with MPs and union officials — found that the company's industrial relations officers had the same in store for him.

Because Everett's section has been merged with another, he is no longer a steward, and through this manoeuvre, he can't be a convenor either.

COLLABORATION

What a shock this must have been for the senior stewards. For years they have collaborated with Leyland management. Nevertheless this action by Leyland bosses would have united the workers had the stewards called a mass meeting, or even a meeting of the shop stewards' committee.

This they failed to do. It was left to national union officials to talk to Pat Lowry, Leyland's senior industrial relations officer. Danner now has a new stewardship, but not through a strong stand organised by the stewards committee. The steward in his new section has quietly stepped

down instead.

Because the stewards who ran the strike failed to call mass meetings and involve the workers during the strike, both stewards and the rank and file face a much harder task in organising the fightback. Besides, many workers knew that the TR7 sports car was a white elephant long before the closure was announced.

There is no doubt the situation will change radically in the next few weeks. Many workers feel frustrated at going back to worse conditions than existed when they first took strike action. Speke

support committee leaflets circulated at the factory last week, arguing for a fight against the closure, were greeted warmly.

Of course, many workers do want to take redundancy money. There is no doubt that if the fight is left to the leadership, there would be a stampede for the 'golden handshake'.

This happened two years' ago at Vauxhall's plant at Ellesmere Port. All the fine talk in the world didn't create the militant fightback that was needed to convince workers they could win.

McCarthyism v. Democracy

McCarthyism versus union democracy. That was how several Cowley militants described the latest developments in the Transport Union's disciplinary trials in Oxford, which threaten to hound revolutionary shop stewards Alan Thornett and others out of the union, reports JOHNNY HAINE.

After last week's hearing, it has become clear that an alliance of union bureaucrats are out to stifle all opposition to their plans. And every trace of democracy has been

stamped on in the process. Following Frank Corti's disastrous appeal to the courts, some of the militants turned up at the union hearing to learn they faced even further charges. These result from complaints made by Oxford Trades Council president John Power and secretary Keith Dancy alleging 'disruption of trades council activities'.

SECRECY

What is amazing about these new charges laid against Alan Thornett, Dave Pinnington, and Tony Homer is that they have never been discussed at the trades council, let alone endorsed! It was the first time the accused had even seen the



Leyland boss Michael Edwardes commissioned a secret report a month before the Speke closure was announced, assessing whether management could get away with the closure. With support from the Leyland Combine Committee, Liverpool Trades Council, and

virtually every work place in the Speke area, we hope to prove that Edwardes' plan can be smashed.

Many workers realise that to do this they must take on not only Edwardes but also his boss — the Labour Government.

allegations.

Yet apparently the regional committee wanted to continue with the trials and only the strongest representation forced a postponement. Even so, it is understood that Thornett was questioned about his membership in the Workers Socialist League, showing the McCarthyite nature of the trials.

OFFICIAL

The involvement of trades council officials is a significant development, showing that the bureaucracy is bringing all guns to bear. Power is the engineering union convenor at Leyland's Hoshpath Parts Division. He has welcomed Edwardes as Leyland's saviour, and backs his plan to cut 13,000 Leyland jobs.

Dancy is a relatively obscure member of the white collar union ASTMS.

Together with ambitious T&GWU district official David

Buckle, JP, they set about turning the local trades council into a tame tool.

Some indication of the lengths to which they will go was shown at last week's trades council meeting. According to some delegates, Power refused discussion about the inquiry, on the grounds it was an internal union matter. The fact that Power — the AUEW district president — was presenting the case was apparently irrelevant!

Homer, one of the Cowley Four who is now hauled before the regional committee for the second time in 18 months, issued an open letter to delegates. He declined to comment to Socialist Challenge because T&GWU regional secretary Brian Mathers has told him not to talk to the media.

NATIONAL

Other delegates, however, reveal that he has called for

Liverpool socialists have taken the national lead in the campaign against the closure of the British Leyland's Speke Standard Triumph No. 2 plant. A meeting on 27 February set up an ad-hoc committee to fight for a labour movement based support committee for the thousands of workers whose jobs are threatened.

The meeting, called by the International Marxist Group, was also attended by individuals and representatives from Big Flame, International Socialist Alliance, Socialist Workers Party (as observers), and the Women's Action Group.

The ad-hoc committee agreed the main aim of the campaign should be how to organise opposition to closure within the plant. Suggestions put forward to achieve this included working through the Right to Work Campaign; reviving the Speke Trade Union Defence Committee, getting resolutions from union branches urging the Liverpool Trades Council to organise a solidarity conference; and calling on left Labour MPs — such as Eddie Loyden, whose constituency contains the factory — to win active support in the unions and his own party for an occupation to prevent closure.

A Socialist Unity candidate may contest the May local elections, and the wives of Speke workers who supported the 16-week strike will be approached.

A further meeting was held Tuesday, 7 March with speakers invited from British Leyland plants at Cowley and Rover, Solihull, to begin to organise an opposition inside the plant and plan the fight-back against closure.

The address of the support committee is: Trade Unionists Against Closure, c/o 217 Walvertree Road, Liverpool.

branches to dissociate themselves from Power's and Dancy's anti-democratic behaviour.

But it is not just a local affair. Such unprecedented moves must have been given approval at the highest level of the union and the coming struggle is vitally important to trade unionists everywhere.

CAMPAIGN

Cowley militants recognise this and are launching a nation-wide campaign on the issue of union democracy. They are calling for resolutions from T&GWU branches demanding the dropping of the charges, and will shortly issue a petition. They are also considering a lobby when the hearings are reconvened, rumoured to be in mid-April.

Resolutions, messages of support, to: Frank Corti, Secretary, T&GWU 5/293 branch, 4 Queens Close, Botley, Oxford.



3000 STUDENTS marched in Birmingham last weekend to demand 'Fair grants for students' giving new impetus to the NUS campaign on student poverty.

Labour pro-abortionists hold timely conference

by ANTONIA GORTON, national convenor of LARC

At the first annual conference of the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign a year ago, the main priority was seen as winning the Labour Party conference to the defence of the 1967 Abortion Act and a woman's right to choose.

Subsequently, more than 4½ million votes — over two thirds of the Labour Party conference — supported these policies, but LARC was defeated in its attempt to win conference backing for the abolition of the free vote for Labour MPs on abortion.

It is normal practice for policies receiving a two-thirds card vote majority to be part of Labour's General Election manifesto. But this is not automatic, and Callaghan has already shown his attitude to the pro-abortion vote when he notified the Socialist Medical Association that it 'was merely a vote which reflected the mood of conference'.

Consequently this year's LARC conference, to be held on Saturday, will be discussing how to place the Labour Party's conference policy in its election manifesto and win its

implementation. There are resolutions on winning support for the free vote position, securing more trade union involvement in LARC, and the building of active campaigns in the localities for better abortion facilities.

There will also be discussion on future legislative initiatives, the National Abortion Campaign sponsored trade union conference, and Government attacks on fertility control services through cuts in NHS spending.

The recent introduction in Parliament of the anti-abortion Braine Bill, warned us that we have to be prepared for attacks. The Bill had its second reading in Parliament on the afternoon of 3 March. As it was a '10 minute Bill' it only required one MP to rise and say 'object' for it to get thrown out. Fortunately this happened, but it demonstrates that supporters of a woman's right to choose cannot afford to relax. In this respect LARC's second annual conference is indeed timely.

It will be held on 11 March at the City University, St John Street, London EC1. There is a registration fee of 50p for LARC members and £1 for non-members. The conference is open to all Labour Party members.

Gay alliance to picket WH Smith

THE GAY Movement reached something of a milestone when a meeting of militants from gay groups — from as far apart as Glasgow to Brighton — agreed to form a new national organisation, the Gay Activists Alliance. JAMIE GOUGH reports.

The meeting on 25 February set the alliance on a course to campaign against the increasing attacks being made

on lesbians and gay men. The aim is to organise against these attacks locally and, where possible, nationally.

It hopes to enlist the maximum support and participation from non-gay organisations.

The organisation has grown out of the national Gay News defence committee. The Gay News appeal is now over, although the result has yet to be announced. The small number of women at this first meeting was an indication of the nature of the Gay News issue, but those at the meeting appreciated the importance of the alliance taking up lesbian issues

Engineering pay claim

Why engineers won't be keen to strike

The executive of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Workers Union has called a two-day strike of its 3½ million members on 20 and 21 March. This strike should be supported, writes JOHN GRAHAM, AUEW shop stewards, although it by no means represents any significant breakdown in negotiations with the engineering bosses.

Since the 19 unions in the Confederation, led by Hugh Scanlon of the Engineering Union, have chosen to drop the demand for a 35-hour week with no loss of pay, and have reduced the pay claim from £70 to £60, there is little difference with the Engineering Employers Federation.

The stumbling block has been that the bosses insist that the implementation of the new

national minimum time rate of £60 should not force any employer to breach the Government's 10 per cent guideline on pay.

Acceptance of the present offer would seriously affect low paid workers in the industry, who are still receiving only £42 plus 5 per cent and may well not receive the new rates this year. Even Scanlon has not been able to swallow

such a fraud, which would be in clear breach of AUEW policy.

Unfortunately, the fact that the union leaders have already capitulated on the bulk of the claim means that there will be little enthusiasm for the strike from the rank and file. And hints by Scanlon that British Leyland will not be included in the strike further undermines the possibility of ready support for the stoppage.

In this context it is essential to demand that the Confederation fights for the original claim and a full return to free collective bargaining, which alone could mobilise full support for industrial action.

Laurie Smith, an AUEW national organiser currently

fighting for re-election, condemned the Confederation officials' capitulation on the pay claim when he spoke at a Birmingham meeting on Saturday. Smith called for a massive response from the rank and file to demand that the officials fight for the original claim.

The task for the Broad Left delegates on the AUEW national committee, which meets as Socialist Challenge goes to press, is to support these demands, and to seek an explanation as to why the resolution passed at the last meeting in November, calling for a special meeting of shop stewards to organise support for the claim, has never been implemented.



THE BEGINNING of the teachers' union action of pay has already resulted in several schools being closed and thousands of children sent home.

The dispute has hardened because of the intransigent attitude of many local authorities to teachers' pay.

Action is only answer for power workers

Angry power workers chided Frank Chapple, general secretary of the Electricians' Union, as he emerged from pay talks with the Electricity Council last Thursday. They were enraged by the latest insulting offer from the employers, which they feared Chapple may have accepted, reports JUDE WOODWARD.

Chapple has to watch his step. The unofficial action of the power workers in the autumn, which led to widespread blackouts, was an indication that they will not readily submit to the terms agreed by their leadership.

The unofficial shop stewards committee has declared its determination to win a substantial increase in payments from self-financing productivity deals to bring their pay at least in line with the miners, although this is likely to

involve further job losses in the power stations.

The four unions involved will be meeting on 14 March to consider their response to the bosses' offer of a 10 per cent increase plus a £3.60 productivity deal. With no improvement likely, the question now facing the power workers is whether to take industrial action.

The union leaders favour a ballot as the next step, but there may also be a combined delegate conference.



and working closely with women's groups.

The new alliance fills an important gap in the gay movement. It does not see itself as an alternative to the present gay movement, and it aims to work with existing local groups of all kinds. A local alliance group has already been formed in Brighton, which is a useful development where there is a need to co-ordinate and initiate local campaigns.

The first national initiative is pickets of WH Smiths on

Saturday 18 March to protest at the withdrawal of Gay News from their bookstalls. Pickets are already being planned in Manchester, Leicester, Birmingham, London and Brighton.

Organisations or individuals wishing to support the continuing fight for free speech for gays should contact their local Gay Switchboard for details, or the Gay Activists Alliance on 0273 202930 (8pm-10pm). The next meeting of the alliance will be on 4 and 5 April.

Many power workers do not expect leaders like Chapple to win their pay demand. They point out that the stifling of democracy in the EETPU limits

the ability of the rank and file to make their leaders accountable. This is why the power workers have to be prepared to take unofficial action.

Healthy response to cuts

The fight to blunt the axe that hangs over the health service has made an important advance with the setting up of a national steering committee, backed by the Greater London Association of Trades Councils and the South-east Regional TUC, reports DOMINIC COSTA.

Hounslow Hospital, still in occupation against closure, called a fightback recall conference on 28 February, which was attended by more than a hundred delegates from all over the country, representing wide sections of the labour movement — from industry, trades councils and Labour Parties, as well as the health service unions.

The conference criticised the public sector trade union leaders for failing to organise a national fightback against Labour's policies, which might have saved Hounslow.

Last month, two hundred trade unionists, including Leyland stewards, picketed the

Birmingham area health authority against the closure of Romsley Hill. The projected closure of Romsley Hill and 15 others due to come under the axe in Birmingham, together with the 18 already closed since last April, underline the need for a co-ordinated national offensive.

This is the importance of the national fightback steering committee, elected at the conference. Through its monthly meetings and a national Fightback bulletin, it aims to unite all those who oppose the cuts. Delegates are invited from all cuts campaigns, union branches, Labour Parties and trades councils.

The first meeting is on 18 March in London, so interested organisations should elect delegates urgently and make sure that they are affiliated. Details from: Interim Steering Committee, c/o Hounslow Hospital Occupation, Staines Road, Hounslow, Middx.

IN BRIEF

THE YOUNG National Front's 'offensive' in education has been more sound than fury. It has, though, intensified racism in schools: 'Blacks 4 gas chamber' reads a wall scrawling in a school in Camden, North London.

But the anti-fascist response of teachers and school students has been militant and encouraging, and teachers are holding a major rally against racism in Westminster Hall, London on 16 March.

The rally, which begins at 5.45pm, is being organized by All-London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism, and supported by 10 local associations of the National Union of Teachers, together with the Socialist Teachers Alliance, Rank and File, the London branch of the National Association for Multi-racial Education and the Caribbean Teachers Association.

ALTARF regards the rally as 'a public stand against racism and fascism aimed at parents, school students and the public at large'. It sees itself as the 'basis of a more permanent organisation... which would ally itself with other sections of the community in fighting racism and fascism'. To this end the organisation is calling a conference on 20 May.

Whether the campaign will be built rests partly on the willingness of forces such as Teachers Against the Nazis to support it.

Bristol goes into battle...

OVER FIVE hundred people who packed one of the largest political meetings held in Bristol decided to form a branch of the Anti Nazi League, reports Harriet Wordsworth. Labour MP Joe Ashton introduced the meeting, held on 28 February, with an anti-fascist film, but reinforced its chauvinist line that fascism is not a very British tradition.

Socialist Challenge supporters will play an active part in the broad-based Bristol campaign, which promises to be both large and combative.

We will continue to argue that the campaign should oppose all forms of racist repression, particularly immigration controls; that it should affiliate to other anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations, especially CARF; and that the local group should fight to change the structure and policies of the ANL nationally.

...and Exeter, too

NATIONAL FRONT activity in Devon and Exeter has brought a sharp response from local anti-fascists. The inaugural meeting of the Exeter and District Anti-Nazi League last month was attended by over 70 people, representing Exeter Labour Party, the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Challenge supporters, Exeter Trades Council, the local students union, together with several union branches and other local bodies.

Exeter ANL aims to be a broad based, open and campaigning organisation which will oppose racism and fascism in the city and hopes to extend its activity into the surrounding rural areas where high unemployment provides the NF with potential recruiting ground.

The effects of the ban 'Public order' as Mosley would have liked it

Dennis Howell, Labour's Minister of Sport, was asked whether it was viable to use the Public Order Act against football 'hooligans' when he appeared on BBC-TV's Grandstand.

Howell replied he thought that this was a splendid idea and that he would draw it to the attention of the police.

The all-embracing authority of the Public Order Act was suggested in those remarks. More practically it was being displayed in the streets of Ilford as Howell was speaking on 25 February. There, fascists and anti-fascists had been prevented by the Public Order Act from demonstrating.

TWO MONTHS

The ban is not restricted to one day in Ilford, but runs for two months throughout London. Nor is it confined to specific anti-fascist and fascist organisations. It extends to all demonstrations except those 'of a religious, educational, festive or ceremonial character customarily held'.

Despite this, many saw the use of the Act as some sort of victory for the forces of democratic rights; the fascists

had been stopped from marching and that was the main thing.

This argument appears to be strengthened when the origin of the Public Order Act is remembered. Although both the Communist Party and the National Council for Civil Liberties opposed the Act when it was introduced in 1936, the story goes that the Act was introduced to combat Oswald Mosley's fascist Black-shirts. But this is true only to a limited extent.

The Mosleyites were specifically in the mind of the drafter of the Act in that one section of it aimed 'to prohibit the wearing of uniforms in connection with political objectives'. The Mosleyites uniform of black was a case in point.

But this part of the Act has been rarely used; it is Section 3



ANTI-FASCISTS rally in Hyde Park in the '30s. It was the ability of the anti-fascists to sweep Mosley's Black Shirts and their police protectors off the streets at Gardiner's Corner and Cable Street which led to the 1936 Public Order Act.

which the police have recently employed. Under the terms of this section, should the police have 'reasonable grounds for apprehending' that a procession may lead to 'serious public disorder', they can impose any conditions they want on the route of the march.

The police can also apply to the local council for a ban of up to three months on 'the holding of all public processions' in that area. This section of the Act also gives specific powers to the head of the Metropolitan Police, who can ban marches on his own authority, as long as the Home Secretary approves, without going to the local council.

Both in the case of the Ilford ban and the earlier ban on fascists and anti-fascists in Tameside, many assumed that the police had no option but to ban all demonstrations and marches. This is not the case. Section 3 of the Act does give

the police the power to ban 'all public processions', but they also have the power to ban 'any class of public procession so specified'.

As it turned out the ban invoked by McKnee and Rees in Ilford worked in favour of the fascists. They were allowed to leaflet and to hold a 1,000 strong public meeting. The ban did not prevent them from fulfilling their main purpose — to spread racist propaganda.

But it did prevent the anti-fascists from their aim of stopping that racist propaganda. This is why the National Front candidate in the Ilford by-election could tell the fascists' rally: 'The police mounted a magnificent operation today.'

That the use of the Public Order Act in Ilford worked in favour of the fascists is not surprising. A recent survey of the Act in the State Research Bulletin* came to the following conclusion: 'Two strands of

great importance emerge from the history of the legislation.

First, the extent to which the Act is used against the left rather than the right; and, second, the apparent ineffectiveness of the Act against the growth of fascist marches and racist agitation.'

This fear was shown to be well founded in Ilford two weeks ago. Fascism can only be defeated by active mobilisation. The Ilford ban prohibited that mobilisation, while it allowed the National Front to meet and to organise. This was achieved through 'Public Order' legislation whose aim is indeed to keep the public 'in order'. Mosley and Hitler promised much the same in the 1930s.

State Research Bulletin No 4. Available on subscription from State Research, 9 Poland Street, London W1. Tel: 01-734 5831.

Fight the ban!

A MEETING to discuss a campaign against the Public Order Act was held in London's County Hall last Thursday. Chaired by Ernie Roberts, prospective Labour candidate for Hackney North, the meeting agreed to mount a sharp campaign against the ban on all demonstrations in the London area.

A public rally in Camden Town Hall has been scheduled for 22 March, where all groups affected by the ban will be invited to participate.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, the International Marxist Group, the Revolutionary Communist Group, local Labour Parties, State Research Bureau, Liber-

ation and the Friends of the Earth [as observers].

A four-person committee was elected to carry out the decisions taken: Ernie Roberts, Ken Livingstone, George Antony and Davey Jones. Further information from: D. Jones, PO Box 50, London N1. Tel: 01-359 8371.

* At its annual meeting last weekend, the Labour Party's Greater London Regional Council voted to support a rally and (illegal) demonstration to be held on 15 April by the Haringey Anti-Racist and Anti-Fascist Organisation.

But it refused to consider an emergency resolution opposing the ban, put up by a divisional council of TASS, the Engineering Union's white collar section.

See you in Wolverhampton

The spectre of racism that Enoch Powell bestowed on Wolverhampton is likely to suffer grievous harm this Saturday, when the town will witness its largest ever anti-racist demonstration, reports JEFNY ASHCROFT, secretary of Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee.

Many Asian pubs, shops, and clubs in the Black Country are displaying the mobilising poster produced by the anti-racist committee, which has called the national demonstration.

Both Indian Workers Associations (IB and ML) are expecting hundreds of their supporters from across Britain, and West Indian organisations are mobilising in Handsworth and London, as well as locally.

SUPPORT

Together with the support of left organisations, we are expecting a march of 5,000 to demonstrate to Wolverhampton

that we will not put up with racism, whether it comes from white thugs who have been responsible for intimidation, knifings, and burnings, or police harassment.

INQUIRY

A local labour movement inquiry on racist violence and police harassment, held on 25 February, unanimously decided that there was a case to answer after hearing evidence from leaders of black organisations, victims of attacks, and the anti-racist committee.

The inquiry panel, which included several Labour councillors and union officials, supported the committee's call for an independent public inquiry into the situation in Wolverhampton, and will be making recommendations to ensure that it does not do a whitewash job.

We hope that all Socialist Challenge supporters will be in Wolverhampton on Saturday to help confront Powell's heritage.

The inquiry, held at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, aroused the wrath of the poly directorate, which issued a



The Wolverhampton demonstration on 6 February — a sharp response to racist attacks and police harassment.

press statement dissociating itself and college staff from the inquiry. This was immediately rebutted by the branch committee of the staff union, NATFE. The student union at the poly is organising a petition in support of both the inquiry and the anti-racist committee, on which it has long been active.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE Public meeting in Wolverhampton, Friday, 17 March, at 7.30pm.

Tariq Ali (Editor, Socialist Challenge) and N.S. Noor (National President, IWA) on: 'Black workers must struggle for socialism.'

At Wolverhampton Poly, Students Union, large meeting room.

NATIONAL DEMO Saturday, 11 March

Assemble at 2.30pm for 3pm start, outside Fountain pub, Chappel Street, off Dudleys Road, Wolverhampton. Rally at 4.15pm.

THE LEFT AND THE

THE FIRST round of the French parliamentary elections is on Sunday. It promises to be the most explosive election since General de Gaulle seized power in 1958 — though you wouldn't know it from the lacklustre campaign.

But for the first time since the precarious days of the Fourth Republic in the 1940s and 50s it looks like the right wing will be

toppled from government.

GILLES GIACOMIN reports from Paris on the closing stages of the Communist Party campaign, **RICHARD KIRKWOOD** and **MURRAY SMITH** present two rather different views of the far left campaigns, and, below, **RICHARD CARVER** asks what is at stake in the election.

IF YOU'VE been relying on the television — or even Fleet Street — for coverage of the French elections, you'll have a rather strange picture: a nation struck with terror that a left government might get in, bringing with it a 'sweeping' programme of nationalisation and the end of civilisation as we know it.

In fact the nationalisations will be about as sweeping as my typewriter brush. The differences between the Communist and Socialist Parties on this issue amount to how many subsidiaries of the nine major companies to be nationalised should meet their parents' fate.

After much posturing the parties drew closer until the difference was less than 0.2 per cent of all French companies! The new compromise proposal from the Socialist-backed CFTD union federation splits that difference and seems likely to win acceptance from both sides.

VETO

The full extent of the nationalisation is only 15 per cent of total production — considerably less than in 'socialist' Britain.

Nor do the left parties threaten to do away with any of the constitutional apparatus of Gaullist



FRANCOIS MITTERRAND: Prime Minister in a fortnight?

France. They have been at pains to show their willingness to govern subject to a right-wing President with Bonapartist powers of veto.

Any attempt at significant reform will run up against the right-wing Senate, President, and the parapher-

nalia of 'constitutional guarantees'. And the left has declared in advance that it will be a good loser in these conflicts.

Yet the press still insists on its picture of an entire population terrorised by the threat of

communism, selling its francs and sewing gold ingots into its mattresses — which leaves you wondering who exactly is going to be left to vote for these rabid revolutionaries.

The fear is not entirely misplaced. For more than a year — and especially since the big left gains in the municipal elections last spring — the Union of the Left parties have been telling workers to hold off the industrial action and opposition to government economic policy until after these legislative elections.

REACTION

This has dampened down struggles so far, but there is always the danger [from the point of view of the major parties] that the workers may take this promise literally. A left victory threatens to unleash a militant reaction beyond their, or anyone's, control.

For all the reformist moderation it remains likely that a left win would usher in a new period of mass struggle greater than anything seen in France since 1968.

Hence the vision of a terror-stricken nation and hence, too, the overriding need to put a Socialist Party-Communist Party government in power.

Whatever their policies these parties (though not their ruling class hangers-on in the Left Radicals and Left Gaullists) are still the mass organisations of the working class

and focus the hopes and aspirations of the workers.

Their election would create more favourable conditions to advance the struggle against the rural class austerity attacks against undemocratic legal baggage, and for the interests of the mass of exploited and oppressed.

The split between the two worker parties and the sectarian attitude of both sides only hamper the development.

This is not because we are in favour of some abstract 'unity' at any cost but because — as Gilles Giacomini explains on this page — neither party puts forward a programme which goes beyond the most timid reforms.

And predictions? The split among the right-wing parties is less likely to be reflected in votes, since both the Giscardians and Jacques Chirac Gaullists have agreed to stand down in the second round if the other is higher placed on the first.

LEFT

But it now looks probable that, all the bombast, the left parties will arrive at a similar deal between the rounds.

If that is so, and the opinion polls are to be believed (and that's always a big 'if'), Francois Mitterrand will be heading a left government within a fortnight.

'Build French, Vote Communist!'

GILLES GIACOMINI writes from Paris on the closing stages of the Communist Party campaign.

SOME 70,000 people turned out for a Communist Party [PCF] rally in Paris on 16 February.

Standing under two decorations that symbolise the party's campaign — the French flag and a giant banner saying 'Vote Communist' — PCF leader Georges Marchais laid out his scenario for the coming month: 'Vote Communist on 12 March, discussion on the thirteenth, and victory on the nineteenth.'

The name of Francois Mitterrand, leader of the Socialist Party (PS), the PCF's former partner in the Union of the Left, was booed every time it came up.

PROGRAMME

And it came up frequently — more than the names of President Giscard d'Estaing, Prime Minister Raymond Barre, and the other leaders of the capitalist parties.

The tone of the PCF campaign has become stridently anti-PS. 'For the PS,' Marchais complained in a national radio broadcast on 16 February, 'the Common Programme was only a way of bolstering its own strength.'

And he denounced 'the old Social Democratic tradition, which consists in getting the left elected in order to carry out the policy of the right.'

This, according to Marchais, is what broke the Union of the Left. 'The hope of victory is not enough to seal the union of the left... A programme is necessary.'

The PCF 'programme' is a mixture of verbal shop-floor-type militancy,

reformist economic prescriptions and sickening nationalism. Well before the election campaign the PCF had plastered Paris with posters saying: 'They invest abroad and close down our factories. Build French — French Communist Party.'

PROSPECT

Pro-imperialist positions on such matters as the French 'independent nuclear strike-force (which the PCF supports) and 'national defence' (on which it accuses the PS or laxity) have been combined with militant, leftist-sounding attacks on the Social desire to 'manage the crisis of capitalism'.

What is the PCF doing? Part of the answer is the substantial gain in the PS vote between 1973 and 1977, which has overtaken a stagnant

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

WE HAVE already reported on the Choisir all-women election slate (16 February). Now a gay group has announced that it intends to stand five candidates.

But the police have stepped in to prevent three of the five standing on the grounds that they are a transvestite, an immigrant, and a gay under 23 years old.

At a stroke the cops have managed to exercise their prejudice against gays, blacks and youth. The 'Hammer' must be green at the gills.

THE Harris-L'Express opinion poll predicts 51 per cent of the vote going to the major left parties and 45 per cent to the right. The remaining four per cent would go to the far left, the fascists, the ecologists and various right-wing splinters.

Translated into parliamentary seats this would mean 257 for the left [176 Socialist, 81 Communist] and 234 for the right.

PCF electorate. At the same time the PS has picked up organisational strength in the working class, capturing leading positions in the CFTD, the second largest union federation.

The PCF has been unable to prevent the far left from sinking deeper, though still modest, working class roots. This has been combined with the emergence of a layer of workers, mostly young, who are willing to move into action independent of, and even against, the line of the PCF leadership.

With polls predicting a left victory the PCF faced the prospect of backing a PS-dominated government without any of the expected benefits in terms of state and ministerial position.

So the party leadership decided on a tactical change, bringing to bear its most powerful weapon: its continued strength in the workers movement. Hence the attacks on the PS for the Social Democrats' open advocacy of austerity.

The PCF, according to its leadership, is the party of the working class; only if the PCF is strong will

social change be possible. Even Georges Seguy, the leader of the CGT, the largest union federation, has been called upon to pitch in, calling openly for a PCF vote.

The PCF leadership has strongly implied that it will allow the present government to stay in power if its own vote is not enough. The legislative elections are held in two rounds. An absolute majority is needed to be elected on the first round; on the second a plurality is enough.

The PS has already announced that its candidates will stand down on the second round wherever the PCF gets a higher vote on the first. The PCF refuses to do the same.

If the PCF does 'not command enough support' on the first round, Marchais has said, social change is ruled out and there is no point in trying to settle the question of the second round.

The PS is putting itself forward as the leader of the battle against the right and the most consistent champion of the unity of the left, hoping that the workers' aspirations for unity can be transformed into PS votes.

The PCF campaign, sectarian in the most literal sense, is unlikely to resolve the party's difficulties, even though it will temporarily boost party patriotism among working class members. For despite the 'leftist' rhetoric, its policy is as reformist as ever.

CONTRADICTION

Its economic programme, for example, apart from the empty slogans about 'making the rich pay', calls for the nationalisation of only 0.38 per cent of companies with more than five employees, which accounts for only 14 per cent of production and 15 per cent

of the work force. And the annual compensation bill for those companies that are nationalised comes to more than £300 million.

The PCF leadership is thus mirroring itself in a contradiction. Its radical talk, in the context of a rise in working class militancy and consciousness, stimulating a further upsurge of combativity which is in conflict with the leadership's thoroughly reformist programme and strategy.

Sooner or later the PCF bureaucracy will have to confront that contradiction — whether in government or in opposition.

GERRYMANDER IS ALIVE AND WELL...

DESPITE the left's substantial lead in the opinion polls the right still has a massive gerrymander in its favour:

'It has invented three new overseas [and generally right-wing] seats; 'French citizens abroad [again usually rightists] now have the right to choose where they vote by proxy. Of course they all opt for marginal seats;

'There is a new seat in Corsica [which will favour the right] where cheating is rife;

'Apart from these there has been no redrawing of electoral boundaries since 1958. This means a disproportionate weighting in favour of [conservative] rural seats. The left tends to hold the larger seats, the right the smaller, making a right-wing vote worth more than a left;

'Immigrant workers are not allowed to vote.

FRENCH ELECTIONS



LCR soldier candidates hold first press conference — despite state attempts to gag them.

Two views of the revolutionary left

'Missing its chances'

The divisions and problems of the French revolutionary left have emerged clearly in this election. Faced with divisions on the established left and a demagogic 'left turn' of the Communist Party there are possibilities of revolutionaries gaining an audience, argues RICHARD KIRKWOOD.

Last year three major groups — Lutte Ouvriere, the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) and the 'soft-Maoist' Communist Workers Organisation (CWO) — ran a joint slate and did relatively well.

This time there are two main slates. Lutte Ouvriere is running in every seat in mainland France — 470 in all. A joint slate of the LCR, the CWO and a small group, the Communist Committees for Self-Management (CCA), are running in rather fewer.

One difference was over programme. LO correctly claimed the joint programme was too soft on the Union of the Left.

ILLUSIONS

At the heart of the LCR's campaign is a belief that a victorious left 'would not be just another bourgeois government'.

This is based on the experience of the 1936 Popular Front which led to mass strikes. The illusions of the mass workers can lead to a mass movement which will go beyond the limits imposed by the reformist parties. But much of the propaganda has given the impression that the Communist and Socialist Parties in power can in fact be pushed to the left. Thus pages of *Rouge*, the LCR paper, are dedicated to governmental programmes. Presumably the idea is that these can be put forward in a mass struggle to win over erstwhile PCF and PS supporters.

INTERLUDE

But, as LO pointed out, the problem may lie elsewhere. They see a more likely scenario as a left government à la Callaghan — using its working-class credibility to win acceptance of an austerity programme.

In this case the problem is rallying the working class against its established leadership to fight on basic issues.

Thus it is central to denounce the Union of the Left as a bourgeois government and not to encourage illusions that it could ever be a workers' government.

Equally they argued that elections were merely an interlude, the main

struggle was elsewhere and this should be clearly stated. To put up governmental programmes was electoralism.

TRAP

Many of LO's criticisms have proved correct. *Rouge* has fallen into the trap of calling for 'workers unity' in a way that sounds like calling for PCF-PS unity.

It is not the job of revolutionaries to call on the reformist parties to unite without being clear on the content of any unity and the place of revolutionaries in it. At times *Rouge* has seemed to echo PS attacks on the PCF.

The LCR's denunciation of the constitution has pointed out the 'strong state' elements that make it undemocratic. But its emphasis on positive plans leads it to propose an alternative bourgeois constitution rather than using the opportunity to denounce bourgeois democracy as such. The same can be said about a number of other issues.

But LO have done little to carry out their promise of a clear revolutionary campaign. From rejecting programmes aimed at the government they have moved to having no programme at all.

LO has called on 'ordinary people' to vote for them because an LO

member of parliament would denounce the Union of the Left when it betrayed the workers.

They have pointed out how many women are standing on their ticket but have had little to say about women's problems in detail or about the women's movement.

They have relied on the image of their star, former strike leader Arlette Laguiller, who has been moved from her Paris constituency to one in central France with which she has no connection — except that there was a high vote there for the revolutionaries in the past.

In many cases they are running candidates in places where they have never had any activity at all.

On the other hand LO has published clear articles — for instance showing the anti-parliamentary nature of the early PCF's electoral interventions.

In terms of presenting simple propaganda for some revolutionary ideas LO has set an excellent example. But in the end it has succumbed to a different kind of electoralism.

INAPPROPRIATE

We are not on the verge of a revolution so programmes for a workers' government are largely inappropriate. But equally the simple propaganda of 'we are the real lefts —

trust us' is not enough.

AIM

Both are substitutionist in essence. LO does have a full programme (the old 1938 Transitional Programme) which it will presumably raise out of nowhere at some point.

The aim must be twofold. Propaganda against parliamentary elections as such, and for basic socialist principles. Agitation around things workers can do now, organisations they can build to prepare the fight against a left (or right) government. The latter, linked to basic socialist argument, is the contemporary meaning of 'transitional politics'.

SAD

In a period when the tensions in the Union of the Left and the PCF's shifts give real possibilities it is sad that none of the material that reaches here from France shows much sign that the revolutionary left is making this preparation.

Richard Kirkwood is a leading member of the Workers League and International Socialists Coordinating Committee.

'A great success'

The 1978 revolutionary campaign is bigger than ever. In almost every constituency militant workers will have the chance to express their distrust of the reformist parties and their support for a fighting alternative, writes MURRAY SMITH.

But the impact is unfortunately weakened by the presence of two or more far-left candidates in most places.

The LCR (French Section of the Fourth International) is running a joint campaign with two other far left organisations, the CWO and the CCA, under the name 'For socialism, for workers' power'. The campaign is fielding over 250 candidates, 150 of them from the LCR.

Its political basis is threefold — to explain constantly the class collaborationist nature of the Common Programme (in either its Communist or Socialist variant), to present a class struggle programme, and to call for a vote for the reformist parties in the second round to kick out the right.

THIRST

There are still differences within the campaign. For example, the CWO calls for a second round vote, not just for the C and PS, but for the Left Radicals, a small capitalist party.

These differences are indicated in the text of the common platform, and

each organisation's candidates stand on their own programme as well.

The LCR campaign centres on the need for a united workers' front, and for a government of the Communist and Socialist parties (PCF and PS), not to carry out class-collaborationist policies but to implement workers' demands and break with the ruling class, its parties and its state.

The LCR's local meetings are generally not bigger than in previous campaigns, but the audiences are now mainly working class, often in families or groups from the same workplace.

There is a thirst for political discussion on everything from the PCF-PS split to the struggle against nuclear power stations and the problems of minority nationalities.

PCF militants are coming to many meetings, not just to put the party line but to discuss. When the LCR's Alain Krivine spoke at a meeting in a Lorraine mining community near Forbach (the French equivalent of Barnsley), the mayor, an old PCF militant, finished the town council meeting early and came along.

Krivine addressed a meeting of 60

that night, mostly miners and including many PCF members. A PCF meeting in Forbach the same night, with a big-name party speaker, drew slightly less.

We shouldn't exaggerate these examples, but all over the country revolutionaries are finding a new audience of militant workers. Many voted for them in last year's municipal elections, when a revolutionary list scored 8-10 per cent in several towns, and 12 per cent in Orleans.

The other major far left campaign is Lutte Ouvriere's. Last year LO formed part of the revolutionary slate in the municipal elections along with the LCR and CWO.

IMPROBABLE

The name was the same, 'For socialism, for workers' power' and so was the political basis of the platform. But this year LO is running its own campaign, and a massive one at that, with 470 candidates.

Whereas the LCR-CWO-CCA list concentrates on towns where the organisations already have some support, LO is 'parachuting' candidates into the most improbable places, and isn't worried about competing with the other organisations.

LO's explanation is that they have 'major differences', especially with the

LCR, and over their attitude towards the PCF and PS now and if they form a government.

There are differences. LO (and CWO) do not share the LCR's view of the united workers' front and the call for a government of the workers' parties.

But from its own electoral propaganda there is very little difference in how it sees the reformist parties and its propaganda for class struggle demands.

The real reason for LO's behaviour lies elsewhere. Its campaign is primarily aimed at building its own organisation.

It hopes to reassemble the 600,000 votes won by its candidate in the 1974 Presidential election, Arlette Laguiller. Those votes were won by a highly personalised and rather populist campaign.

Despite its efforts it is unlikely that LO will repeat that success on Sunday. The uncertainty of the outcome and the division of the left, puts a massive pressure on workers to vote for the PS or PCF in the first round.

This will reduce the far left vote, and the confusing presence of two or more candidates will not help (the centrist PSU and an alliance of two Maoist groups are also presenting lists).

But the importance of elections — for revolutionaries like everyone else

— is that they give a chance to debate policies. The need for an alternative programme for class struggle is made even sharper by the political crisis, particularly the leadership crisis on the left.

Judged in those terms, the campaign of the LCR and the joint slate is undoubtedly a success.

CONSTITUTIONALLY INCAPABLE

THE 1958 constitution is one of the mean weapons the ruling class can use to block any reforms it doesn't like. The main working class parties have refused to raise any objections to it, but the Trotskyists of the LCR use their manifesto to argue the need to get rid of this reactionary junk;

*For the abolition of the Constitution and the emergency powers it gives to the President of the Republic.

*For the suppression of the Senate and the Presidency of the Republic.

*For the election of a single Constituent Assembly, combining legislative and executive powers, elected by proportional representation, and whose members will receive the salary of a skilled worker.

Paisley trial reveals secret police deal

Loyalist leader Ian Paisley was acquitted at the weekend of impeding the police in Ballymena, Co Antrim, during last May's Loyalist strike, reports TOM MARLOWE.

Paisley's acquittal was in no small measure due to the quality of one of his defence witnesses — none other than Jack Harmon, deputy chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Both Harmon and Paisley testified to the court that they had made a secret deal by which Paisley would be arrested and he then would use his influence to see to it that Loyalist barricades in the town were taken down.

It was, said Paisley, 'a face saving situation' in that once Paisley had become a 'martyr' his followers would feel something had been achieved.

Paisley testified that he had two secret meetings with Harmon to work out the

details of the plan. Harmon testified: 'My purpose was to restore normality, peacefully if possible and with a minimum of force'. He emphasised: 'This differed in no way with the views expressed by Dr Paisley'.

The trial exposed the level of co-operation which existed between the RUC and Paisley. Harmon told the court that he could have called in the Army to remove the barricades, but he thought this would have 'a dastardly effect'. He also declined to remove the barricades at night, because this 'could have been readily misconstrued'.

Such low profile attitudes are absent in the RUC's dealing with Republicans, but

then Harmon might as well have been a character witness for Paisley when he declared 'Mr Paisley had been helpful to the police' and that the Loyalist leader's 'sole aim was to avoid trouble in the town'.

Considering that Paisley was leading an attempted general strike in the North of Ireland at the time, it seemed a curious statement: but then the police appeared to be falling over themselves to be helpful to the Loyalist chief — another defence witness for Paisley was the RUC's Chief Superintendent in Ballymena.

All this was enough to secure Paisley's acquittal, and when the verdict was announced he led a rendition of the hymn 'Oh God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come'. Whether the RUC is now claiming divine status is unclear.



A series of protests in England and Ireland marked the second anniversary of the abolition of political status for Republican prisoners in the North of Ireland last week. Seen here is a 'blanket protest' held on 1 March in London's Fleet Street, symbolising that Republican prisoners who refuse to accept criminal status have only blankets or towels to wear. Among other activities in England were pickets of Leicester jails and Army recruiting offices in Sheffield and Brighton.

Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)

Deskilling and reskilling Workers must control

'DESKILLING' is a trendy word, which some socialists have taken to putting in their sentences as cooks add salt. What, if anything, does it mean and if it means anything is it important?

TONY FLETCHER of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS) explains:

Usually the idea of deskilling a process is that part of it is mechanised. What was previously done by a worker, using her or his skill and power, is taken over (at least partly) by a machine, with the result that the worker needs less skill (and maybe less power).

Mechanisation has been around a long time of course, so what's special about it now? Traditionally, we saw it as capital's main way of increasing productivity (output per worker) and making the product cheaper. It did this by both reducing the number of workers and increasing the output of the ones who were left.

Deskilling was there, but seen as a side-effect. Besides, new skills developed to replace dying crafts so that there was always a section of skilled workers, sometimes expanding and sometimes shrinking.

facturing to service industries.

3. A contradiction in this process (and one of which senior management is uncomfortably aware) is that bigger machines, assembled into ever bigger factories, still need operators, and, however skilled or unskilled, these men and women can stop the whole production line.



In a way, reskilling can give a section of workers more power (which employers have tried to subvert by upgrading them into management.)

There is something new, however. Recently mechanisation has become more widespread and has accelerated. So much so that new skills are not being created in sufficient numbers and what new skills there are need only be represented by a few workers.

The result is a shift towards a few elite, highly skilled workers and a mass of unskilled or semi-skilled workers or unemployed. The technology involved in this disturbance to the familiar balance of changing skills, is electronics and computing.

Let's look at one area of work to see the implications of this happening — secretarial work in offices.

WORD PROCESSING

There's one phrase which all the technical and management journals use to describe the transformation in office work: word processing. It describes

the replacement of filing clerk, filing cabinet, typist and typewriter by a keyboard, a printing machine, a computer (surprise) and 'operator'.

With this set-up the cost of a letter dives from £3 to 18p, and a typist's productivity can increase tenfold (*Financial Times*, 3 May 1977). For the management, this system is fast, cheap, reliable (as long as the operator co-operates) and compact. It embodies all the charms which electronics holds for them.

The new skills it creates are: the operator (whose work is very similar to the typist, but much more exhausting because

of the transactional and the monopoly).

Change of this speed and magnitude poses many problems for socialists. It's maybe no good opposing it the way the Luddites opposed mechanisation in the early 19th century. For a start, the Luddites lost, and besides there is much in these new techniques which is potentially truly liberating, both for individuals as workers and for society.

The possibilities hidden within the new electronics technologies are not completely poisoned by the fact they emerged within capitalism. It's the direction which their development takes which so well expresses the interests of capital.

The Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards' Corporate Plan is one answer, which is being taken up by workers in other industries. Their argument is simply that with all its resources — human skill as well as factories and money — Lucas could be making socially useful products in a more humane factory, instead of adding to the dole queues.

By exposing the real priorities of production the fight around this plan is politicising many people, but there is a danger of incorporation of this initiative and its becoming a diversion or, worse, an appendage of the company's design department.

The machine is incredibly quick and demanding; maintenance workers (very few and quite unskilled because the machine analyses its own faults and they can be repaired by just unplugging one bit and plugging in a new one); and the designers and builders of the machines.

By exposing the real priorities of production the fight around this plan is politicising many people, but there is a danger of incorporation of this initiative and its becoming a diversion or, worse, an appendage of the company's design department.

CONTROL

We need to link similar initiatives in different firms as part of our struggle for production for use (instead of profit) at the level of the whole society. Workers faced by profound changes in their factories or offices can put several immediate demands:

1. Control of the ways new techniques are introduced.
2. Workers' monitoring of the physical and psychological risks of new processes, before and after their introduction, or total opposition if necessary.
3. Shorter working week at guaranteed full pay, as a way of keeping down redundancies and showing that technical development could benefit everybody by reducing working hours.

* This is part of a regular series of monthly columns which the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science produces for Socialist Challenge.

What's Left

PLAISTOW Maternity Hospital Benefit, Sat 11 March at 7.30pm, Greenleaf House, Greenleaf St, Plaistow, Disco and food. Admission 50p.

NATFHE College Hack and Film day school on Sat 11 March. Annual conference on Sun 12 March. Both at Regent St, Central London Poly (Oxford Circus label) 11am start. Creche.

WSL SPLITS! Trotskyist Faction platform 'In Defense of the Revolutionary Programme', and resignation statement, 33p inc p&p (stamp welcome) from 35, Leona St, Newtown, Birmingham 19.

UNITED TROOPS OUT Movement London meeting. Open to members and all those interested in building the movement. Fri 10 March 7.30pm at 151, St Clements Building, Houghton St, WC2.

THE OTHER CINEMA distribution 3pm, benefit, 18 March at 7.30pm. Henry Cow, Red Bullion and Ens performing at University of London Union, Malet St, WC1.

EAST LONDON Socialist Unity Public Meeting on the cuts. Speakers from the public sector, St Hilda's, Club Row, E2, Wed 15 March 8pm. Discussion of Socialist Unity programme at the Britannia, Mark St, Hackney on Wed 22 March at 8pm.

MEETINGS ON Homelessness to be held on Tuesday 14 March at 1.30pm and on Wed 15 March at 7.30pm at the Exhibition on Homelessness at the Battersea Arts Centre. Speakers to include Helen Eddy, Organising Officer of the GMWU Southern Region.

BRITTON SOCIALIST Club, South Africa evening. A unique slide show which records the black students uprising in Soweto in 1976. Followed by South African singers Barry Gelder and James Phillips. Canterbury Arms, Canterbury Crescent, London SW9, 8pm, Oct 50p.

CRITIQUE Seminar on 'The Working Class Response to Atomisation — the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in the 1930s' by Vii Graham. Tues 14 March, 10 Poland St, London W1, 7pm.

NORTH LONDON Claimants Union fundraising benefit and pop, Records and Charge plus discs, food, creche, stall and bar. Fri 10 March, 8-11.30pm, Leobroke House, Highbury Grove, London N5. Claimants 40p, others 80p.

PEOPLES NEWS SERVICE has some important US Government documents originating from the National Security Council, the supervisory body for CIA and other US intelligence bodies. They concern many aspects of US relations with almost all other countries. The index runs to 33 pages and is available to interested parties at price £3 inc p&p. Cost of documents ordered from the index depends on the number of pages involved. From PNS, 152 Upper St, London N1, £3 from PO Box 91454, Los Angeles, California 90019, USA.

REVOLUTIONARY Communist Tendency new pamphlet: 'Under a National Flag — Fascism, Racism and the Labour Movement', by Frank Richards. Price 30p (+12p postage). Send orders to: BM/CT (SC), London WC1V 6XX. Cheques and POs payable to RCT Association.

HACKNEY WRITERS Workshop and Hackney & Islington Music Workshop present an evening of songs, stories and poems. All welcome, 30p, Saturday 11 March 8pm at Hackney Trades & Labour Club, 96 Deodar Lane, EB. Proceeds to Bethnal Green Hospital Campaign.

'END Immigration Controls' badges. Ideal for giving to friends and work-mates during the Anti-Apartheid Month of Action in March. Order yours now, 15p each plus 7p p&p; or 11p each for orders of ten or more. From J Wilson, SC Badges, PO Box 59, London N1 2XP.

NGUGI DEFENCE Committee are holding a public meeting on 21 March. Speakers will include James Baldwin and Alex La Guma. This is part of a series of events planned by a defence committee to protest at the imprisonment without trial of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, an internationally known Kenyan novelist and academic. Venue to be fixed.

NORTH LONDON Socialist Unity organising meeting, to decide on candidates, constituencies and the type of campaign for the May elections in Islington. Tues 14 March 7.30pm at Caxton House, St Johns Way, London N19. All Socialist Unity supporters welcome.

BELT & BRACES Roadshow. Do need a person for general office work. Typing essential, driving licence useful. Tel: 01-450 6485.

SOCIALIST Students 4, Anti-Apartheid Conference, 18/19 March, Kent University. If you believe in a mass campaigning union, an independent democratic union, left unity to defeat the right — then come along. Further details from Colin Campbell, or Pamela Helmer (Cambridge 8524).

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BRENT TRADES COUNCIL Public Meeting: End Wage Controls, End Unemployment. Speakers: Jack Dorney (Sec. Brent TCU and national TU) and Labour Party speakers, plus Broadside Mobile Workers Theatre performing 'Now You See It — Now You Don't', about wage controls, unemployment, inflation and cuts. Fri 17 March 7.45pm, Brent Trades and Labour Hall, 375 High Rd, Willesden NW10. Collection for Grunwick Strike Fund.

PEOPLES NEWS SERVICE has just published the first in a series of indexes of stories in community newspapers for January 1978. Papers who want to receive the index and be included in it should write to PNS, 182 Upper St, London N1.

NEWHAM SOCIALIST Challenge Forum on The Left and The Election at North East London Poly, Livingstone House, Livingstone Rd, Stratford, E15, Room 10A on Wed 15 March at 7.30pm.

BRISTOL International Women Day March and Rally, Sat 11 March. Assembles 2pm, Victoria Rooms for march at 2.30pm. Rally at 3.20pm at Memorial Hall, Centre Hall, Old Market. International speakers, two feminist plays, tea. Evening: disco and feminist musicians. 9pm-1am at Architects Disco, 25 Great George St. Tickets at the door.

BROADSIDE Mobile Workers Theatre's new production is now available. Made in cooperation with the Anti-Apartheid movement it is a programme of songs, sketches, readings, poetry and dances concerning the struggle of black people in South Africa and the solidarity movements. It can be used to live-up public and Trade Union meetings, conferences etc. Length: flexible, up to 30 mins. Ideally available in conjunction with speaker from Anti-Apartheid Details and booklets: Broadside, 58 Holborn House, London SW1 8JL (Tel: 01-450 6692 or 01-730 5392).

THE BITE Theatre Group at the ICA, The Mall, London SW1T performing 'Gast' (on the causes and effects of migration) Grunwick on Sat 11 March, 8pm. Bookings: Tel: 01-930 6393. Tickets 75p.

The crisis in Peru Workers strike despite CP

THE PERUVIAN workers' movement passed a new milestone last week, writes BOB JOHNSON.

The general strike which paralysed most of Peru's industry last Monday and Tuesday comes only seven months after the country's second ever general strike last July.

It reflects the movement's growing ability to transform a traditionally localised combativity into nationally centralised actions with widespread support.

At the same time it marks a new stage in the fight between the Peruvian Communist Party and class struggle tendencies in the main trade union federation, the CGTP.

UNDEMOCRATIC

The fact that the strike took place at all represents a major setback for the CP leadership of the CGTP.

The stoppage was originally called by the confederation's national assembly — a

300-strong delegate body — for 23-24 January.

At the last minute it was called off in a flagrantly undemocratic fashion by secretary general Eduardo Castillo, who continues to believe in 'dialogue' with the military.

TREACHERY

Castillo provided the movement as a whole with an object lesson in Stalinist treachery that will not be quickly forgotten.

The CGTP rank and file showed their disgust by overruling the leadership and renewing the strike call for the end of February.

The workers' main demand was for the reinstatement of the 5000 who lost their jobs at government instigation after the July general strike. They are also demanding across-the-board pay rises to offset the 50 per cent decline in the buying power of wages since 1973.

Some significant unions, such as Castillo's own Bank Employees' Federation, failed to join the strike, but in the factories it was 100 per cent solid.

The upward trend of popular struggles in Peru continues. Whether any immediate concessions will be forthcoming remains to be seen (an IMF delegation is currently visiting Lima).

Either way the strike will have the positive effect of widening the limited margins for working class political expression offered by the constituent assembly elections scheduled for June.

In particular the forces to the left of the CP — who recently formed a common front for intervention in the elections — can expect to make a somewhat greater impact.

MANIPULATE

In Peru, as in neighbouring Bolivia and Ecuador — which also have military-sponsored elections this year — the precise degree to which the regime is able to manipulate the proceedings depends on the current relation of forces.

Last week's strike will have helped to shift this balance in the workers' favour.

Brits boot out militants

THE BRITISH Embassy in Lima has handed a group of militant workers over to the police.

The embassy claims that the group was trying to gain political asylum, though the workers say they went to the embassy to stage a hunger strike.

The British refuse to say whether Peruvian police entered embassy premises, which are technically British territory.

A wave of hunger strikes started on 28 January in protest at the mass sackings which had followed last July's general strike. The military government brought charges against the hunger strikers on 10 February.

On 20 February seven people entered the British Embassy to hand in a letter, the contents of which the Ambassador refuses to divulge.

The seven were Raul Marchand Rendon, Nelli Rivera de Marchand, and their three children aged six, four and two, Pedro Acosta Plasencia, and Daniel Cobos Torres.

After they were handed over to the police Acosta was held in a state security prison and the other three adults in military hospital.

The reasons for their choice of the British Embassy are unclear. One suggestion is that it was because the offices of Amnesty International are in London.

Another is that top Foreign Office officials were in Lima for discussions with Argentina over the Falkland Islands. This would be a way of drawing world attention to the treatment of the hunger strikers.

Either way they counted without the cullousness of the British state.

Czechoslovak party crisis



GUSTAV HUSAK: soon to depart.

Husak to be kicked out?

THERE will soon be a bid to remove Gustav Husak from his position as First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, according to reports just reaching the West. MARK JACKSON reports.

Husak, who had supported the liberalisation that led to the Prague Spring in 1968, was brought in to head the party in April 1969 because he would be more acceptable than any of the party leaders who were too closely identified with the Soviet invasion forces.

Over the last nine years he has lost that credibility, particularly because of his acquiescence in the purge of half a million supporters of the Prague Spring from the Party and their jobs, and in the trials of political oppositionists. He is reported to be alcoholic.

Since 1970 the party leadership has been split into two factions. The issues in dispute are what to do about the opposition and whether to bring back some of the expelled half million, who include many of the country's best administrators and technicians.

FACTION

One faction, headed by Vasil Bilak, argues against any concessions on the grounds that Czechoslovakia has never been properly normalised.

The population would not see the concessions as proof of the party's benevolence, but as a sign that the party leadership was in retreat. The Pandora's box of demands raised in 1968 would then reappear.



LUBOMIR STROUGAL

The other faction, headed by Lubomir Strougal, wants to isolate the hard core opposition by making major concessions

to those expelled, who form a large layer of malcontents on which the opposition can base itself.

This group also favours a modification of the rigidly centralised planning system.

Strougal is able to use the Czech bureaucrats' discontent at the gains of their Slovak counterparts. Husak is a Slovak and Bilak a Ukrainian from Slovakia. The Bilak faction has so far kept a slight edge over its opponents.

DUBCEK

The relationship between party and masses is bad. On the one hand this creates a pressure for unity in the leadership, on the principle of 'hang together or hang separately'. On the other hand there is a feeling that something has to be done, that the party needs a new direction.

But the natural beneficiary of the second pressure would be neither Bilak nor Strougal, but Alexander Dubcek, the party's leader during the Prague Spring. So the unitarian pressure is likely to prevail, at least in the short term.

The Kremlin bureaucrats will be thinking along similar lines. Moscow has had some contact with the Dubcekites, evidently contemplating some new initiative. But they have always drawn back from any move that might upset the shaky equilibrium in Czechoslovakia.

Thus a compromise candidate must be found. Still, the fact that all factions have decided to throw Husak to the lions will be taken as a sign that the pressure on the party leadership is causing problems.

SCAPEGOAT

The economic situation is getting to the point where it threatens an attack on living standards, which have risen steadily since 1970 and have been a major factor in maintaining stability. Husak will be a scapegoat for this problem as well as for the party's botching of the Charter 77 issue.

But the compromise candidate will be in no stronger position and will have just as little trust from the masses. This will only sharpen the problems that Husak's replacement would be designed to solve.

Then Moscow will more seriously consider the need to bring back some Dubcekites — with all the problems that would pose for the present party leadership.



Hunger strikers in a church in Lima.

Basque women take to the streets

The womens movement got off to a slower start in the Basque country than in other industrial areas, notably Barcelona and Madrid. However there have been some signs in the last couple of months that this new movement is beginning to catch up. FRED FAIRBAIRN reports from Bilbao.

Late last year the prostitutes of the 'red-light' district of Bilbao went on strike and demonstrated in the streets with members of women's groups and supporters of COPEL (Committees of Prisoners in Struggle). A young woman had been burned to death in her bed in prison in circumstances that have still not been properly clarified.

The prostitutes argued that she should never have been in prison — she had been arrested on a minor shop-lifting offence and held because she was a 'known prostitute'. They denounced police harassment and called for the repealing of the 'Ley de Peligrosidad Social' (Law of Social and Moral Danger), a catch-all law which covers the persecution of gays, pot-smokers and anyone else suspected of 'anti-social' behaviour.

Perhaps the most important recent developments have taken place in the province of

Guipuzcoa. After a number of rapes and assaults on women in the suburbs of Reheria, a demonstration was called in the town. This drew some 6,000 people, mainly women, of all social types and ages, despite the fact that the Civil Governor had refused his permission for the march. The demonstrators argued for a radical improvement in the dilapidated state of the suburbs, especially the provision of adequate street lighting.

PATROLS

However the women were not content to leave matters there until all these problems were solved. In the meantime they convinced the neighbourhood association of Galazaraborda district to organise its own street patrols. These will operate from 5-7.30 in the morning and 8-10 and 10-12 at night.

It has also taken steps to see

that all women going to work in the morning when it is dark form up in groups and go together. Similar measures were also decided upon in another suburb, Beraun.

DISREPAIR

This movement has now converged with that protesting against the general state of disrepair and lack of amenities in the town. A rates strike has begun, and on 5 February there was a 10,000 strong demonstration.

Nearby, another anti-rape demonstration was convened by the residents association of Eguia (San Sebastian). Despite appalling weather, about 3,000 people turned out. Here too a call was made for the organisation of self-defence pickets. Another proposal was to denounce specific attempts at rape or assault, not just to the police, but by massive fly-posting and wall-painting campaigns, naming names where possible.

On the industrial front the situation is more varied. When the large firm of Echevarria declared redundancies among its predominantly male work-

force, the women related to these men began to organise immediately, just as their sisters at Babcock-Wilcox had done. The women have not simply trailed along behind the men, but have organised independently to promote solidarity.

Soon after this women came to the forefront in a cleaners' strike in Vizcaya. Large contingents composed mainly of women have swept through the streets in support of their pay-and-conditions claim, the strike remains solid as it approaches its third week.

SETBACKS

However there have been some setbacks. At Cranefisa — a firm of about 500 workers threatened with lay-offs — a mass meeting decided that if these materialised, the first to go should be married women, single women, and young men, in that order.

Although there are women's groups in a number of factories in the region, the unions have shown little interest in women's problems, which has been matched by a low level of union membership among women.



Zimbabwe con-trick Episode 2: The Sting

After months of protracted negotiation Ian Smith last week managed to get his 'internal settlement' signed, sealed and delivered. ROY ALEXANDER reports.



The signatures of erst-while 'nationalist' leaders Muzorewa and Sithole do not hide the fact that the deal leaves control in the hands of Smith and his colleagues.

True, the functions of 'Prime Minister' are ostensibly taken over by a new Executive Council composed of Smith and three black politicians; and the agreement includes a promise for the election of a Parliament with a black majority within the year.

But there is more than enough 'small print' to undermine such limited pledges. For at least 10 years the white minority — only 10 per cent of the population — will hold 28 out of the 100 Parliamentary seats, giving them considerable balancing power if the black members remain divided.

They will also be able to retain 'entrenched' clauses in the Constitution which, among other things, provide that judges will have 'security of tenure' and their 'independence and qualifications' fixed; that 'the public service, police force, defence forces, and prison services will be maintained in a high state of efficiency and free from political interference'; that an independent board will control 'appointments to, promotions in, and discharge from, the public service'; and that there will be 'protection from deprivation of property unless adequate compensation is paid promptly.'

What these add up to is a firm guarantee that there can be no serious attack upon the central bastions of white power and privilege in the state or the economy.

It also means that whatever the changes in the cast, it will be Smith who continues to run the show behind the scenes.

But what Smith is seeking is a secure transition from white racist domination to a multi-racial neo-colonial order, which will mean making real concessions to the black majority.

Thus the angry words exchanged between Smith and the representatives of imperialism — Owen and Young — are rather like the recent 'heated exchanges' between Smith and Muzorewa: born not of real disagreement, but rather of a proximity of aims which each finds rather embarrassing.

Already there are reports that Owen, reflecting the eagerness of the Labour Government to extricate itself from Zimbabwe, is going 'soft' on Smith. The Americans, more concerned with their relations in the rest of black Africa, are holding a firmer line.

But if Smith and his black collaborators can summon up serious mass backing among the black population for the settlement, Owen and Young will fall into line.

The main concern of those fighting for the real liberation of Zimbabwe must be to ensure that such support is not forthcoming.

And that requires an intensification of political agitation throughout the country around a clear programme for political and social liberation — a programme that can show up the 'settlement' for the hollow thing it is.

US miners strike over safety

"We were eating dust off the belt"

Jimmy Carter has invoked the Taft-Hartley Act against the US miners' strike. This requires a return to work for an 80 day cooling-off period. This was done, said Carter, 'to protect the health and safety of the American public.'

But RICHARD CARVER asks, what of the health and safety of the American miner?

'WE WERE eating dust off the belt. The boss had turned off the water that keeps the dust down because the belt was slipping. It was slowing down production, so he just turned the water off. We complained about the dust, but he just shrugged it off.'

'But if the state inspector comes in it's a different story. They turn on the water for him, all right.' That's a pretty typical day in a US mine, and it gives some idea why the strike — which has been going since 6 December — has been so fiercely supported.

Anyone who's been down a pit will be familiar with the sort of callousness that coal bosses — state or private — have towards safety.

What is less familiar is the miner telling the story. She is Donna Ratulowski from Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, one of a growing number of women miners. The battle for acceptance of women in the mines has been difficult, but the strike has been absolutely solid.

The strike started over the demand for restoration of health and pension benefits and recognition of the right to strike over safety.

The coal bosses cut the United Mine Workers of America health fund last summer, arguing that wildcat strikes had cut into their financial resources. This was a ploy to prevent the right to strike over safety violations.

A month ago UMWA leader Arnold Miller agreed a draft contract with the Bituminous Coal Operators Association, which conceded all the bosses' demands to prevent strike rights in safety cases.

Miller was elected in 1972 on a Miners for Democracy ticket which booted out the old gangster leadership of Tony Boyle. Although Miller and the bureaucracy have moved sharply to the right, the Miners for Democracy gains remain.

Central to the platform was membership ratification of contracts. In this case the procedure wasn't needed. Rank and file pressure forced the union's bargaining council to reject the contract overwhelmingly without it going to the members.

The latest deal Miller and Carter worked out in the White House is a variation on the same theme. The bosses have traded pay rises for acceptance of their conditions on safety

and the right to strike.

The miners are having none of it. Again it is union democracy which has saved them from the deal accepted by Miller, whose standing in the union is at an all-time low.

The coal bosses have their own view of how the union is run: 'Democracy will destroy unionism,' said one. 'None of the major unions that are well run have any democracy.' Quite.

Despite its impartial pose the Carter administration has been concerned to end the strike from the moment it started.

In Indiana the National Guard is protecting scab coal shipments and already two pickets have been shot dead by security guards.

Retired miners' pensions have been cut off in a bid to turn them against the strike. It has failed, with many old and disabled miners backing the pickets.

In Indiana again State police intervened to arrest 194 pickets at one of the few docks handling scab coal.

The miners have already signalled their intention to resist Carter's Taft-Hartley injunction.

The injunction requires them to return to work. Refusal means they will lose welfare benefits such as food stamps and could face military intervention.

But Carter's umming and ahing over whether to invoke Taft-Hartley shows his trepidation. And with good reason.

The last President to try that one on the miners was Harry S Truman in 1950. The miners laughed in his face, continued their strike with massive labour movement backing... and won.

In the new atmosphere of class struggle in the US they can probably count on similar support again, despite George Meany of the AFL-CIO (the equivalent of the TUC) saying he favours Taft-Hartley and the miners can stew in their own juice.

The UMWA, like the British miners, has a special place in the labour movement as one of the toughest and best organised sections.

The 18-month struggle for union recognition in Stearns, Kentucky — a sort of Grunwick with guns — is an indication of the US miners' spirit.

Steelworkers' and car workers' branches in particular have responded to this militancy with financial

support and help on the picket line.

These links between the various sectors will become more important if the bosses go ahead with their apparent strategy of layoffs because of real or imagined coal shortages. General Motors is cutting its

operations and Chrysler threatens a total shutdown.

Steel companies such as US Steel and Bethlehem Steel are represented on the coal owners' negotiating body. If, as seems likely, they start similar threats, unity between steelworkers and coal miners will be vital.

Israel helps racist exports

Made in South Africa

WATCHOUT for that next tin of Israeli fruit, because it may well be South African. That is the main result of a visit to South Africa by a high-level Israeli economic delegation led by Finance Minister Simha Ehrlich.

The deal is that Israel will package and re-export South African goods as its own. In certain instances Israeli firms will also finish South African products.

If the value added in such cases is more than 40 per cent, the South African company will not be liable for Israeli income tax.

Unfavourable tariff barriers and the reluctance of the western public to buy South African have had a serious effect on South African exports.

This deal is designed to make use of Israel's privileged trading status with the European Common Market and the United States. For example there 27,000 kinds of products Israel can export to the US free of customs duty.

The Israeli paper Ma'ariv comments: 'In the past Israel used to deny emphatically that it was "hiring" its position as an associate member of the Common Market to other countries. But this offer made by the high-level Israeli delegation to South African businessmen confirms these rumours.'

South Africa has offered Israel a good deal in return, including the right of Zionist organisations to take money out of South Africa. South African currency regulations are among the world's most stringent.

Israel has long been one of South Africa's major trading

partners, but this new deal confirms a rise in trade between the two countries at a time when the white racist regime is feeling increasingly embattled.

Co-operation goes beyond the economic sphere. When the United Nations voted for an arms embargo of South Africa last year, the initial Israeli response was to ignore it.

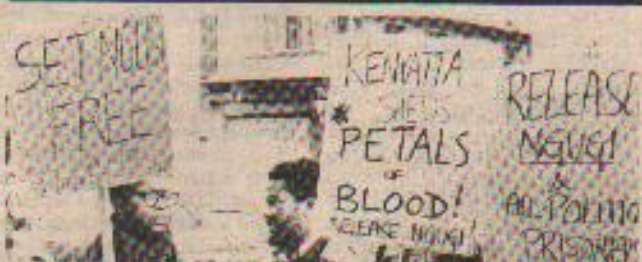
Defence Minister Moshe Dayan corrected this when he met a visiting delegation from the US Congress, though it was noticed at the time that Israel could continue to provide expertise through the Zionist Federation of South Africa.

Now the Jerusalem Post reports that Israel is continuing arms exports to South Africa on the grounds that the embargo only applies to new contracts decided since the UN vote.

Even the US State Department has been forced to admit that Israel is the only country to have interpreted the embargo in this way.

COMBATE es un periódico especial hecho por la Liga Obrera Comunista (Sección Sueca de la U. Int.) al servicio del medio latinoamericano en Europa, de los militantes exiliados y los grupos revolucionarios de América Latina, con amplia información sobre los debates de los aliados en su conjunto, las luchas en el continente y el movimiento de solidaridad, que ha ganado una amplia audiencia en Europa y también en Latinoamérica.

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Si estás interesado en integrar un grupo de lectores de Combate, comunicate con la Fracción Latinoamericana del ICG (International Marxist Group), pases escrito a: PO Box 50, London N1.



A PICKET outside the Kenyan High Commission last Friday demands the release of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the internationally known novelist held by the Kenyan Government under the Public Security Act. Under this Act detainees can be held indefinitely without trial, without charge, and without the right to defend themselves.

Intercontinental Press combined with Inprecor

TEXTS FROM the debate in the far left on the French elections are reprinted over 12 pages of this week's Intercontinental Press/Inprecor [Vol. 16, No. 9].

Also included in this issue are: a statement by the Fourth International on International Women's Day; a feature on women workers and unemployment; a statement by the Socialist Workers Party [US] — 'For Solidarity with the American Coal Miners Strike'; a further analysis of the tasks of revolutionary Marxists in Argentina; and reports on

Colombia, India and Kenya.

Single copies are 30p plus 10p p&p, but why not take advantage of the favourable subscription rates: £9 for one year [48 issues], £5 for six months [24 issues], or £2.50 for an introductory offer of 10 issues. All new subscribers before 31 March will also get a free copy of Inprecor No. 19 [New Series] devoted to the world economic situation. Write now to Intercontinental Press/Inprecor, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. All cheques/POs should be made out to Intercontinental Press.

According to 'comedian' Dick Emery, Robin Hood was a myopic Irish labourer who came to England to build the Nottingham by-pass. At Christmas, Mike Yarwood informed the nation that Father Christmas must be Irish — because he comes down the chimney instead of through the front door. And recently a child phoned in to a London radio station to announce that you can tell an Irishman in a carwash because he's riding a motorbike.

The suggestion that such anti-Irish jokes may be anything other than harmless fun is often met by cries of 'Don't be a spoilsport!' or 'Everybody should be able to laugh at themselves!'. To these people we offer a joke that has been doing the rounds of the Irish community in this country. 'Heard the one about the Irish Evil Knievel? He's going to jump over ten English people using a steam-roller, and he's made three unsuccessful attempts already.'

Many Irish people find anti-Irish jokes thoroughly unfunny and are getting their own back. Throughout the past year, the letters page and leader column of the *Irish Post*, 'The Voice of the Irish Community in Britain', have reflected this concern. Feelings about the jokes run so high that when, on *New Faces*, Terry Wogan ticked off a comedian for telling anti-Irish jokes and influenced the panel into giving him low marks, he merited a leader in the *Irish Post* and a stream of congratulatory letters.

IMPRESSED

Wogan went on to win the *Post's* 'Irish Person of the Year' award for 1977. The *Post* pointed out that this was not just because of his successful media career: 'We have no doubt at all as to what it was in 1977 which additionally impressed many *Irish Post* readers. It was that occasion on the *New Faces* programme when he spoke out against the anti-Irish jokes.'

The British are not, of course, the only people who tell 'thick' jokes against other groups of people. There are anti-Pom jokes in Australia, anti-Polish jokes in the United States, and even a recent fashion for anti-Kerryman jokes in Ireland. All such jokes are based on a relationship between the tellers and the targets which is, to varying degrees, antagonistic. The target group is seen as 'different' and is in some measure despised. (Kerryman jokes reflect urban chauvinism, and may also be a reaction to anti-Irish jokes, displacing them onto another target.)

The antagonism between British and Irish people has a long history and is currently being fuelled by the war in the north. The rash of anti-Irish jokes has developed since the upsurge in the conflict in 1969, and the jokes have now become so pervasive that at the end of last year they were captured for posterity and the mass market in a book published by Futura entitled *The Official Irish Joke Book*.

Anti-Irish jokes are a reaction on the part of British people to a situation which they find frustrating and which they fail to understand. The 'Irish question' is seen — as ever — as a rather marginal irritant on the British body politic, but an irritant nevertheless. To portray the Irish as stupid is to reflect the logic of the Government and the Press, which continually inform us that the war is going on because of Irish irrationality; because of men-of-violence, because of outmoded religious passions, and because of irresponsible southern politicians.

HISTORICAL CAUSES

The *Irish Post's* readers, however, perceive the war quite differently from most British people. They see its causes not as psychological but as historical. They see the war stemming not from Irish irrationality, but from centuries of British domination culminating in the setting up of an oppressive province in the North-east.

And just as a person who understands the threat of racism cannot laugh at racist jokes which portray blacks as spear-carrying primitives, and a person who understands sexism cannot laugh at cartoons which portray women as big-boobed featherbrains, so a person who understands the present relationship between the British and Irish peoples cannot laugh when members of the oppressor nation portray 'Paddy' as thick.

It is true that some Irish people do laugh at anti-Irish jokes, and some even tell them. But these are people who are less politically aware, less confident of their national identity, who — like the black person who says that immigration should be stopped — have internalised the values of the colonising country. More politically aware Irish people see the British as stupid — or at least as a rather strange people, with their big-headed chauvinism, their self-delusions and their inability to comprehend the Irish reality. 'Heard the one about the Englishman with an inferiority complex? He thought he was the same as everyone else.'

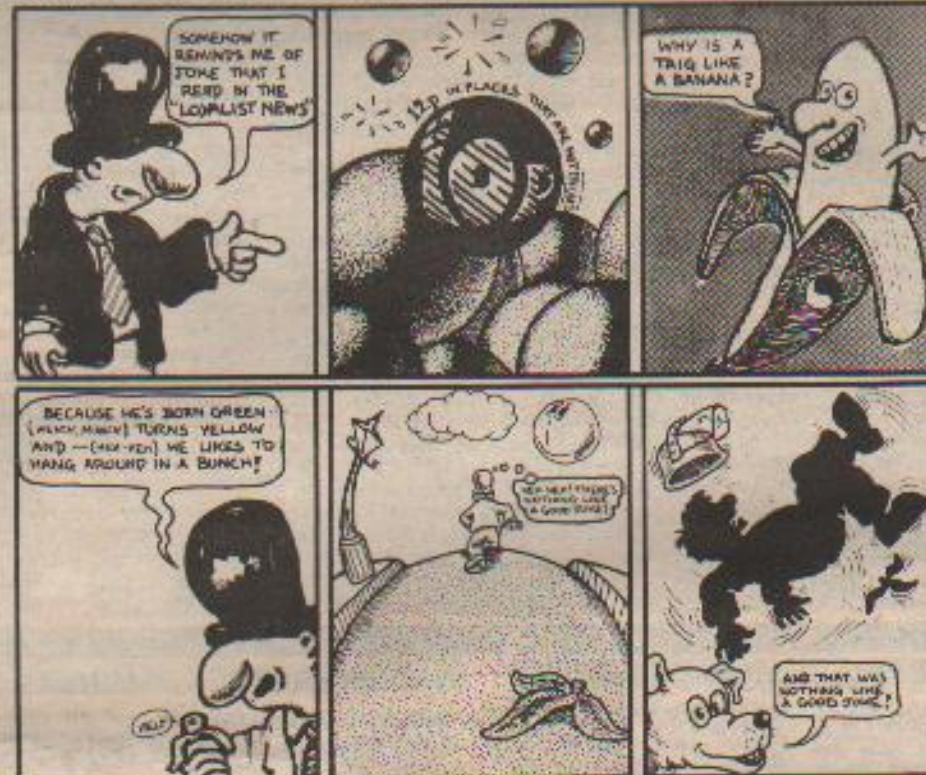
The denigration of the Irish as inferior in intelligence, morality or pedigree to the English has a long history. Bernard Levin recently wrote in *The Times*, 'There they go



Have you heard the one about... anti-Irish jokes

by LIZ CURTIS and ALASTAIR RENWICK

'How can an elite of usurpers, aware of their mediocrity, establish their privileges? By one means only: debasing the colonised to exalt themselves, denying the title of humanity to the natives, and defining them simply as absences of qualities — animals, not humans. This does not prove hard to do, for the system deprives them of everything.' — Jean Paul Sartre, Introduction to Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*.



still, the Irish 'patriots', with minds locked and barred, mouths gaping wide to extrude the very last morsel of folly, and consumed with a wild terror that sense may one day prevail.' Levin was invoking the Victorian image of the Irish. Take this 'humorous' portrait drawn by Punch in 1862, at a time when the radical Fenian movement was growing and the Irish were perceived as a threat both in Ireland and as immigrants in Britain:

'A creature manifestly between the gorilla and the negro is to be met with in some of the lowest districts of London and Liverpool by adventurous explorers. It comes from Ireland, whence it has contrived to migrate; it belongs in fact to a tribe of Irish savages: the lowest species of the Irish Yahoo. When conversing with its kind it talks a sort of gibberish. It is, moreover, a climbing animal, and may sometimes be seen ascending a ladder laden with a hod of bricks.

'The Irish Yahoo generally confines itself within the limits of its own colony, except when it goes out of them to get its living. Sometimes, however, it sallies forth in states of excitement, and attacks civilised human beings that have provoked its fury.'

In Victorian days, the supposed inferiority of the Irish was communicated by caricaturing them as monkeys, and later as apes. In 1848 Punch repeatedly caricatured John Mitchel, the outstanding radical leader of the Young Ireland movement, as a vicious monkey.

Previously cartoonists had represented the Irish as drink-sodden peasants, or — with other radicals — as pig-like creatures, identifying them as part of the 'swinish mob'. The monkey image derived from the growing debate among natural scientists about the ancestry of humans and their relationships to animals. As the debate grew, and increasing information about the great apes was disseminated, so 'Pa'dy' came to be represented

as a full-blown ape, placing the Irish on a lower rung of the ladder of human development than their conquerors — who, of course, represented themselves with the features of Greek gods.

CHARACTER

The British saw the causes of Irish poverty and violence not in the colonial system — but in the Irish character. The Reverend James Page, who toured Ireland in 1836, observed: 'The poor Irish work... for what can, at the lowest calculation sustain life. That obtained, they sit down contentedly in their cabins in the midst of filth and wretchedness almost exceeding what the greatest stretch of an Englishman's imagination can conceive. For subsistence they will work, and that with cheerfulness. Beyond this their degraded condition does not permit them to pass.'

The famous historian Thomas Macaulay in his *History of England* analysed the rebellions of the Irish as a result of their character, and explained the rising of 1690 thus: 'The habits of the Celtic peasant were such that he made no sacrifice in quitting his potato ground for the camp. He loved excitement and adventure... Far more seductive bait than his miserable stipend was the promise of boundless license.'

Because the Irish were 'inferior', they needed to be ruled by the British, argued the colonisers, and different standards of justice could be applied to them. This is how *The Times* argued in 1846 against the movement for the Repeal of the Union between Britain and Ireland: 'The great obstacle to tranquility of Ireland is the national character — the character of the masses, of the middle classes, of the senators of Ireland... When Ireland acts according to the principles of civilised man, then she can be ruled by the laws of civilised man.'

HALF DEVIL

The British saw all their colonial subjects as, in Kipling's phrase, 'half devil and half child'. Richard Ned Lebow, who has studied colonial attitudes in his book *White Britain and Black Ireland* (ISH 1976), points out that in almost all colonial situations the coloniser has a stereotyped image of the 'native' and that these stereotypes are remarkably similar.

Whether Irish or Indonesian, Burmese, Nigerian or black American, 'with almost monotonous regularity colonial natives have been described as indolent and complacent, cowardly but brazenly rash, violent, uncivilised and incapable of hard work. On the more complimentary side, they have been characterised as hospitable, good-natured, possessing a natural talent for song and dance and frequently as curious but incapable of a prolonged span of attention. In short, the image of simple creatures in need of paternal domination emerged very clearly.'

Following Albert Memmi and Sartre, Lebow argues that this image differentiates the coloniser from the colonised, and thus justifies different standards of treatment. In earlier days, the differentiation was even more drastic, with the subject peoples being seen as animals or as races destined to be slaves: images which allowed the Spanish conquistadors, the Pilgrim Fathers and others to treat American Indians with unbelievable cruelty while retaining a clear conscience. There was a contradiction between believing that your nation was the upholder of freedom and justice and the ruthless methods that were necessary to subdue the colonies. The way out of this moral dilemma was to conceive of the subject peoples as inferior to your own and as benefitting from colonisation.

IRRESPONSIBLE

The present establishment view that the Irish are — with a few notable exceptions, such as Conor Cruise O'Brien — incompetent and irresponsible and would, left to themselves, turn Ireland into a slaughterhouse is, then, part of a long tradition. This view is at the heart of the anti-Irish jokes, which have been fuelled by a number of factors: the continuing colonial role of Britain in Ireland and the ideology of British superiority that accompanies and justifies this, the systematic mystification of the war by the Government and the press, and the frustration at the continuing and apparently insoluble 'troubles'.

In turn the propagation of Irish jokes represents a propaganda 'plus' for the Government, reinforcing and making socially acceptable chauvinist attitudes towards Irish people and their political objectives, and thus easing the Government's task of justifying the occupation of the North.

Irish people in Kidderminster recently made a start on a counter-offensive when students put out a rag magazine saturated with anti-Irish jokes. Local Irish organisations arranged to meet them and explained their objections: the students apologised and gave them £10 for charity. But given the pervasiveness of anti-Irish jokes and the media's 'seal of approval' for them, the Kidderminster action is like using one brick to dam a river. A lot remains to be done.

Gutted

WHAT A fool David Widgery is to use Glasgow as a yardstick for the Socialist Workers Party. Glasgow might well have 30 members with five years' membership, but what about other major industrial cities like Birmingham, Liverpool and Coventry? During the last two years, these three major cities have been gutted of membership of the SWP.

I think comrade Widgery would do better to have a look at the latest SWP bulletin in which 'triumphalism' and the 'we are the greatest' type of sectarianism was condemned by the Central Committee of the SWP. Chest-beating is for fools and little boys.

And I am sure David Widgery will not do this after he has read the SWP bulletin.

TOMMY HEALEY (Liverpool)

Conference on politics of education

THE SOCIALIST Teachers' Alliance is organising an open conference on *The Politics of Education* in London on the weekend of 29th-30th April. This is an important move at a time when there is a danger of teachers becoming demoralised by the profound changes in education that have followed on from Jim Callaghan's so-called 'Great Debate'.

We hope that, by trying to develop a serious understanding of the role of the education system in British capitalism, the conference will help teachers to appreciate what they can hope to achieve. So it should make possible more confident, aggressive interventions from the Left in current debates about education. It could even, hopefully, redefine their terms of reference.

In order to understand the ideological context of the Labour government's present educational policies, one major theme of the conference will be the relationship between social democracy and state education. Different aspects of this will be examined in papers by Dan Finn, Neil Grant, Geoff Esland and Raymond Williams.

The other main topic will be a discussion relating Labour's 'industrial strategy' and the cuts in state expenditure to changes in the content and control of education. Again, discussion will be initiated by specially written papers — by Simon Frith, John Holloway, Sol Picciotto, Ian Hextall, and Michael Young.

In order to ensure that there is real debate, all these papers will be distributed before the conference. Groups or individuals will be able to read them in advance. There will be no long set speeches from the platform, no 'star' turns.

However, it is important that 'theorists' (many of them members of

the Conference of Socialist Economists) are given the chance to address teachers in a political, and not just an academic context. The practical implications of the ideas that are raised in these debates will be considered in workshop sessions focusing on more detailed topics. These sessions could also define areas for future debate, and suggest campaigns that the STA could usefully undertake.

Another encouraging feature of the conference is the way that it is drawing together socialist tendencies in education who have too often worked in isolation from each other, and thus weakened the left's position. Union militants have concentrated on matters of pay and conditions, while questions about what should be taught and how it should be taught have been left to 'progressive' teachers. This conference will help to reveal the artificiality (and danger) of such distinctions. It has already been sponsored by *Radical Education and Teaching London Kids*.

Tickets for the conference (including the distribution of papers) will cost £2 (or £1 for students/unemployed). For information and booking details, write to STA Education Group, 25 Highgate West Hill, London, N6.

JAMES DONALD (London)

Iford - a different view

I MUST protest against your lack of balanced judgement on the Iford events.

The ANL say it was a victory over the National Front, but a qualified victory because of the damage McNeen's indiscriminate ban might cause. The IMG and *Socialist Challenge*, however, found nothing positive at all to say about the events, and clearly regard them as a defeat, to which the ANL contributed. Brian Grogan even says that the fascists had 'the fullest freedom' (!) While the left had the 'biggest repressive force for many a year' concentrated on them.

To say as you do, that the ban was aimed 'essentially' at its obscures political judgement. Everybody knows that it was the NF who wanted to march in Iford. Far from having the 'fullest freedom', they were stopped from doing so. In stopping the NF, the police, as even you admit, were acting under the pressure, not of some movement to ban all demos, but of the anti-fascists — those who fought at Lewisham and Ladywood, those, including MPs, demanding a ban on racist marches, and the 10,000 people who threatened to turn up if the NF were allowed to go ahead.

But the police are not yet ready to concede us that point. So instead of banning racist marches, as the spirit if not the letter of the law itself requires them to do, they ban all marches, thereby pretending to be 'neutral'. By wildly lashing out against marches of every description for the next two months, they aim to damage the labour movement. Yet



does this ban reveal their strength or their weakness? Everybody knows there is normally no reason to expect marches, other than racist ones, to cause violence. Paradoxically, therefore, in the long run, McNeen has discredited the weapon of the indiscriminate ban. The pressure for a ban on racist marches will increase in the future. At the same time, it will get harder for anyone to defend an NF march anywhere from now on.

Your contributors see none of this. They get very worked up about the military hardware in Iford, the public display of new toys and gadgets. But the show of military strength conceals the deeper political dilemmas and contradictions that the police are now in over the NF.

Of course, even a ban on racist marches, under the Race Relations Act or whatever, doesn't mean they would be stopped. The mass action of the labour movement is the only guarantee we have. This point is well made against the CP and the reformists. But we shouldn't create some absurd principle that we are opposed to turning legal means and arguments to our own advantage. You however, seem on the verge of doing just that.

Indicating the next steps, Brian Grogan says: 'A campaign against the ban, linked with the fight to mobilise the labour movement to impose 'No Platform', does not give the fascists free reign(?). To join in the call for a ban does.' In other words, any sort of ban compromises the movement. And he then goes on to trace the alleged failures of the ANL on the picket line to the fact they have so far refused to oppose all bans.

Because of the ANL attitude, we are told, they were not 'prepared for the way the police reneged on their deal with the ANL to allow a mass picket. It is true that we were overwhelmingly outnumbered by the police. But with the eyes of the whole movement on Iford, the League should have asserted its right to hold the mass picket — putting the blame for any violence that ensued on the police. If the police had moved in, we

would have been able to mobilise the whole labour movement in our defence (?) and shown what it means to rely on the State to do our job.' (my emphasis)

In other words, by a heroic stand, our criticism of the ANL — that to demand any sort of ban whatever is to create illusions about the state — would have been made for us. The hospitalisation of the pickets will resolve all further argument.

But the police harassment of the picket was not the inevitable result of the alleged folly of those demanding bans of one sort or another. Of course the police are capable of acting in bad faith, but in Iford, as you know full well, the police half-decided to disperse the pickets when the East London People's Front appeared to call on us to break through the police cordon and lined up ANL stewards for that purpose.

If violence had occurred, what point would have been made? Not that the ANL was wrong to call for 'a' ban. Something much more important: that the form of McNeen's ban was justified after all. I can hear his precise words on News At Ten: 'We have to have this two-month ban because as you saw this afternoon, even when the NF don't march, the left still causes trouble with the police.' In other words, a brawl on the picket line, far from pointing the way forward, would have given McNeen his only real justification for the indiscriminate ban against which we are now fighting.

No, we had every interest on Saturday in having absolutely peaceful activities within the terms of McNeen's instructions, avoiding the ELPP's mindless militarism, doing a mass canvass of Iford, and in laying the foundations for a fight against the form of the present ban.

DAVE BAILEY (London)

Examine yourselves

AS A very recent and non-aligned reader of SC, I have been favourably impressed by the level and vigour of your political position and its expression, especially in contrast to other socialist papers.

I was therefore saddened to see your snide and naive comments on the reaction of a communist headmistress, Ms Fisher, to girls disturbing a mock examination. First, the reader is told that the girls 'were amused by the ludicrousness of the whole situation', thus implying an explicit, or implicit, political awareness on their part that I doubt they had.

As a teacher myself I think it was more probable (and I am not being derogatory) that they had not done the revision necessary, or didn't particularly care about being entered in the external exam.

More importantly, Ms Fisher is criticised, in a rather supercilious way, for making all of the examinees re-sit the exam. What was she supposed to do? As a paper that normally attempts to be objectively and constructively critical, the absence of such a criticism implies that the girls should have been

allowed to talk, and presumably also allowed to swap answers. Logically, this means that this is to be the accepted practice in external examinations as well.

Such an action would mean that all of the candidates would be automatically disqualified. Of course, if this happened nationally, examinations would have to be severely questioned as an educational and social practice, but to attempt to do this without altering the institutional structure of education would be futile and self-defeating. It would also leave many casualties in the process.

Obviously, examinations, the competitive ethos they promote and maintain must be questioned and criticised. But this should be done from a political position that offers valid and viable alternatives.

I, and I'm sure many other socialist teachers, have had to take the same kind of action as Ms Fisher. Does this imply we aren't socialists or that our politics are discredited and devalued? The logic of this approach is to categorise every person who works for a capitalist institution (and there are a few others around) can be accused of helping to maintain capitalism or its ideology.

The inclusion of Rhodes Boyson and St. John Stevas to snipe at Ms Fisher was cheap and intellectually dishonest. It should be deplored. The report constituted an apolitical and sectarian attack on the Communist Party and smacks of the left-functionalism and political dogma that has made me recoil from other left papers. Such reports can only undermine the intellectual and political integrity that the paper as a whole aspires to achieve.

BRIAN CONNOLLY (N.10)

Point taken. We have received numerous complaints from socialist teachers on the same report — ED.

Touché!

The 23 February issue of SC has an article on the French elections with a headline in French. Some time back I sent in an article on a subject not remotely connected with France which also acquired a French headline.

Most people in England don't understand French, even when it's a line from a well-known French song, so why use it in articles? Our sister paper *Socialist Worker* would not make such a mistake — in matters of style and presentation we should learn from them.

SC is playing a very important role on the left at the moment, and it is a lively and entertaining paper, but sometimes it shows an unfortunate tendency towards intellectual snobbery.

We live in a class society in which few people get the chance to do A-levels or go to university. We are out to win workers to our positions, but pretentious headlines and use of academic jargon ('conjuncture', 'ongoing situation', etc) quite rightly put them off, and even encourage elitist posturing in our own ranks. Surely clarity must be our first aim?

GREGOR BENTON (Leeds)

Touché! — Ed

Socialist Challenge EVENTS

NORTH WEST

BURY Socialist Challenge group meets every Wednesday, 8pm at the Whitehall pub, Bury New Road, Whitehall (near Whitefield bus and train station).

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

GREATER MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge School students who support the paper and would like to get involved in anti-racist activity please contact Chris 275 3947 (weekday), or Steve 225 4287 (evening), or write to Manchester SC Centre, c/o 14 Pockley.

DURHAM Socialist Challenge supporters group meets Thursday, 18 March, Big Jug Pub, Claypath, Durham City, 7.30pm. Further details from J. Fox, 41 The Avenue, Durham.

PRESTON Socialist Challenge supporters can be contacted by ringing Preston 546176.

SOUTH MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge group meets every other Thursday at the Albert pub, off Wilmslow Rd. Help sell Socialist Challenge between 11.30am and 1pm at Moss Side shopping centre or Longsight Market, Dickson Rd. Further information from 061-235 2352.

LIVERPOOL Socialist challenge group meets fortnightly on Wednesdays at the Dolphin, Canning Place.

DARLINGTON Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Northern Rock on High Row 11am-12pm.

MIDDLESBOROUGH Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Boots at Cleveland Centre, 11am-12pm. Socialist Challenge is also available from many newsagents in Linthorpe Street.

WALES

SWANSEA Socialist Challenge group meets every other Wednesday at 7.30pm in St Helens Inn, Vincent St, Swansea. A 5000-leaflet welcome. Next meeting 22 March.

YORKSHIRE

HULL Socialist Challenge discussion group meeting on 'The Army and the Insect Movement', Wed, 22 March 8pm, Waltham Club, Norfolk Street.

HUDDESFIELD Socialist Challenge group meets next at 8pm 23 March and 10th night thereafter at the Friendly and Trade Club, Northumberland St (opp station).

SCOTLAND

For information on Socialist Challenge contact Scottish Socialist Workers' Challenge bookshop, 64 Queen Street, Glasgow. (Tel: 041-221 7451). Open weekdays 10-4, late closing Thursdays at 6pm. Wide range of Fourth International publications.

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

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge meetings every second Wednesday. Contact George Keravan, 12 Merchiston Grove, Edinburgh, Tel: 031-346 0465.

ABERDEEN Information about Socialist Challenge activities, ring 0183 on 43696 (after 6pm).

SOUTH EAST

COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge supporters sell the paper every Saturday outside cafes from 10.45am-1pm. Further information of local activities from Mike, 11 Angelsea Rd, N.venton.

COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge group to be set up in town. If you are interested, come along to a meeting at the Labour Party Hall, North Chapel Street, 14 March, 7.30pm.

BRIGHTON Socialist Challenge Forum, Tuesday, 14 March, 8pm, Fascism Resources Centre, North Street, 8pm.

SOUTH WEST

SOUTHAMPTON Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday from 10am-12pm outside Jicow Bar Post Office, Burgess.

BRISTOL Socialist Challenge group meets next on 21 March, 7.30pm. The Swan, Stokes Croft, Bristol.

MIDLANDS

For details of activities of local supporters contact the Socialist Challenge Centre, 765 Sighthill High Street, Birmingham, 021-653 9208.

LEICESTER Socialist Challenge supporters meet fortnightly at the Highlands Community Centre. For details ring 0533 25934.

WOLVERHAMPTON Socialist Challenge meets Tuesday 14 March, The French elections and Eurocommunism, with Elizabeth Knobeman, from the French Ligue Communiste Revolutionary. The Vine, Stafford St 7.30pm.

LONDON

NEWHAM Socialist Challenge Forum, Wednesday, 15 March, The Left and the elections. North-East London Polytechnic, Livingstone House, Livingstone Road, Stratford, E15. Room 108, 7.30pm.

CAMDEN Socialist Challenge supporters group meets Wednesday, 15 March, 7.30pm at 30 Camden Road, NW1 (Camden Town City Hall). Further information contact Socialist Challenge offices. The meeting will continue the discussion on Socialist Unity and prospects for revolutionary unity.

HARINGEY Socialist Challenge group meets next Monday 20 March, West Green Community Centre, Sandle Road, off West Green Road, Turpin Lane tube.

HAMMERSMITH Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly — details from PO Box 50, London N.1.

ISLINGTON Socialist Challenge readers group discussion on 'What is Socialist Feminism?' led by participants in recent Manchester conference, Wed 15 March, 7.30pm at the Hemmingsford Arms, corner of Old Ford Rd and Hemmingsford Rd, N1.

GREENWICH/LEWISHAM Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly. For details ring Ray 01-659 1167.

HARROW Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. Anyone interested please contact PO Box 50, London N.2P.

SOUTH WEST LONDON Socialist Challenge supporters meet fortnightly in the WCCP Neighbourhood Centre, 172 Lavender Hill, SW11. Next meeting, Wednesday, 22 March, 8pm.

BRENT Socialist Challenge group. For details of meetings write c/o PO Box 50, London N.1.

Jonah who will be 25 in the year 2000

A history lesson

The starting point of *Jonah who will be 25 in the year 2000*, the latest film to be scripted by John Berger and Alain Tanner, is the events of May '68 in France. In various ways, the eight characters have each been marked by that political upheaval.

This text of the history lesson in the film has been translated and elaborated by JOHN BERGER especially for Socialist Challenge. It corresponds generally, but not word for word, to the text finally used in the film.

A CLASS ROOM in a secondary school. Pupils about 16 or 17 years old. The headmaster introduces Marco, the new history teacher, to the class.

The Headmaster: Here is your new history master, Monsieur Marco Perly, who from now onwards will take the place of Monsieur Genthod. Please make him welcome.

The headmaster goes out. Marco is carrying a suitcase which he puts on his desk and opens. From inside it, he takes out a long blood-sausage, a chopping board, a butcher's knife and a metronome. Each object he holds up to the astonished and amused class.

Marco: You should know that my father is a butcher and my mother likes singing operettas.

Laughs. Marco places the boudin [the blood sausage] on the chopping board, starts the metronome, and brandishes the knife.

Marco: Would somebody like to come up here and cut the boudin in time with the metronome?

A boy comes forward and starts to do exactly that. [The sausage is several metres long and coils like an intestine.] Laughs and screams from the class.

Marco: Fine, that'll do for the moment.

The boy stops cutting. Marco picks up several pieces of the boudin.

Marco: These are bits of history. What shall we call them? Do you want to call them hours or decades or centuries? It's all the same, and it never stops. Boudin should be eaten with onions and mashed potatoes. We are taught that time is like a boudin.

That's how Darwin saw it, except that he wanted to prove that, as the sausage continued, the meat changed! Marx thought that one day everybody would stop eating boudin. Einstein and Max Plank took the skin off the boudin so that it lost its regular shape.

Does anybody here know what the skin of a boudin is made from?

A girl: A pig's bladder.

Marco: Excellent.

Marco slows down the metronome. The boy once more cuts the sausage into pieces, but much more slowly, in time with the metronome.

Marco: OK. Let's stop the butchery now. And the laughs too, please. Let's look at the boudin which is still uncut. You can see that it folds and coils. And that is interesting. Are there such things as folds in time?

In rural agricultural societies people believed that time was cyclic, that it repeated itself like the seasons. Mid-winter's day every year consisted of the same moment. Of course, the

individual grew older but that was because he or she wore themselves out. His or her effort and the efforts of all other people were used to keep the wheel — the wheel of the seasons — turning.

Capitalism introduced the idea of time as a motorway, the motorway of progress. The essential idea of progress was that the conquerors, the victors, had not just won a battle but had been chosen by history as intrinsically superior beings.

And naturally this superiority was meant to outlast all cycles and seasons; the passing years became like the thread of a corkscrew; but the sharp thrusting point of the corkscrew was always the conqueror's. And the corkscrew opened bottle after bottle of what were considered inferior cultures.

The conquerors drank from the bottles until they were no longer thirsty and then they threw the bottles away, always making sure that in doing so, they broke them. A new form of violence was born and this was it. Arrows and swords had killed people before, but what killed now was the verdict of historical progress!

With this new form of violence created by the conquerors, the same conquerors discovered a new fear: a fear of the past avenging itself. If the past one day caught up with the conquerors it would show as little pity for them as they had shown?

In the nineteenth century this fear of the past was turned into a scientific law. Time became unilinear, a road without bends or turnings and infinitely long. Its endless length was a terrifying abstraction. The nineteenth century was haunted by it.

But abstractions have nothing to avenge. Which is why most nineteenth century thinkers chose to transform their fear of the past into a purely mathematical vertigo. The endless road had milestones, placed with absolute regularity. Millions of years divided into eras, millennia, centuries, days, working hours — all clocked in on their cards. All cut up

like the boudin.

Cut to street scene. Workers going to work. Return to class room.

Marco: At last today we can see that the motorway, the motorway of capitalism is bound to have an end. There are far more reasons for this than I can explain in this little bit of boudin which is our first lesson. But let's go back for a moment to the folds I pointed out to you.

Marco holds up the uncut purple boudin.

Marco: In an acorn time is already folded in such a way that the future form of an oak tree is already present in it. What you are, each of you different, was already partially there at the moment of my conception!

I beg your pardon! Your conception. I am not a determinist, but in your first cell there was a message which you are still reading today. There are things which make holes in time, and sometimes these holes align themselves, thanks to the folds.

Marco makes a drawing in the blackboard:



Marco: You could thread a skewer through the holes! You must remember my father is a butcher. Time folds to make the alignment of the holes possible. Why is nobody a prophet in his or her own country? Prophets find themselves between the holes, pierced but without a skewer!

Nobody listened to what Diderot had to say about sexual psychology until, several generations later, everybody said Freud was a monster to propose that there was such a thing as child sexuality. Some of you surely remember?

The holes that prophets make with their ideas are the same holes through which, later, historians peer to look back at the past. You can see the historians now peering back at the eighteenth century through the holes Jean-Jacques Rousseau made to glimpse a possible future!

Aha! You are looking at your watches. All right. It's time. We'll end up with a simple rhythm, shall we? Like the rhythm of the heartbeat.

Marco starts to beat with his hands on his desk like a drummer.

Marco: Between each beat there's time, isn't there? Time is the fact that you know that the second beat isn't the first. Time consists of this opposition, this distinction.

The pupils start to beat their desks in time with Marco. There are shouts and cries too.

Marco: Time is reduced by synthesis!!

The pace of the drumming becomes now faster and louder and Marco is forced to shout at the top of his voice.

Marco: Listen! Listen to the embryo's whistle, the human embryo's whistle right through the story of evolution! Darwin the old bastard!

The class is now completely out of control, the drumming frenetic. Marco shouts.

Marco: In a total synthesis time itself disappears!

The school bell rings to indicate the end of the lesson.

Jonah who will be 25 in the year 2000 has just opened in London at the Paris Pulman and Phoenix cinemas. It will be showing in Oxford in May.



JACQUES DENIS as Marco Perly, the history teacher.

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1. Hegel

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Special offer to Socialist Challenge readers. Both ordered together will be sent post free (£3.60).

HE NEVER COMPLAINED

by RALPH PEACOCK

Bill Crosby is dead and the papers declare
He was fifty-two years at the top of the
tree.
Fifty-two years of fame and command
And his country's media in the palm of his
hand
And he never complained.

He never complained to you or to me
About death or pain or misery
He never complained to 'Uncle Sam'
About Bangladesh or about Vietnam
He never complained by the Kennedy's fate
(And Allie and Watergate)
He just never complained.

Like Fanny and past and Dylan can sing
But none of the problems ever touch Bill
Through the struggles and torments of
Redskins and Blacks
He'd sing about Christmas and kept on

buying 40s

If this is a good just, I don't want to know
I'd rather have those who stand up and
said NO
Those who complained.

He lived with his family in comfort and
ease.

While Gilly's men slaughtered the Vietnamese
And never he put in verse or in song
The people who tried to avenge or this wrong
He never acknowledged John Hope or John Wayne
For supporting causes where no one would
gain.

No, he never complained.

And now that he's destined for heaven
forever
Who'll move over? 'Che? Ho? Martin Luther? —
Never!

They always complained.

After Ilford SOCIALIST UNITY MORE VITAL THAN EVER

IT IS A sign of the times that Labour Party leaders were not really too upset by their defeat at Ilford North last week. After all the Tory majority and the fascist vote could have been higher. It could have been, but the reasons for that are the combined impact of Labour's social and economic policies. BOB WEST reports.

Mertyn Rees has accused Thatcher of being a recruiting sergeant for the National Front. Peter Walker has said that it is Denis Healey who is really aiding the growth of fascism. Both are right in a way. But for socialists the

problem is how we can take our solutions to capitalism's crisis to the mass of working people.

The coming local elections in May offer a real opportunity to take our socialist alternative to the people. In a Labour stronghold such as Middles-

brough one begins to realise how the labour machine works. Petty intrigues and corruption are rife. Due to decades of neglect the voters are polarised between apathy and Labour.

EMBITTERED

Thus socialists in the Aylesome area have, through the Socialist Unity campaign, come into contact with embittered tenants, with old-age pensioners, with disaffected youth. They have countered fascist propaganda by explaining that there are other options. The vote gained by SU in Middlesbrough will be small, but the experience gained will benefit candidates elsewhere.

An effective and popular campaign in May will lay the basis for an intervention in the general elections. The letter we print on this page from Steve Jefferys of the SWP is an important and positive step.

We should try and implement it in the Lambeth by-election where discussions between SU and the SWP are already in progress. In some areas a joint backing by the SWP and SU for independent socialist candi-

dates with a strong local base will also become necessary.

It has often been argued that elections are a waste of time for revolutionary socialists. The experience we have accumulated over the last year disproves that argument. In Stechford, Ladywood, Southall and Spitalfields we have seen how an electoral intervention actually aids the development of political campaigns and struggles. Furthermore, the election of revolutionary left councillors or MPs would represent a tremendous step forward for the entire revolutionary movement. It would enable us to intervene systematically in national politics. A recent example is the way Bernadette Devlin (McAliskey) projected the Irish struggle throughout Britain when she was a member of the House of Commons.

It is true that the present electoral system makes the election of revolutionaries extremely unlikely. Harold Wilson's call to raise the figure for election deposits to defeat the NF is a pathetic way to defeat fascists. In any case it will not affect them too much, given the financial support they can obtain from sources inside and outside this country. The groups it will affect will be the socialist left. It would be ironic if shortage of finances rather than politics forced through a real and lasting unity.

If you would like to help the Socialist Unity candidates in the May local elections or you want more information, then write to: Socialist Unity, Box 15, Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N1.



'I know Callaghan's stolen your clothes, Maggie, but you're not having mine.'

A LETTER TO THE SWP

THE LAMBETH by-election will be taking place at a time when the racists are launching a new offensive. It also comes in a period when the trade union bureaucracy has been able to ensure the defeat of the Fire Brigades Union's strike, the introduction of productivity schemes in the mines and the acceptance of wage freeze across the trade union movement.

The traditional leaders and organisers of the workers' movement, like the left MPs and the Broad Left inside the unions, are either supporting the anti-working class policies of the Government, or have absolutely refused to organise any united action against these policies.

Socialist Unity is of the opinion that a united socialist candidate backed by the organisations of the left, and supported by independent

militants, could raise in a most effective way the need for building a socialist alternative.

Such a candidate and campaign would be able to put forward an alternative socialist programme as well as encouraging the development of local struggles on racism, against cuts and unemployment, and around women's rights. Furthermore we are convinced that a united campaign involving Socialist Unity and the SWP would draw in far wider forces than a separate campaign run by each individual organisation.

Socialist Unity therefore suggests to the SWP that we hold a meeting to discuss Lambeth Central with the aim of agreeing on a joint candidate.

BOB PENNINGTON, Socialist Unity National Organiser

A LETTER FROM THE SWP

I'm writing to clear up one point arising from your 'Time to Link Arms' statement in Socialist Challenge.

The SWP has already made it clear that where we are not standing our own candidates then we will be supporting the candidates of Socialist Unity and other parties standing to the left of Labour.

We also recognise that the recent negative experience of running candidates in the same constituencies in by-elections must not be repeated

at the General Election. The SWP will not be finalising our election plans for another couple of months, but as soon as we do begin to draw up a list of actual constituencies, then we most certainly do want to sit down with Socialist Unity and make sure that divisive clashes are avoided.

STEVE JEFFERYS
Elections Sub-Committee
Central Committee
Socialist Workers Party

OUR FUND DRIVE

A MUCH improved week for the fund drives. The Tatlin tower benefitted by a further £155.50 and the emergency appeal to the tune of £122.15.

Several weeks ago we made an appeal for stamps. A few readers responded. Today we can announce the proceeds of that one appeal as £27.05 which includes both stamps and philatelic items. This piece of enterprise has been organised by our supporters in Leicester. On their behalf we again appeal for both British commemora-

five and foreign stamps. Cut them out carefully and rush them to the stamp appeal.

Having seen the success of the stamp appeal, other local groups could take similar initiatives. There are numerous possibilities - cigarette

coupons, trading stamps, and old coins. So what about it?

Two large donations helped put this week's total above the average we need. One arrived anonymously for £50 to help us avoid having to self-censor Leyland documents. While the other for £49 came from supporters in South East London. A smaller amount, but equally welcome, came all

the way from Japan. In recent weeks donations have been sent from Finland, Canada, the United States and France. That's the sort of internationalism we appreciate the most.

This week our thanks for Tatlin tower donations:

Camden supporters	4.50
H. Asgarian	1.00
Southampton reader	2.00
I.C.	0.90
Yoko Takada, Japan	1.85
Anon.	50.00
Wandsworth reader	0.60
Leicester stamp sale	27.05
J. Masters	1.00
K. Harding	5.00
B. Connelly	4.00
L. Carville	2.00
Oxford bet	5.00
NUJ	1.00
Wandsworth readers	0.60
SE London supporters	49.00

MEANWHILE the emergency

appeal received a welcome boost. A Birmingham supporter dug deep into their pocket and contributed £100. That has taken us one step nearer to the printing press we so urgently require. Other donations brought the week's total to £122.15. We have now made just over one tenth of the £3000 total.

Our thanks to:

London IMG members	8.28
Anon [Birmingham]	100.00
Hull collection	2.87
C. Creighton	1.00
R. Owens	5.00
Adrian and Judith Mellor	5.00
R.H.	1.00
G. Elliot	1.00

SPECIAL

GLASGOW TEACHERS have found the Russian revolution

special a real bargain at 25p. Just the job for wall displays or explaining to school students this great moment in history. Going at half price, this is a real bargain, especially as it contains a previously unpublished text by Isaac Deutscher on the revolution.

So if you are a teacher or know somebody who is, then send for your bargain copies now. Are London schools more reactionary than Glasgow? You know how to answer that question.

Many of our readers will have seen the 1978 calendar Socialist Challenge produced. This is made up of 13 posters from May 68 in France. Out of the 3,000 printed less than 100 remain. As we enter March you can now buy one of these calendars for half price. Send 50p plus 29p postage today.



PENNIES from heaven. Well, more precisely, from a North London supporter who converted a 1/2 lb coffee jar into a vault for 1p and 2p pieces and donated us the lot.

Our accountants are still working out the total. Suffice for now to say that we have added the call for the immediate conversion of all coffee jars to our action programme. Unite with that!

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Domestic: 6 months, £5; 12 months, £10
Abroad: Airmail, £16.50. Surface, £10 per annum.

Name _____
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I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of _____

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'.
Complete and return to:
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