

The Red Mole

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Lynch's Catch 22

Of all the reasons dictating Lynch's decision to call an election in the South of Ireland, the most important is that contained in his first statement on the elections: "The incoming government in its appraisal of the British White Paper will need the unequivocal support of the people to deal firmly with the new situation as it develops." This is the key.

As is argued elsewhere in this paper, Whitelaw's Green Paper offered all kinds of everything to the Irish people. In the proposed White Paper, these promises must be delivered. But the Tories cannot deliver the Heinz 57 Varieties needed to fool all of the people all of the time. Either Orange or Green must be double-crossed.

Lynch declared an election because he believes that the British will renege on their promises to him: he has bought a pig in a poke, and now he realises that it is going to be a rat. But before the people of the South of Ireland twig this, he goes to them asking for a mandate in advance of the White Paper, because he believes that he will not get a mandate afterwards. He realises that the chances are that the White Paper will contain little of significance for the Northern minority.

That he is forced to carry out this manoeuvre is a sign of his weakness: that he is able to carry it out is a sign of the political weakness of his Republican opponents, whose failure to prepare their supporters for an on-going political battle is emphasised by the confusion amongst the Provisionals on the question of participation in the election.

The differing responses of Provisionals and Officials to the Southern election is a reversal of their respective roles in the North. The Officials show drive, push and a desire to get at them, while the Provisionals hesitate, afraid to commit themselves for fear of a humiliating defeat.

But the recipe for a humiliating defeat is exactly this tailist attitude. By using the election to expose Lynch to advanced sections of the population they can show that there is an alternative. If the people are not offered such an alternative, they can become cynical and frustrated.

A cynical and frustrated people would be easy meat with which imperialism and Green Tories could play.

FUND DRIVE: THE LAST PUSH?

The £10,000 Fund Drive for a weekly paper now stands at £8,200.

This means that we have gone over 80% mark. But the crucial question for the production of the weekly will be decided in the struggle to get the last remaining sum.

On page 8, we publish a letter from Phil McCullough, a political internee in Long Kesh Concentration Camp. With his understandably "limited financial resources" he donates £1.

A short while ago, a serving soldier in the British Army, who supports our position of solidarity with the IRA, donated £10.

Many readers of this paper, some supporters of the IMG, have heretofore seen this appeal as being directed beyond them to someone else. The attitude has been: "Let X who is not active give the money. I don't have to do that."

Wrong, comrade, wrong.

If supporters of the IMG cannot make comparable sacrifices to those made by our comrades in Long Kesh, and in the enemy army, then a question mark will hang over our ability to make the transformation to a weekly.

All monies must reach us by Wednesday 21st February. A Fund Drive form will be found elsewhere in the paper.

As Heath throws down the gauntlet and gas-workers go into struggle

ORGANISE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE

The Tory government has thrown out a challenge to the working-class. It must be met.

The government is throwing everything it can lay its hands on into the fight against the gasmen. After months of slobbering about the low-paid and the 'weaker' sections of society, it launches a murderous campaign against one of the lowest paid groups of workers with one of the lowest records of militant struggle.

On Monday the 12th, the *Daily Mail* called the tune for a well-orchestrated press hysteria by shrieking: "THIS STRIKE COULD KILL". The 'charity' organisations run by the wives of men making a packet out of the Tory government were also quick off the mark: 'Help the Aged' urged gas-men to "search their hearts" and Age Concern suggested that half a million might be killed off by the gas-strike! This means that half a million people in this country are so poverty-stricken that they will freeze to death. Who is responsible for that scandal? And the story does not end there: millions of people are finding themselves priced out of the essentials — not just of an electric heater but a decent roof to put it under. Are the gas-workers responsible for that?

This is exactly what the gas-workers are fighting against and what the capitalist class which the Tory government leads has created. Soon we will hear about the explosions and deaths.

Why haven't we heard about them before?

They are an outrage and they have been going on all the time. They occur because every government this country has had puts the profits of the capitalists before the safety and living-standards of working-people.

INFLATION

The Tory government's pay-laws are the chief weapon in the hands of the capitalist class for maintaining this state of affairs. These pay-laws have done nothing to stop price rises. It is the gas-workers alone who are starting the struggle against inflation. And the government have chosen the gas-workers for a fight because they hope they can whip up a frenzy of opposition from the middle-classes and confused workers who believe that the gas-strike is responsible for the problems of the mass of the people.

Heath's plan is to pick off one section of workers after another. In his broadcast as we go to press he has openly called the bluff of the Trade Union bureaucrats, challenging them to a fight over the freeze.

In fact of course, it has been the consistent sabotage by Vic Feather and the General Council which has enabled the government to use the tactic of taking on the working-class section by section: the TUC has made no attempt to build up a united front movement and prepare for a General Strike to throw out



Above: Unity is Strength. Workers rally in defence of Briants' 'work-in'. (Story Page 3).

the government.

The task of preparing such action must be taken by other forces — the millions of workers who are not frightened to take on the government.

In the face of Heath's attempt to isolate the gas-workers in a show of strength, every socialist and trade union militant must take up the struggle of the gas-workers and prepare the way for a General Strike.

What the present situation demands is not simply the wave of solidarity, as in last year's miners' strike, and not simply the preparation of all groups of workers for wage-struggles that break the freeze. What is required is for militants to place all that work within a single perspective — the organisation of a General Strike to bring down the Government.

Every militant must start today to fight for this perspective in every work-place and every mass organisation. The need for such action must be shown to all sections of society which suffer at the hands of the present government and capitalist system.

But more than this is required: much more is needed than the traditional preparation for strike action. The government understands this fact very well and a "secret" cabinet committee has been preparing for the confrontation, making special plans to organise police squads, press publicity, 'essential supplies' etc. The working-class must follow suit.

Militants must work for the creation of the broadest possible organisations, to embrace all sections of working-people — not just trade unionists. The widest possible plans must

be drawn up to spread information and ideas throughout the working-class. Arrangements must be made to organise the spreading of pickets on a scale which dwarfs the mass pickets of the miners' strike and outdistances the flying pickets of the building workers in terms of mobility.

INITIATIVE

In addition, action against rising prices such as was organised in Reading last week must be taken up in the preparations for a general strike. In such a struggle the working-class must take over responsibility for the distribution of essential supplies and for stamping out profiteering. Workers must also be prepared to handle the police strike-breaking squads and the threat of arrests — the lessons of Saltley and Longannet must be applied.

The TUC is to be recalled in March — we must support this initiative and prepare for it. But we must not leave the preparation of the general strike to the gathering of bureaucrats in Croydon.

The Communist Party's initiative in calling the Liaison Committee Conference on April 7th must also be supported, but the work of the organisation must be started today. In London and other parts of the country local conferences involving many different sections of workers are already under way.

These conferences must be spread to every locality and out of them must come local action committees and demonstrations to spread support for the gas-workers and carry forward the movement for a General Strike.

EDUCATION ON THE CHEAP

The turn of the year saw the publication of a whole series of statements on education from different elements of the bourgeoisie. Among these were Thatcher's White Paper 'Education: a Framework for Expansion', the White Paper dealing with Public Expenditure, the report of the Commons Education Sub-Committee and the University Grants Commission's expenditure allocations for the next five years. What these statements ratify is an about face in higher education.

Gone are the 'Green and Pleasant Land' vistas of Robbins a decade previously. Then "International Competition", "the Technological challenge" was intertwined with a picture of education for "the Whole Man". Today those same forces demand a deterioration in all provisions and a ruthless cut-back on unit costs. For Robbins, 'student demand' meant new experiments in expanded University education; for Thatcher 'student demand' means two-year courses crammed into an overcrowded Polytechnic. In Robbins' time each sector of education was dealt with separately; now one part (nursery education) is played off against another.

SLEIGHT OF HAND

Thatcher's White Paper outlines plans for the whole of education but in fact has very little to say about secondary schools; the main proposals are concerned with nursery education which will undergo an expansion, and higher education whose growth rate will decrease in the university and teacher training sectors. The growth rate for the whole of education will also decrease from about 5 per cent per year for the last ten years to about 3 per cent between now and 1976, possibly stopping altogether after that. The White Paper on Expenditure recommends a very large increase in government spending but most of this will be eaten up by investment grants to industry.

Most of the nursery expansion will therefore be paid for by the slowing down of higher education growth. It is claimed that provision will be made for "all those children of three and four whose parents wish them to benefit from it". However the White Paper also adds the proviso that "no allowance has been made to cover higher capital costs and current costs of nursery schools. Any significant expansion of nursery schools would slow down the rate at which the government's objectives will be reached". In other words these trumpeting about nursery expansion are fairly hollow. They are being used mainly as a cover for the slowing down of overall growth in education expenditure, in particular expenditure on higher education.

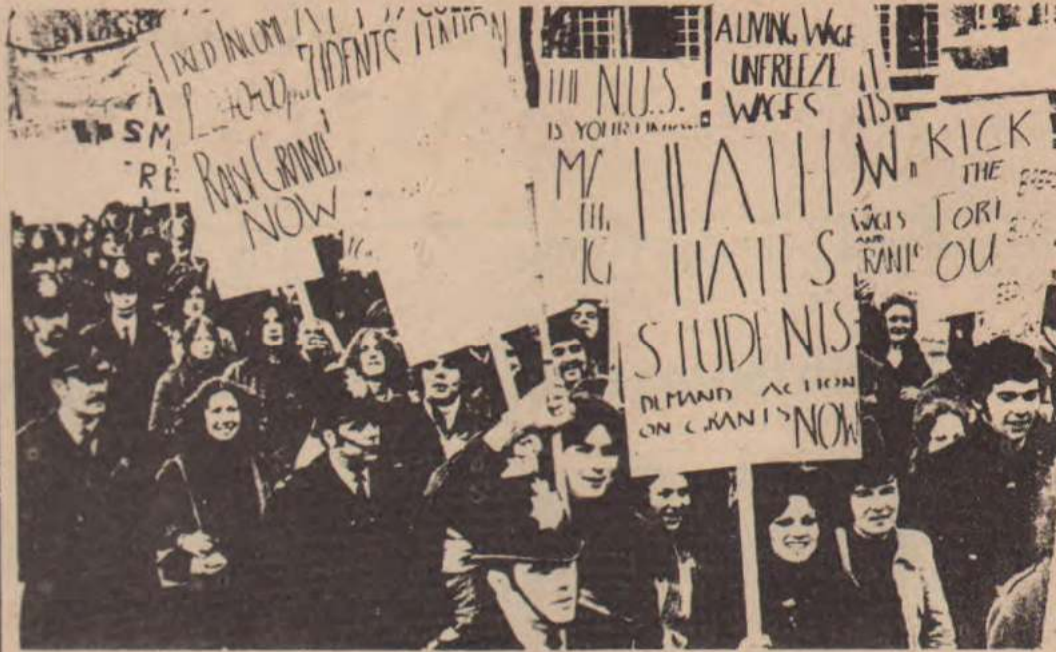
ROBBINS

Less than 10 years ago, in 1964, the Robbins report heralded a massive expansion in higher education, mainly in the university sector.

What had happened was that the developments of capitalism, particularly in the latter half of the fifties and in the early sixties, had amounted to a 'third industrial revolution' based upon a qualitatively higher technology. A much better, and differently skilled labour force was required for the more dynamic sectors. This had an added bonus with the sudden realisation that there were many school leavers clamouring to fill this apparently unlimited potential of highly qualified jobs. All this was backed up by the view that investment in educational training ('human capital') caused economic growth.

THE NEED TO RATIONALISE

No sooner had this whole process got under way however than problems began to emerge. Having to cater for an unplanned and anarchic system, nothing could be firmly predicted. The fate of British capitalism during the course



Above: Students march on the Education Department

of the sixties has shown that the amount of such highly skilled labour was grossly over-estimated. Graduated unemployment has started to get quite serious in the last few years, hitting the sciences as well as the arts. Some firms have also started to show dissatisfaction with university graduates, saying that they are not sufficiently adaptable to the "profit motive". The CBI recently published a report claiming that the amount of graduates needed by industry is going down. In the 60's, when the bourgeoisie were much more convinced than they are today about the economic necessity to expand higher education, the forces pushing for pruning and rationalisation were not so strong. Now, however, with the uncertainty about the economic role of higher education and the sharpening crisis of social expenditure, these forces have been more prominent.

THE PROPOSALS

The White Paper heralds the end of the Robbins era. The main restructuring and reorientation to the needs of industry took place in the 60's; the coming years are to be a time of rationalisation through reorganisation of costs. Alongside this of course there is still some chopping and changing since higher education does not provide a good enough "fit" between a graduate's skills and the needs of industry. Also, with Britain's entry into the Common Market, the bourgeoisie desperately needs higher competitiveness in industry and greater economic growth; it hopes that many skilled graduates will be needed.

Within the overall rationalisations, therefore, there is to be a general increase in state supervision not only of costs but also of courses so that this "fit" can be achieved more flexibly; this explains the proposal of the Commons Education Sub-Committee for a manpower planning council. It also explains the fact that expansion is to be led by the polytechnics since the universities with their "academic tradition" would not be sufficiently flexible and would not allow state supervision of costs and courses to be carried out so easily. For example in the polys the course module system has already been introduced; this enables a range of diverse courses to be presented to students from which they choose a certain mixture. With this system it is far easier to modify the content of courses to correspond more closely to industry's needs; the White Paper recommends that this system be extended.

Meanwhile the universities will not only suffer a slowing down in growth of student numbers but the amount spent per student ('the unit costs') will also decrease. This process is already taking place with the policy of making catering facilities and residence buildings self financing, provoking mass support for the present wave of rent strikes and catering boycotts. The U.G.C. five yearly allocation of funds projects that the sciences will be hit especially badly and that the proportion of postgraduates in the total student population will also go down. Expenditure for the polys is not spelt out in the White Paper, which is very strange given the fact that they are to lead the expansion. It seems, however, that the difference between conditions in the polys and universities could tend to narrow with the erosion of the privileged status enjoyed by the universities (although the difference in function would remain). NUS outbursts about "pushing universities out on an

elitist limb" (because of the lower intake) and "the failure to tackle the inequity of the binary system" are therefore very misleading.

One way in which the polys could save costs is if they carry the bulk of the proposed courses for the two year Diploma of Higher Education. According to the White Paper this "could enable many students to achieve in two years, instead of three or more, as much higher education as they aspire to...". Again the exact implementation of the Dip HE is not spelt out and there seems to be a great deal of uncertainty alongside the euphoria in educational circles about the proposed new degree. If there are enough applicants, it would certainly be a suitable means of providing education on the cheap.

In the area of teacher training there is to be a large cutback in student numbers which according to many (including the NUT) will mean even more serious classroom shortages. Also teacher training colleges are to merge with polys, specialise in retraining qualified teachers, merge with universities or diversify their courses (mainly in the arts) to become techs or polys in their own right. Similarly, small technical colleges will be required to merge eventually with larger polys or nearby colleges. Thus another strand of the simultaneous cost cutting and streamlining of higher education is that the divisions between sectors within the lower half of the binary system are to be eroded.

STUDENT CONCERN

What all this means is that major restructuring in higher education is more or less over and that we are now in a period of rationalisation: that is, a pruning of costs and an overall slow down in growth. The pattern of student struggle and concern bears witness to this important change. In the late sixties, the fact of the re-orientation of higher education provoked ideological ferment about its purpose and function. Old established views about the relation of education to society and the relation of individual students were questioned and thrown to the wind. This crisis of social relations produced a deep going radicalisation which for many culminated in an identity with the colonial revolution.

Today, although a large section of students identify with these struggles, questions of conditions in the colleges are coming much more to the fore. At the last NUS conference for instance all the major issues debated were 'student' issues. The old fight of socialist students to identify politics with issues external to the colleges has to be re-evaluated in this light. A political response to this new challenge has to be hammered out.

STRENGTHENING OF REFORMISM

Throughout this whole period, the Communist Party has been working up an answer to these problems. Its two features, a fight for 'comprehensivisation' outside the college and a policy of 'representation' inside the colleges now structures the approach of most of the student union leadership in the colleges and has been adopted in its essentials by the NUS. This approach locates the problem correctly at the level of the organisation of higher education but proposes a struggle to be fought (with the labour movement) in and around Parliament. In the meantime, it recommends struggle in the colleges only within the existing structure, through fighting for representation

on governing bodies, making 'responsible' critiques of the present policy, bringing various sorts of pressure to bear, and generally negotiating the best possible deal.

Insofar as this 'comprehensivisation' includes a demand for free access of the working class into higher education and opposition to unequal expenditure in the various sectors, it is perfectly correct. Socialists should be absolutely in favour of any change which increases the cultural and technical level of the working class. But insofar as it is a worship of forms rather than analysis of content, it is totally disastrous. It is one thing to note that the percentage of the working class entering higher education is not rising very rapidly, it is quite another thing to make this a main critique of the Thatcher proposals as does the NUS. As we have explained, the main question is that of the rationalisations which are promoted.

It is only by totally failing to recognise this that they can then go on to welcome the report of the Commons Education Sub-Committee. This recommends a single body to administer both halves of the binary system. The NUS sees this as a move towards comprehensivisation rather than a proposal for overseeing the pruning of costs.

THE ALTERNATIVE COURSE

However, the key questions with which students in the colleges should be (and indeed are) concerned about are the effects of the rationalisation as they arise in the colleges themselves. This means raising in the colleges themselves the question of the actual organisation of higher education. Of course students cannot provide a solution to this question — we can't have socialism in the colleges alone. However, they can prevent the bourgeoisie from solving their problems at the expense of students. They can struggle to veto the effects of the rationalisations. Such an approach means breaking out of the framework common to all the left that the 'real' struggle, the 'political' struggle (even on student issues) takes place outside the college; the struggle inside the colleges can only go ahead within the existing framework — the real content of student trade unionism. In opposition to this we must assert that the key political question — the way the ruling class imposes its solution to society's problems on other social groups, in this case students and workers — has to be taken up as and when it occurs. This is the only realistic solution to the problems which the mass of students face and the only basis from which we can begin to form a political alliance — an anti-capitalist alliance — with the working class. Only on such a basis can the question of a total reorganisation of education be posed.

James Clynes/Noel Briggs

YORKSHIRE INDOCHINA SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

On Saturday March 10th, the ISC is holding a conference in Leeds, sponsored by more than 70 organisations and individuals in the region, including Joan Maynard, Vice-President of the Agricultural Workers' Union, the York and District Trades Council, Hoe-Crabbtrees Shop Stewards Committee, Ken Wallace of the AEUW and Leeds Clann na h'Eireann. The morning session will include speeches by a representative of the National United Front of Cambodia, Tariq Ali and Malcolm Caldwell.

This conference has been called in the knowledge that in spite of the cease-fire agreement the war in Indo-China is far from over. In this situation the need for developing the solidarity movement is greater than ever. Those wishing to attend the conference or make a donation to its costs should write to: 1a, Park Holme, Harehills Ave., LEEDS 8.

Fill in this form and send to: FUND DRIVE, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. (Cheques should be made out to The Red Mole).

I am enclosing £.....p..... for the Fund Drive.

NAME

ADDRESS

I know the following who may also wish to contribute:

NAME

ADDRESS

The events in Ireland North and South over the past two weeks are the surface reflection of a deepening crisis of Whitelawism.

Plebeian Protestant rioting in Belfast, the New Lodge massacre, the sectarian murders of Catholics, the desecration of Catholic Churches, the decision of Lynch to go for an election in the South, and the withdrawal of General Tuzo, British GOC in Ireland, are all interconnected. Previously, Whitelaw's central political aim was to destroy the IRA, while avoiding two other dangers: the rise of an anti-imperialist movement against British interests in the South of Ireland, and the growth of an "anti-war" or solidarity movement amongst the vanguard of the British labour and student movement, which even numbered in thousands could disrupt the British war-strategy in Ireland.

To achieve this aim without these dangers, it was necessary to isolate the IRA from the Catholic community, and then to "destroy its military capability".

REFORMS

To isolate the IRA from the Catholic workers in the Northern ghettos it was necessary to promise such reforms as would threaten the Protestant Ascendancy. While the old Stormont remained, there was no possibility of any sizeable section of the Catholic community taking these promises seriously. Stormont had to go.

But the British hoped that the suspension of Stormont would be limited to one year. In that year they hoped to isolate and destroy the IRA, and lay the basis for a new settlement in the North, which would be acceptable to the Green Tories in the South and the SDLP in the North.

The removal without fanfare of General Tuzo, the British equivalent of General Westmorland, was the writing on the wall; the final acceptance by the British that they were not going to achieve their immediate aims by the tactic of Whitelawism; the recognition that the IRA was not destroyed, and that this meant the inability of the British Army to achieve the political tasks of the British bourgeoisie within the one-year time table which had been laid down.

THREE-CARD TRICK

Thus, Whitelaw's planned March White Paper could not deliver the promised goods. The White Paper must double-cross one or other of the three main Irish props of Whitelawism, the Green Tories in the South, the SDLP in the North, or the moderate Unionists.

By reforming the Ascendancy while protecting the Union (its original intention) moderate Unionists and the SDLP could be satisfied. But on the question of implementing the pro-

Gery Lawless on the crisis North and South

IRELAND

Crunch for Whitelaw?



Some of those who marched to British Government Office in Toronto on first anniversary of 'Bloody Sunday' demanding an end to internment and the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

mised 'Irish Dimension' of the Green Paper, i.e. gradual steps towards Irish unity, either Lynch or the SDLP or the moderate Unionists must be disappointed.

The SDLP is the least important in this three-card trick. As Whitelaw himself has said privately, who would buy a used White Paper from Gerry Fitt? But the co-operation of Lynch is essential.

Lynch had been threatened and cajoled into throwing his weight behind the British Army in this period - introducing the Offences Against the State Act (Amendment) 1972, in an attempt to finally smash the IRA. But before Lynch's helping hand could begin to bite we had the escalation of the sectarian

killings. These killings, originally instigated by the British SAS as part of a policy of intimidating the Catholics, without the British Army getting the blame for it, took on a momentum of their own, as plegian sections of the Orange-Ultras joined in the game in a desperate orgy, attempting by these politics of despair to save the Protestant Ascendancy.

EFFECT OF KILLINGS

The killings in turn swung decisive middle-aged sections of the Catholic population back behind the IRA, and therefore endangered Lynch, who could not afford to be seen stabbing in the back the defenders of the Catholic ghetto areas, while the killings continued.

To defeat the IRA it was necessary for Lynch to go further. For Lynch with his small majority to go further meant that Whitelaw must first curtail the sectarian killings. To do this meant to curtail the "para-military" organs of the Orange-Ultras. Hence the decision to arrest and intern some UDA members. In order to do this without provoking a Protestant backlash, Whitelaw attempted the sacrificial lamb tactics - i.e. to appease a rising pogrom, the British Army proves that it can carry them out better.

This is the explanation for the New Lodge massacre, when, as an Anti-Internment League leaflet correctly pointed out, the British Army deliberately murdered six Catholics in cold blood. But these deliberate murders, far from appeasing them, merely whetted the appetite of the Orange rabble, who came out last week to get some more Tags*.

But the result of their desperate rampage increased the pressure in British society for a withdrawal from Ireland - this pressure is reflected in the Labour Party's careful airing of the demand to 'Bring our Boys Home'. This demand is highlighted by the centrist Eric Heffer who joined Wilson's stalking-horse on this issue, James Wellbeloved, to call for the withdrawal of "our boys", while at the same time protecting himself against allegations of being an anti-imperialist by referring to the dangers our boys have to face from the "savages" on both sides.

SERIOUS DANGERS

However half-hearted this demand, it contains serious dangers for Whitelaw. The shifting by the Tribunites could easily provoke a movement by Harold Wilson to break bi-partisanship on Ireland and in turn precipitate a stampede in Britain for the withdrawal of troops, leading to the anti-war and solidarity movements of thousands gaining the strength of millions, and even reaching such proportions as to threaten to rend the fabric of British society on this issue.

Revolutionary socialists involved in rallying aid for the struggle in Ireland must, in the next crucial weeks, be sensitive to these possibilities and prepare now the initiatives to gather and organise this potential.

This means organising support for the conference called by the Anti-Internment League for the week-end of 12-13 May to raise the question of the role of the British troops in Ireland inside the British trade union, labour and student movements.

* Tagh: English settler racist term used by Ulster Protestants to describe Catholics; derived from Be' tagh, native Irish hewer of wood and drawer of water, circa 16 - 17th Century.

BRIANT WORKERS DEFY COURT ORDER

The High Court has served a writ on the Joint Chapels Committee at Briant Colour Printers, where the workers have been pursuing an occupation work-in in defence of their jobs. The writ, obtained by the liquidator, obliges the workers to hand over all the documents of the company so that he can wind it up, to leave the premises by the date of expiry - 13 February - and to pay the costs incurred by the owner's court proceedings and the rates and rent over the seven months of occupation. These could come to as much as £50,000.

But at a mass meeting the workers decided unanimously neither to hand over the books nor to leave the premises voluntarily, nor to pay the costs. Instead they burnt the writ. They then called on the whole labour movement for support by sending mass pickets for a demonstration on 13 February and for 24 hour pickets after that date to prevent any attempt at seizing BCP.

RIGHT TO A JOB

The workers at Briant's went into occupation because suddenly they were all told they would be made redundant. They suspected the owner, Mr D. Syder, of wanting to make a property deal whereas they felt the printing company should continue as a printing company. The decision to fight redundancies challenges the very basis of so-called 'freedom' in bourgeois society, particularly the freedom of the capitalists to direct their capital into whichever avenue will maximise profit, regardless of the social consequences - in this case speculate in land and put 150 workers out on the street. To this they countered the right to a job - a right which no capitalist economy can guarantee.

Briant workers have seen what the law thinks of workers who take their 'right to work'

seriously. They have a writ slapped on them. But the Briant workers are a nuisance for the liquidator's plans so he utilises the law to try to get rid of them. In this way the owner can tidy up his debts at Briant's and take his capital elsewhere.

After seven months of occupation the Briant workers have not managed to win back their jobs. But in spite of the economic hardship

involved in the struggle, the workers there have used their control over the plant to produce masses of literature, leaflets, posters, etc., for other workers in struggle. The most important occasion was the struggle to free the five imprisoned dockers. But they also printed material for the UCS workers, the Thornycroft occupation in Basingstoke, and Rockware Glass.



July 1972 Briant workers use their control over the plant to help the struggle to free the five.

DECISIVE QUESTION

The Briant workers have also shown an example of tremendous unity between different unions, between the men and women workers, and between the leadership and the mass of workers involved. And now they have taken up the challenge of the writ without hesitation. The decisive question is now this: the extent to which other workers and socialists will respond with massive solidarity.

The defence of Briant's is not only a matter of manning the pickets and participating in future demonstrations. The capitalist class wants to stamp out the new forms of mass struggle such as the occupation tactic. Such initiatives can pose a deadly threat to the whole offensive of the Tory Government if they become generalised and take on a single political focus. It is as an integral part of the preparation for the confrontation with the Tory Government that the working class must take up the defence of the Briant workers.

John Weal

BRIANT'S: STRUGGLE DECIDES NOT THE LAW

A London IMG pamphlet, price 5p.

Contains material on the background to the Briant's occupation, discusses the occupation tactic, and situates the fight within the general upsurge of working class struggles.

Available from: London IMG, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

RENTS: UNION SUPPORT VITAL

In early December, some 25 Labour Councils were still refusing to implement the Housing Finance Act. Two weeks later, Glasgow Council capitulated following a court order. Camden was ordered to increase the rents by the statutory amount by mid-January, following a threat from the Government to cut off housing subsidies. They too surrendered. Then the district auditor was sent into Conisborough, a mining town near Rotherham. The councillors were surcharged, subsidies were withdrawn, and the councillors ordered to make up the rent deficit out of the rates. They yielded. Three Labour Councils still lead the resistance: Clydebank, Merthyr, and of course Clay Cross. Meanwhile, the legal process has gone much further in areas where Councils capitulated early on. In Llantrisant for example, 600 tenants are facing court action, attachment of earnings and possible eviction for refusing to pay an extra 96p.

On the industrial front, the Government can be expected to make big blunders from time to time. But on the rent front, the Government has been able to apply its legal tricks with ease. The force of the courts has been brought to bear on the heads of the individual councillors. Big demonstrations have been held all over the country to put pressure on the councillors to stand firm. Tenants and trade unionists marched side by side to many a town hall to demand: 'No betrayal'. Following the Glasgow sell out, workers and tenants from all over Scotland marched in their thousands to rally the beleaguered Labour councillors of the town. The Housing Finance Act has provoked the biggest mobilisation of the trade unions on the rents issue since the War. But in most cases even this has not prevented the Labour Councillors from giving in.

SHREWD TACTICS

The Government's tactics have been shrewd. Many councillors once in favour of non-implementation have been bought off by being allowed to bargain over the amount of rent to be paid. Birmingham set the pace here. Those who continued to stand firm were then forced to run the gauntlet of surcharges, appeals, loss of subsidies, suspension from office for five years, district auditors, and local court rulings that rent arrears must be financed from rate rises, and so on. The last of these is an indirect but potent piece of financial pressure. It puts the Council at the mercy of local capitalists and private tenants who face an increase in the rates as a result of tenants withholding rent: Singers threatened Clydebank Council with a rates strike.

Many of those hoping that the Commissioner would be called in quickly, were kept dangling on the hook while all these proceedings took their course. The Government have made sure that councillors were subject to all these legal moves before going over their heads and threatening the tenants themselves. This was designed to isolate the councillors in order to allow time for other, political, pressures to have their effect.

Merthyr tenants march on recent Camden demo



These pressures came mainly from within the Labour Party itself. Respect for the rule of law and the sovereignty of the Parliament to which it is so attached, are traditions which weigh heavily on the minds of those who have not been directly involved in, and often deplore, the industrial struggles against the law of the

past year. Then the Labour Party leadership reversed the decisions taken at the 1972 Labour Party conference: non-implementation, and compensation for any councillor who suffers personal loss. This reversal, in December, further whittled down the number of Councils still standing firm.

The Labour leaders know that should they return to Government, they have no alternative to the Act. Why is this? Because the Housing Finance Act represents a major shift in state policy. Briefly, it attempts to standardise rents nationally, putting an end to local Councils having their own peculiar low-rent policies. This will result in a series of rent rises in many places, the extra finance from which will be used, (a) to repay interest on capital loaned by financiers to housing authorities, and (b) to help out those Councils in inner urban districts facing acute housing crisis without placing further burdens on the capitalists. The Labour Party could hardly come up with any other solution more favourable to monopoly capital. It therefore wants to accept the basic "fair rents" framework.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

When it comes to evictions, union militants have responded well. In Kirkby, for example, workers blocked off the estates and turned them into no-go areas for the bailiffs. In Merthyr and other South Wales districts, miners have promised immediate strike action when the first tenant is taken to court and their earnings attacked. In Camden, NALGO and G&MWU Council workers refused to be party to evictions.

But the overall campaign has suffered from the weakness that the union militants neglected industrial action against the Act earlier on. Even with those Councils still standing out in December, the union militants have tended to postpone the task of helping to organise the tenants while the councillors protested their loyalty to the working class under the pressure of demonstrations and meetings, only later to bow the knee to the Government. The campaign was organised to put pressure on the councillors. While this was necessary, it has proved insufficient. Two of the Labour Councils still standing — Clay Cross and Clydebank — are doing so partly because they have enjoyed unique links with the unions in the past: Clydebank Council's support for the UCS struggle, and the action which Clay Cross Council members took in turning over Council facilities to striking miners and engineers last year. These are examples which other Labour councillors looking for support have unfortunately not followed.

DIFFERENT COURSE

The labour movement knew well how to put pressure on those it had elected. But it did not grasp in time the gravity of the Act. This would have dictated a different course of action, the elements of which are still valid now. First: to smash the Act, because otherwise it will have to fight on a localised basis against further rent rises under the Act. Second: the isolated pockets of rebel tenants still left cannot be expected to do this by themselves. These areas of resistance must be not just defended — with mass industrial struggle and flying anti-eviction squads — but must be turned into a base from which to fight the Act and all further increases made under it. The NUM has special opportunities here.

At the same time, since it is in the interests of these tenants to bring down the Government, the tenants associations in these areas must agitate for tenants organisations all over the country to give practical support to all workers in struggle against the Freeze. But more than this. The trade unions must begin to take responsibility for those sectors of the population living in the hell of inner urban slums. If this is not done, then these sections of the population, ill-housed and unhoused though they may be, can be won over to the Government, which hypocritically explains that it is screwing those 'comfortable' and 'secure' tenants in order to help those living in misery with a few sops. The unions must help win over those voluntary and semi-voluntary organisations working in these areas to a policy of class struggle rather than individual 'case' pressure on the state. The deep social crisis here makes these tasks necessary and possible, and it is up to unions like NALGO which organise state employees, to take such

At the end of January, nearly three months after the start of the wage freeze, the *Morning Star* reported that the leadership of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions had met and decided to hold a recall Liaison Committee Conference on April 7th. This was linked to the call for massive action on May 1st to support the international day of labour and protest against the freeze.

The purpose of this article is to show where the call for the LCDTU conference came from, what it represents and what policy working class militants should adopt towards it. But first we should ask, what is the LCDTU?

THE LCDTU

The growing capitalist campaign against shop-stewards in the late 1960s led to the call for a national rank and file organisation which would mobilise support in defence of the movement. The Communist Party understood that a direct initiative from one central body of the rank and file would have a tremendous effect in pushing the trade union leadership to 'embrace' the new "lefts", Scanlon and Jones.

The LCDTU carried on to organise a series of one day strikes against the then Industrial Relations Bill, which were taken up by Scanlon and the AUEW. It came briefly into existence again in September 1972 to 'take up' the struggle against the Act, when it managed to mobilise 400 odd workers to strike during the TUC conference.

There is a clear oddity in that last event which needs to be explained. At the height of its influence the LCDTU was capable of holding a conference in London attended by over 2,000 workers. These represented shop-stewards committees, union branches and the like. If there was ever a meeting of the rank and file leadership of the British working class in one room, that was it. The potential strength of such a conference is possible to show. Similar conferences, even on an industry basis, of the shop-stewards movement of the old Amalgamated Society of Engineers, organised massive solidarity strike waves which sent the employers and the government reeling during the first world war. So the LCDTU is really the only national rank and file organisation of the working class.

QUESTIONS

Why did this movement then fail to have any impact during the TUC conference last year? Why has it been called together again just now? Before we can answer these questions we must look closely at two developments in the class struggle in Britain since the miners' strike. The first has been taken up in *The Red Mole* before, in its discussion of how the Engineers responded to the Goad fines. For the first time in the last year, there have been two clear and contradictory choices for the way the struggle should be carried out in difficult economic and political conditions. On the one hand is the need felt by most militants for central leadership and national action. On the other is the practice of the 'left' in the union leadership, of leaving the rank and file to fight on their own. The failure of the AUEW to crush the attack from the N.I.R.C. posed very sharply the question as to who or what is to co-ordinate and lead the struggles of the rank and file. The CP during the Engineers' strike was not able to offer a reply. It had lined up behind Scanlon in his defence against 'wreckers' and 'critics', who wanted to see a successful national, co-ordinated struggle.

More difficult to catch hold of, but more important, are the uneven changes that have been occurring in the way that sections of the most militant workers think and act. There has probably never been a clearer understanding that the struggle on the industrial front should be directed at political aims. Many militants, even in traditionally badly organised sectors, see the industrial struggle as having directly political ends at this stage. The problem was raised by the gas workers, for they know more acutely than anyone else the dangers of isolation from the support of old age pensioners, housewives and tenants, let alone the rest of the working class. Those workers providing public services realise the need to gain broad sympathy for their actions to be fully effective. And that means showing in practice how their struggle takes up the interests of these groups. All this boils down to two basic needs: for a central leadership to co-ordinate industrial action, and for a central political line so that this struggle has clear aims which can unite the struggles of the entire working class movement and all its potential allies.

C.P. OLD STYLE

The Communist Party never understood the actions that it called through the LCDTU as any more than a means to put pressure on the trade union bureaucrats. The lining up of Scanlon and Jones was not done so that industrial action would be developed and led; so that the independent organisation and action of the working class would be increased. The object of the pressure was to influence the 'left' to push them into alliance with the Communist Party.

Workers were trotted out duly for their protests against the Bill, and then the Act. But this was made redundant by the seeming 'left turn' of the TUC. Scanlon's big strength at that Congress came precisely from the notion that he was the one who led the rank and file. It would actually decrease Scanlon's influence if the rank and file started 'doing their own thing' while the congress was going on. The result: the last action of the LCDTU was a national protest by some 400 workers.

Having lined up Scanlon, and having managed to get joint platforms with such working class leaders as Wedgwood Benn, the Communist Party saw little point in further national industrial initiatives. It was pressing home the advantages it had won in the bureaucracy through the Labour Party conference, and with the slogan "Labour to Power with Socialist Policies".

not only sabotaged the door to the right-wing, resulted in confusion and allowed the right to tilt the executive Committee (4-1) Scanlon.

Being the engineering base was sharply affected play it both ways, by action" and by praising (which had borne the brunt of the pay struggle earlier) the feelings of the rank and file Scanlon. Once this point was made, why this was a new initiative what this new initiative

We must return to the industrial struggle to be carried out. It appears at first sight both these questions could be answered by the National Executive Committee of the struggle to the rank and file. The next step as proposed by the Liaison Committee was to continue the struggles against Phase

REAL AIM

A closer examination of these moves is actually the hook. Both measures are the collision course of union 'lefts', by passing the Party Secretary, pointing the fight for a General Election, and committing to left policies



PAY

Paul S
Liaison C

method by which the movement is through the line is still the political (and here and there) trade union leadership. In practice this is a list Party on the rank and file Scanlon's and Heffer's

The recall of the rank and file is of course in fact a recall of any body way forward. But the struggle against the union leadership of the rank and file and by pass

The recall of the Liaison Committee such that it will give at Fords an opportunity to use other requirements. How much conference to

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FIGHT

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portunity to fulfill Mr. Gollan's
ing forward: the building of the
leadership will wish to use the
is a different question, parti-

cularly since the *Morning Star* has already indicated its pro-
jected aim for the conference: massive industrial protest
action on May 1st against Phase 2. Again national indus-
trial action is to be reduced to protest and pressure: even
in its own terms such a move is self-defeating. The strength
of protest actions diminishes as the practical point of such
actions becomes less and less obvious. By failing to raise
the demand to organise and develop industrial action to a
General Strike, even the chance of changing the balance of
forces between the left and the right inside the trade union
leadership is probably lost. No mention is made of the way
in which it is proposed to develop industrial action, or who is
to organise it.

All of these proposals are combined with the woolly demand
for "mass industrial action", combining this with scuttling
behind any section of the trade union bureaucracy which
offers the same line as the Communist Party. On Tuesday,
23 January, the *Morning Star* headline was "Mobilise Mass
Opposition to Tory Policy, Recall TUC, Demand Scots
Miners". Again the point is obvious. We see another attempt
to reduce the tension between the developing struggle of the
rank and file and the 'left' bureaucrats.

REAL ANSWER

What role can the Liaison Committee Conference play in the
labour movement? The clear test for the Liaison Committee
is (and always has been) how far it is prepared to organise
working class militants for the next confrontation over
the freeze with the Tories. Here the Communist Party should
take some lessons in practical politics from the rank and
file of the working class. First, it is the lower-paid workers
who were first into battle. Organisation of the leading
sections of the working class around struggles like that of
the gas workers can make all the difference to the outcome
of such a struggle. Equally the battle of the shop-workers
against their frozen rises can be turned into first attempts
by the working class to organise for their solutions to
the problems of rising prices.

More and more workers are taking practical steps along
these lines. In London the initiative has already gone out to
organise a conference of London workers against the freeze.
Supported by rank and file hospital workers, teachers
associations, local government workers and others, the
object of this conference will be to plan a series of prac-
tical steps towards the kind of united action which can
carry the whole movement forward. Very important
ideas for the labour movement as a whole have already
been floated. For NALGO workers to stop implementing
the Housing Finance Act as a direct blow against the
Government's attempts to redistribute the burden of
housing finance within the working class instead of making
the capitalists pay for the social problems capitalism has
created, shows the way the working class can struggle for
every sector's interests. Equally the proposal for USDAW
workers to mount a campaign, together with local trade
unionists, to suppress price rises by refusing to sell at
higher prices shows a practical means of tackling the
rising cost of living of the great mass of the population, not
just the industrial workers.

NEXT STEPS

The local conferences, started in London, but now beg-
inning to be organised in other areas like Edinburgh,
Rotherham and Oxford, offer a way of bringing together
large numbers of workers to plan demonstrations and
practical lines of action. Those supporting such confer-
ences represent only workers engaged in various struggles,
but also other groups of workers at the centre of the labour
movement. These conferences point the way in which the
Liaison Committee conference can be used. When mili-
tants mobilise for the conference in April these local
initiatives should serve as a guide for action at the level
of national rank and file organisation. The most imp-
ortant lesson here is to abandon the whole notion of 'protest
politics'.

The second point which has to be got across is that in order
to make the LCDTU an effective basis for ongoing organisa-
tion of the struggle against the freeze and against the Tory
Government, we have to take up the way the conference is
run. In line with the idea of a protest-cum-back-scratching
jamboree, the Communist Party has previously prevented
any resolutions from the floor being debated and voted upon.
Instead it likes to produce a vague statement of good inten-
tions and empty phrases that is read from the platform. To
turn the conference into something of practical worth we
must fight to force the Communist Party to abandon this
method of organisation. That means every delegate to the
conference must be mandated to support the introduction
of resolutions from the floor of the conference.

The final step must come out of the conference itself. We
must judge the worth of this conference not on its call for
a one, two or three day strike. We must certainly clearly
show that this conference of labour is in favour of the
organisation of a General Strike to bring down the Tories.
But the key test is the organisation coming out of the
conference to prepare for the coming confrontations
against the Tories. This organisation must be based on the
clear idea that the trade union struggle is part of the general
class struggle taking place on a whole series of issues, in-
cluding prices. Flowing from this, local conferences must
be organised bringing in trade unionists, tenants, house-
wives and students. These conferences would work out the
tasks for the various groups represented, in the organi-
ation of the fight against Phase 2 and rising prices.

If the LCDTU fails to meet this challenge and remains
within the framework laid down by the Communist Party
an alternative means of uniting the rank and file leader-
ship nationally must be worked for. Nevertheless the
LCDTU represents the only national rank and file organisa-
tion at present and its conference is timed at a real water-
shed in the class struggle.

Statement of the Fourth International

No Truce in Support for the Vietnamese Revolution!

The following resolution was passed at a
meeting of the United Secretariat of the
Fourth International on 21 January.

Once more it is reported that a cease-fire
agreement is imminent in Vietnam. So we must
stress again the vital role that the international
movement in defence of the Vietnamese revol-
ution is called upon to play, regardless of the
results of the current negotiations. Every
analysis of the present situation, all information
available, points to the conclusion that the Viet-
namese revolution will not come to a halt, no
matter what the outcome of the cease-fire
negotiations. There will be no truce in the
struggle of the masses of Vietnamese workers
and poor peasants for their national and social
liberation.

The savage attacks perpetrated by the American
air force in late December 1972 on the Hanoi
and Haiphong regions, the unprecedented
bombings of the liberated areas of South
Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, which are
still continuing as of this writing, confirm the
determination of the American imperialists
to utilise all the means of terror at their
disposal to prevent the collapse of the puppet
regimes installed in Saigon, Phnompenh, and
Vientiane. Considerable amounts of arms
and ammunition are still being sent to these
puppets. Thousands of Thieu's U.S. "advisers"
remain in South Vietnam. And even if the
American troops are really withdrawn, power-
ful imperialist air and naval forces will
remain on the alert in Thailand and off the
Vietnamese coasts.

Moreover, maintaining the dictatorial
Thieu regime in Saigon in the face of the
combativity of the Vietnamese masses means
that the revolutionary struggle will continue
after the cease-fire agreement is signed, even
if the general military confrontation between
the two class camps halts for a time.

The hard-fought negotiations that took place
between October 1972 and January 1973
were centred precisely on marking out the
ground for these future revolutionary struggles
in South Vietnam, with each camp seeking to
gain the best possible position for waging its
fight. This is why the negotiations dealt with
questions such as the real nature of the demilit-
arised zone, the size and role of the inter-
national control commission, and similar issues.
Any concessions that imperialism may have ex-
tracted from the Vietnamese fighters in this
regard, as the result of inadequate international
support for the Vietnamese revolution in the
face of large-scale aggression by U.S. imper-
ialism, in no way undermine the capacity of
the revolution to maintain its momentum in
South Vietnam.

The puppet Thieu understands this very well.
He is hastily setting up a system of semi-
fascist repression, threatening to fire on every
crowd of demonstrators, to murder every
Communist, and to prevent any return of
refugees to liberated villages. At the same time
he is holding out the threat of slaughtering
the hundreds of thousands of political prisoners
in his hands.

The popular masses, for their part, are getting
ready to take advantage of any military truce
to resume their struggle to free the political
prisoners, win democratic liberties, defend
their material interests in the cities and coun-
tryside, bring about the disintegration of the
army and regime of the puppet Thieu, and
create and reinforce mass-based organs of
power.

In these conditions, the signing of a cease-
fire agreement will not mean a halt to the
revolution in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambo-
dia, or to the counter-revolutionary intervention
by imperialism. These two processes will
continue in temporarily modified forms, with
the possibility of a new direct military inter-
vention by U.S. imperialism remaining sus-
pended like the sword of Damocles over the
heads of the workers and poor peasants of
Indochina.

In these conditions also, the masses of Indo-
china, confronted with the violence and the
manoeuvres of imperialism and the native
exploiters, will have a still greater need for
the active support of the international working
class after the signing of the cease-fire agreement,
just as they needed this help during the recent
weeks of terror bombing by the U.S. Air
Force.

The counter-revolutionary role of the bureau-
crats of Moscow and Peking, who did not
raise a finger to respond to Nixon's bombing
of North Vietnam and who continue to refuse
to supply the North Vietnamese workers'
state with the more modern kinds of defensive
weapons made available to bourgeois govern-
ments such as those in Egypt, Pakistan, India,
or Bangladesh, cannot be condemned strongly
enough. By arranging Nixon's visits to Moscow
and Peking in 1972, these bureaucrats helped
him to weaken the American anti-war move-
ment in the crucial months of the past year.
During the cease-fire negotiations they brought
the maximum pressure on Hanoi to get the
Vietnamese fighters to make concessions to
imperialism. They put the crowning touch on
this betrayal of the elementary interests of
the workers of Vietnam and the entire world
by remaining totally passive when Nixon un-
leashed against Hanoi and Haiphong the largest-
scale and most barbarous acts of aggression
that humanity has seen since the end of the
second world war. The whole counter-revol-
utionary logic of their "peaceful coexistence"
strategy has thus been starkly revealed.

But, for their part, the working masses of the
world, after being deceived by the secret
diplomatic manoeuvres of Washington, Moscow
and Peking, were awakened by the shock and
indignation aroused by Nixon's barbaric
bombings. They have responded on an ever
larger scale since December 1972. Leading up
to the actions of January 20, 1973, the inter-
national demonstrations against the imperialist
war of aggression have constantly broadened.
In many countries, these demonstrations reach-
ed new heights. What is more, in Australia,
Italy, and Denmark, sectors of the organised
workers' movement started, or issued appeals
for starting, direct industrial action against the
war, thereby pointing out the path for the
most effective response to the imperialist bar-
barism.

It is the duty of the international working class
to continue to extend this movement of
solidarity, no matter what the outcome of the
negotiations and the cease-fire agreement, until
the complete and final victory of the Vietnames
revolution. There can be no halt, truce, or
"cease-fire" in our solidarity with the Vietnames
revolution - this is the fundamental
truth that we must constantly reiterate to the
working masses of the five continents as
this turn is taking place in Indochina.

The Fourth International issues a solemn
appeal to all activists, to all anti-imperialist
and anti-capitalist organisations throughout
the world. For more than two decades the
Indochinese masses have fought with a heroism
unparalleled and an energy and endurance
unique in the history of this century for the
cause of their emancipation and for socialism.
They have fought for us all. The least that
we can do in return for the great service they
have done for the world revolution is to con-
tinue unceasingly our actions in solidarity with
their revolution, which is also unrelenting.

The Fourth International calls on all working-
class organisations to make defending the
Vietnamese revolution against the terror of
Washington and Thieu, whose blows continue
and may escalate further, into the cause of
millions and millions of workers in all
countries.

It calls on all Communists, on all socialists,
not to let themselves be duped by the diplo-
matic manoeuvres of imperialism and by the
cover that the bureaucratic betrayers in Moscow
and Peking are continuing to provide for
these manoeuvres.

Our duty is clear. We must maintain, broaden,
extend, and unify nationally and internationally
the movement of active and militant solidarity
with the heroic fighters and the peoples of
Indochina until the final and complete victory
of the Indochinese revolution.

The Women's Movement .. A Narrow Perspective

Women Fight Back is a pamphlet which specifically aims to explain to 'ordinary women' why women suffer a whole range of inequalities in British society today, to explain what changes are needed, and how the battle for such changes should be developed. It is written in straightforward language, clearly organised into sections on different aspects of women's lives: women and work, the family, women in struggle, the trade unions, women and socialism. It is interspersed with quotations from women militants and working class housewives. It attempts to provide an analysis of women's position in society and a strategy for changing this in a way which will be meaningful to large numbers of working class women. In themselves these aims are worthwhile, if understood to be one part of a strategy to explain and challenge capitalist society and its oppression of women. It is unfortunate then, that the pamphlet approaches 'ordinary women' in a rather patronising way, achieves simplicity at the expense of a narrow economist analysis of the position of women in society, and includes an assessment of the women's liberation movement which is both confused and factually inaccurate.

For example the analysis of the family is not so much wrong as incomplete. The woman's work in the family is (correctly) described as providing a valuable service for the employing class - the production of the intelligent and healthy workers so necessary to keep the wheels of industry turning. Because it does not directly produce profits the woman's work is constantly undervalued, and is of course unpaid; the needs of women as wives and mothers (for contraception, nurseries, etc.) have very low priority. But the whole thrust of the analysis is concerned with the economic significance of the family and its effects on the woman within it. So, important questions like the ideological importance of the family within capitalism are ignored.

SIMPLE TERMS

The political weakness and isolation of housewives is recognised, and although the organisation of housewives to resist rent and price rises, to demand nurseries, etc., appears to be 'a good thing', it is not at all clear why this is so. For, we are told, "Most important of all we must get together and organise to fight for our rights at work - the place where it's easiest for us to produce results" (p. 20). The fight against capitalism is seen in rather simple

Women Fight Back by Kath Ennis
(Women's Voice pamphlet, 10p)

terms as the fight which takes place at work against the boss. There is a complete failure to see that the important task of the revolutionary party is to find the path towards *uniting the struggles of all the exploited and oppressed into one political fight against the ruling class and its state*. The failure to grasp this means that there is no strategy for linking struggles outside the factory to industrial struggles (except in some vague future when everyone has joined a trade union). Indeed the only strategy put forward is to join the International Socialists.

Although the IS do not seem to have noticed this, one of the current debates within the women's liberation milieu has focused on how "community" struggles and industrial struggles are and can be related. We have been arguing that it is necessary to recognise *both* the lack of leverage on and against the system which leads to the relative powerlessness of all those not engaged at the point of production and the significance of such groups in the overall development of class struggle. Thus we must find means by which the struggles of housewives and others against rent and price rises, for nurseries and other facilities are taken up and supported by trade unionists in militant action; and we must actively participate in the organisation of housewives, retired people, students, the unemployed, etc. in support of workers in struggle. (The recent election of women to the action committee fighting against the steel redundancies at Shotton is one example of this.)

WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Tremendous confusion runs through the section of the pamphlet dealing with the women's liberation movement. The women's movement is written off as middle class and therefore "incapable of linking its campaigns with the struggle for socialism" (although for some unspecified reason it has "been a tremendous inspiration to us all"). It is undoubtedly true that the social composition of the WLM is made up predominantly of white collar workers, wives of white collar workers, students, together with some intellectuals, some unemployed women, some single mothers, etc. In a Marxist sense most of these groups would be located as part of the working class (although not the most powerful section of that class - the industrial workers); it is not true, from a Marxist point of view, that the relative advantages which some of these groups enjoy are 'at the expense of the working class'; nor can it automatically be assumed that these groups are the allies of the ruling class.

To make a clear assessment of the WLM we have to identify both its *social* composition and its *political* orientation and potential. (After all the social composition of IS has been overwhelmingly 'middle class' until very recently, and it is still far from being an organization of industrial workers.) In fact the WLM is politically extremely heterogeneous, encompassing some reformists, radical feminists, anarchists, revolutionary socialists, etc. It hardly exists as a movement, except perhaps at the time of national conferences, but more as a diverse range of local groups. Nevertheless this milieu has been affected by the upsurge in class struggle in the recent period, as the discussions and resolutions from the November conference showed; only the narrowest and most nationalistic view of class interests can dismiss the resolutions from that conference in solidarity with the Indochinese people, and calling for the withdrawal of British troops and the defeat of imperialism in Ireland as 'only directed to the middle class'. The debate within the women's movement continues, and revolutionary socialists have an important part to play in it, helping to develop and strengthen the socialist current within it.

Finally, and more positively, it is encouraging to see that the IS are supporting the proposals, for rank and file organisation within the trade unions to fight for women's rights in the unions and in work, for which we have been arguing for some time. We hope that though our analysis and general strategy may differ from theirs, there may be areas of activity in which we will be able to work together in the future.

Margaret Coulson

ECONOMICS AND IDEOLOGY

4. Is Marxist Economics Biased?

By PAUL MOREL

A well known textbook of orthodox economics starts by erecting a Chinese wall between what are called 'positive' and 'normative' statements. The former are judgements of fact concerning "what is or will be"; the latter are judgements of value concerning "what ought to be". According to this philosophy, "disagreements over positive statements are appropriately settled by an appeal to the facts". (Lipsey: *Positive Economics*).

Marx is supposed to have let emotive value judgements colour his economics, denouncing the capitalist system and campaigning for a revolution. On the other hand bourgeois professors regard orthodox economics as scientific because it is based on "the facts".

BARRIERS

Such an approach has in fact operated as a barrier to scientific advance and has turned social science into an apology for the facts of the capitalist system. Science cannot operate by simply focussing on "the facts". Immediate appearances by themselves do not provide us with a scientific understanding of society: as Marx pointed out: "all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided."

Instead of arbitrarily accepting capitalism as a 'fact', Marx saw it as a transitory phase in the development of human society. He then worked out his economic theories, not to explain the economy of each and every society - the bogus claim of bourgeois economists - but to explain one specific type of economy out of the multitude of different types thrown up in history. Bourgeois economists, by

starting out with the facts of capitalist economy and then presenting them as facts for all time, thus present a picture of history as the gradual evolution towards the perfect capitalist system.

CONCEPTS

For the Marxist, the facts do not provide us with an understanding of reality. It is rather a system of concepts which conditions our view of 'the facts'. The question is: which system of concepts should we adopt? From birth, all social groups in bourgeois society are brought up to accept the system of concepts known as "common sense": we are taught to automatically accept the concept of private property, social hierarchy, crime, punishment and individualistic competition. It is this collection of concepts which people use in everyday life to select and arrange the facts. Facts are not neutral: they are selected and arranged on the basis of a preconceived view of the world. Secondly, these views of the world are conditioned by the place that someone occupies within the society. The system of ideas about the world that a wage worker has is different from the world view of a banker.

Thus judgements of fact and value cannot be counter-posed. The so-called 'value-free' statements of bourgeois economists are 'biased' because they serve to maintain the existing state of affairs. Marxism sees the present capitalist system from the point of view of the development of human society, past present and future. This point of view coincides with the interests of the working class, because this is the only social class that can build a new and classless society.

In this sense Marxism is 'biased': it is an expression of the objective, long-term interests of the working class. But an understanding of history shows that there is *no other* scientific viewpoint.

I.M.G. RED FORUM—A series of introductory discussions for those in the London area on the politics of the Fourth International. Every Tuesday, 8 p.m. at the General Picton pub, Caledonian Road (five minutes walk from Kings Cross tube).

MERSEYSIDE I.M.G.—Public Meetings every Tuesday at 8 p.m. in the AUEW, 46/48 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool. Contact 10, Pinfold Close, Bootle 10 (tel: 428 1140).

SCOTTISH NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE—Sat. 24th & Sun. 25th February at Strathclyde University Union, John Street, Glasgow. Registration Fri. evening and Sat. morning. First session starts 10.30 Sat. morning. Registration fee £1—covers food/drink for both days. Accommodation available, creche provided. All women welcome.

TONY SOARES SOLIDARITY MEETING—Sunday, 18 Feb. at 6.30 p.m. in Camden Studios, Camden St., London NW1. Speakers and film 'The Chicago Conspiracy Trial'. Admission free.

UNITED IRISHMAN FORUM—Co-op Hall, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N.7. on Weds. 28th February at 8.30 p.m. Speakers: Jacqueline Kaye (Prisoners Aid Committee), Clive Carroll (editor, *Rose Catha*), Ian Mills (Clann na hEireann). These Republican speakers will discuss the current issue of the *United Irishman*.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE SOCIALIST ACTION GROUP: One day seminar in Oxford - 'Towards the Middle East Revolution'. Speakers from IPSAG and Israeli and Arab revolutionary groups. 24 Feb. in the Lindsay room, Balliol College 10.30 a.m. Details from 01-445 7511 or IPSAG, 5 Folly Bridge, Oxford.

RED BOOKS: SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT. Due to building alterations, Red Books has had to close its bookshop at 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. We regret this inconvenience to our customers and hope to have new premises in the near future. In the meantime we will be operating a mail-order book service from the above address. Write for our FREE catalogue.

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Hear

ALAIN KRIVINE

of the Ligue Communiste (French section of the Fourth International)

—candidate in the French elections

—former Presidential candidate

speak on: 'THE FRENCH ELECTIONS AND THE TASKS OF THE LEFT'

Wednesday, 7th March at 7.30 p.m.

Old Town Hall, Hampstead, N.W.3. (nearest tube: Belsize Park)

Meeting organised by London IMG

IRELAND: National Liberation and Socialist Revolution. *Public Debate* between the IMG and 'Militant'. IMG speakers: Bob Purdie (National Organiser, AIL), Gery Lawless. 'Militant' speakers: Peter Taffe (Editor, 'Militant'), Peter Haddon (Belfast Y.S.). Friday, 2nd March, 8 p.m., Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London W.C.1.

IMG/SOCIALIST WOMAN FORUMS—New series of meetings on issues relating to the oppression of women. First will take place on Monday, 26 Feb. at the Duke of York pub, York Way, nr Kings Cross, at 7.45 p.m. Subject: 'The Role of the Family'. Speaker: Linda Smith. All welcome.

A new National Assembly will be elected in France on March 4 and 11. The present legislature was elected in the wake of the defeat of the May movement, after the P.C.F. (French Communist Party) refused to carry the general strike to the point of overthrowing the Gaullist regime and torpedoed the mass movement in exchange for the government's agreeing to hold immediate elections. At that time the UDR (the main Gaullist formation) won an overwhelming majority. The current elections will produce a very different line-up.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to think, as the PS (Socialist Party) and the PCF do, that these elections will decide the fate of France. It would also be wrong to think, as the Maoists and spontaneists do, that they have no importance whatsoever.

BACKGROUND OF THE ELECTIONS

It is impossible to understand the present situation in France without going back to May 1968. This revolutionary crisis was the grandiose inauguration of a social crisis affecting the most diverse realms. Replacing de Gaulle with Pompidou has not strengthened the state power in the way hoped for. The majority is more ridden with divisions and cliques than ever. It was only with great difficulty that it managed to achieve a certain common front for the campaign. Scandals, some of them very sordid, are popping up everywhere. Not even a relative equilibrium has been restored in the educational system. Furthermore, other institutions, including some of the most reactionary, (the churches, the courts, the police...), have been shaken by profound crises. Finally, all sorts of social categories are raising demands and they are doing so primarily in the streets.

As for the working class, its combativity has not been damaged by the fact that the May 1968 movement did not achieve what it could have. On the contrary, it has demonstrated very strong militancy, notably by resorting frequently to tough methods (kidnapping managers...), in the numerous struggles that have occurred since then. But all these struggles have had a sectoral, partial character and have not shown a tendency to spread. The main reason for this has been that as a result of its experience in May 1968 the working class realised that a mobilisation of such scope needs a political perspective in order to succeed.

The leaders of the PCF and the Socialist Party realised rather early that a situation marked both by their failure to offer any political alternative and by considerable working-class militancy involved a real danger of larger and larger strata of the working class turning toward revolutionary solutions to find a way out of the social crisis. The February 1972 demonstrations against the murder of the worker Pierre Overney at the gate of the Renault factory, called and led by the revol-

The French Elections

From PIERRE FRANK

utionary far left, were a clear expression of this danger.

Thus both leaderships felt a need for getting together on a solution that could channel the discontent of the masses and their aspirations for a profound change into a reformist framework and in a way that would benefit them. Although for almost two years they exchanged pleasantries as well as frequently embittered polemics, suddenly, in less than three months, they reached an agreement to put their signatures to a "common programme". So, in the first instance, the Union de la Gauche (Union of the Left, the PCF-PS coalition) and its joint programme are an indirect consequence of May 1968.

A NEW POPULAR FRONT?

The common programme of the Union de la Gauche is a moderate programme of bourgeois reforms. It contains some very limited nationalisations, promises to certain disadvantaged categories of workers, a retirement age of sixty, etc. It does not propose abolishing the Gaullist constitution but only making some amendments. In content, there is no important difference between the Union de la Gauche programme and that of the Popular Front, even though the recent version is more extensive than the one in 1936.

But the Union de la Gauche differs from the Popular Front on two points.

1. While recognising that the common programme does not contain any specifically socialist measures, the leaders of the PS as well as the PCF claim that this programme, which is supposed to be realised within five years, will promote democracy and thus pave the way for socialism in the relatively short run.

This perspective of a gradual, parliamentary, electoralist development of bourgeois democracy culminating in a socialist society is false and deceitful and is setting the stage for the worst kind of disillusionments.

2. In contrast to the Popular Front, the Union de la Gauche does not have the support of any appreciable wing of French capitalism whatsoever, not even among those elements today that have no confidence in Gaullism or Pompidou. To those who raise the objection that Radical office-holders have associated themselves with the Union de la Gauche, it is easy to answer that these figures represent neither a political or a social force. The Union de la Gauche therefore is an alliance of reformist parties solely and not an alliance between the reformists and any bourgeois party. From this standpoint, the Union de la Gauche is not a new Popular Front.

The attitude of the capitalist forces toward the Union de la Gauche is one of quite understandable hostility. The most astute bourgeois are telling Mitterrand: "We know that the Communist party is a reformist party, but its reformism is not our kind but the Kremlin's. Furthermore, under pressure as it is from the revolutionary movements, we don't know whether the PCF is able now to maintain its control over broad mobilisations as it still was in May 1968. Your Union de la Gauche operation is too risky."

THE PERSPECTIVES

The trend is now running strongly in favour of the left; the signs of this are increasing. But for those who can remember, it is apparent that we are not seeing a revival of anything like the kind of enthusiasm aroused by the

Popular Front in 1935-36. Many parliamentary illusions have disappeared, and not only in the minds of those who have already opted for revolutionary solutions. But in the absence of an alternative leadership that can inspire confidence, the masses will vote for the Union de la Gauche and will do so in enormous numbers.

If the Union de la Gauche gets a majority, we will quickly find ourselves confronted with a major political crisis resulting from a conflict between the president of the republic and the new Assembly, since the constitution provides that the government appointed by the president must receive a vote of confidence from the Assembly. And Pompidou will not appoint a government that can get this. Such a conflict would almost immediately be taken outside the framework of the institutions of the Fifth Republic.

In my opinion, it is much more likely that the elections will result, on the one hand, in a considerable success for the Union de la Gauche (it would not be surprising if it more than doubled its seats in parliament) and, on the other hand, in serious changes within the majority. The UDR may lose a substantial amount of ground to its allies. In this case, there will not be an immediate constitutional conflict, since Pompidou will be able to shift the axis of his leadership within the majority. But the parliament will be unwieldy; and, above all, hesitations, uncertainties, and a certain paralysis of the government will ensue.

The outlook, then, is for a major success by the left and for a parliament without a working majority. Of course, this Assembly was not set up to play any role in the Fifth Republic. But, lacking a clear majority, it can block the functioning of the Bonapartist state machine. We can also, and above all, look forward to seeing a new thrust of the class struggle. Let me just add a few words about the positions taken by the revolutionary movements.

The OCI-AJS (followers of Pierre Lambert, formerly with the SLL in the 'International Committee') originally participated in discussions with the Ligue Communiste (French section of the Fourth International) and Lutte Ouvriere on a plan to divide up the electoral districts. But now they state that they will call for a vote for the candidates of the "recognised workers' organisations" (i.e. the PCF and the PS) and "in no case for the candidates of the Ligue Communiste or Lutte Ouvriere, who are crypto-Stalinist candidates pushed by the bourgeoisie!"

The Ligue Communiste and Lutte Ouvriere will each put up candidates in many constituencies. Thus, the revolutionary road to socialism will be defended in over half the electoral districts. In particular, almost all the working-class districts will be touched directly by the candidates of these two organisations.*

In the first round, the Ligue Communiste is calling for voting only for the revolutionary candidates and for abstaining where they are not on the ballot. In the second round, it will continue to denounce the programme of the Union de la Gauche and its purported roads to socialism. But in order to enable the workers to learn by their own experience and not to put any obstacle in the way of this, the Ligue Communiste will call on its supporters, in accordance with the old tactic already set forth by Lenin in his *Left Wing Communism*, to eliminate the candidates of the bourgeoisie by voting for the candidates - but not for the programme - of the Union de la Gauche. In this way we will have counterposed our entire programme to that of the bourgeoisie and of the Union de la Gauche and done the most that we can to promote a result that will open up a vast perspective for the development of the class struggle. [Intercontinental Press]

January 22, 1973.

* Lutte Ouvriere declares itself in favour of the revolutionary road to socialism, but unfortunately the immediate programme that it has worked out for this campaign has nothing transitional about it, but is made up of immediate demands, a fact which renders it reformist in content.

GROWING RESISTANCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

For a number of years now the picture presented in the bourgeois press of the remaining white controlled territories of Africa, has been one of relative stability. Smith's regime had, they said, survived the deliberately half-hearted sanctions campaign following on UDI in 1965 and, despite certain shortages, was maintaining a steadily expanding economy. The Portuguese propaganda machine crowed over alleged successes in the 10 year old war against the liberation forces of Angola, Mozambique and Guine. The South African "economic miracle" continued unabated while opposition to the apartheid regime was at a low ebb and Vorster enjoyed increasing success in his diplomatic offensive into black Africa.

This complacent picture, so assiduously drawn, has suddenly been shattered by a number of events in the past few weeks which have revealed the chronic instability of the racist regimes.

PANIC

1. On January 9th the Smith government announced a blockade of the Zambian border until Kaunda agreed to the closure of all guerilla bases. The Rhodesians were of course careful not to offend the chief representatives of imperialism in the area - they made an exception for the exports from Zambia's copper mines! Certain points however immediately emerged:

(a) the closure was a panic reaction to an apparently rather insignificant outbreak of violence involving the shooting by guerillas of a couple of white farmers. The extreme sensitivity of the racist regime in the face of these incidents is eloquent testimony to their deeply felt lack of self confidence.

(b) the subsequent dissembling of the South African government spokesmen showed clearly they had not been consulted on the move. Of course their cool reaction reflects Vorster's aim of neutralising any threat from the North by quite different means - through involving the black African states within the South African economic orbit; the link up with Malawi being the most developed outcome of this strategy to date.

(c) clearly Smith's initiative was not very effectively co-ordinated with the Portuguese imperialists. When Kaunda announced he would take all exports away from Rhodesia railways he had no problem about diverting a part of the copper to Lobito, Angola.

STRIKES IN DURBAN

2. For the past few weeks Durban in Natal has been the scene of an escalating series of strikes by African workers around the demand for a minimum wage equal to the official minimum subsistence level for a family of five. Currently three-fifths of Durban's 400,000 workers are below this breadline. The upsurge appears to have been totally unforeseen by Government or employers who had no strategy for dealing with the situation. Some firms have conceded, others have taken a hard line, the Minister of Labour says the Government will not tolerate the situation but they've done nothing about it to date. Faced in other words with this mass upsurge of a key sector of their work force, the South African ruling class is temporarily paralysed. The lesson will not be lost on the black masses of Southern Africa. Since the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 the apartheid government had apparently held the whip hand. In Namibia last year, in Durban this

the myth of invulnerability is being cracked. The prospect now is for a renewed upsurge of the nationalist struggle.

REVERSAL

3. A month ago Amilcar Cabral, leader of the PAIGCV liberation forces, was assassinated in Conakry. The authenticated version of the killing appears to be that it was done by elements in the nationalist movement who were prepared to do a deal with the Portuguese. This would have involved the latter abandoning mainland Guine in return for a pledge that the guerillas would not try to take the Cape Verde islands. While such a compromise would be a defeat for the liberation forces it would signal on the part of the Portuguese the complete reversal of their insistence that there would be no question of giving up any of the "overseas territories". Their willingness to negotiate such a settlement is undoubtedly a sign of willingness to cut their losses in Guine, the better to be able to conduct the battles they are fast losing in Mozambique and Angola.

On the three key fronts for the African liberation movements therefore, 1973 has opened with events which demonstrate the weakness and confusion of the regimes in the white enclaves and the potential strength of the liberation forces. There can be every hope that the year will see further decisive steps forward. In such a period it will be the duty of socialists inside the imperialist countries to develop the most active campaigns of solidarity with this new stage of the African revolution.

Tony Southall



INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

(British Section of the Fourth International)

182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

I would like more information about the IMG and its activities.

NAME

ADDRESS

LESSONS OF CAV DEFEAT

The four and a half month battle against redundancies at CAV Fazakerley has ended in total defeat. A mass meeting on 8 February decided to accept Lucas management's latest offer of 8½ weeks redundancy pay — an improvement of just half a week on the original offer. About 350 workers were at the final meeting, fewer than half of the original occupiers and only a third of the factory's labour force. Of these only 15 voted against the decision to end the occupation.

This is the clearest possible indicator of the demoralisation which had set in at CAV in the final two months, and a tragic finale to a struggle which had started with such high hopes, declaring "We will negotiate anytime, anywhere, but not in terms of redundancy."

It would be pointless to try to gloss over the size of the defeat — what we must do is attempt to provide answers to the questions militants should be asking about why it happened and what we can learn from it.

Why, for instance, was there virtually no industrial action in support of CAV?

Why did the majority of the left either ignore the struggle or brush it to one side with platitudes about "the need for support" not backed up by action?

What mistakes did the CAV workers themselves make?

CONCRETE SOLIDARITY

It was clear from the start that the workers at Fazakerley could not win simply by their own efforts. A huge campaign of concrete solidarity actions was needed to put the screws on the Lucas combine. The first steps were the closing of the adjacent Lucas Industrial Equipment site (LIE) and the blacking of transport from Birmingham. But when pickets were sent to stop scab transport going into other Lucas plants on Merseyside the reaction was at first half hearted, and eventually downright hostile. This should have been the signal for the militant traditions of the Merseyside working class to come forward to the aid of CAV, by extending the blacking to the vitally important docks and car factories. But what actually happened? The occupation committee was virtually told "put your own house in order first"! In other words they were supposed to overcome the reactionary attitudes of the other Lucas workers before they could get the help of the more advanced sections of the class. Things might have been different if the Liverpool Trades Council had given a practical lead in promoting and co-ordinating solidarity actions, but they were content with calling two evening meetings of local shop stewards, which took no decisions on concrete action, and one small demonstration.

Naturally these were welcome, and were steps forward in the struggle, but they were no substitute for action which could have won the struggle. The call for a one day conference to draw up a full scale battle plan against the Lucas combine was simply ignored, yet this was the sort of idea which pointed the way forward to victory, precisely because it put the question of industrial action to the forefront, instead of relegating it to the bottom of the list, after factory gate collections, resolu-

By PETE CRESSWELL
and BRIAN SLOCOCK



Rally in support of CAV workers

tion-passing and token demonstrations. In the last month of the occupation the situation had deteriorated to the extent that the main pressure on the CAV workers was to reopen LIE! In other words to abandon the one major economic sanction they held against the management on the grounds that they were depriving people of work!

PASSIVITY OF LEFT

Clearly this situation did not come about by chance. It was directly related to the passivity of the left, both locally and nationally. The only tendencies to take up the issue seriously in their press were the SLL and the IMG. The role of the Communist Party is especially disturbing. They were the one group which could have forced the Trades Council to start a real campaign, but they never moved beyond the level of fund raising activities. As one of the CAV stewards explained after a month of the occupation — financial support was vital, but there was a danger of it becoming an end in itself, and they had no wish to become the highest paid, longest running occupation on record.

If the mass of the working class is to take revolutionary politics seriously we have to show that revolutionaries can: (1) analyse particular struggles scientifically; and (2) on the basis of this suggest concrete measures for winning those struggles.

This is what we have tried to do in *The Red Mole* and by our activities in Liverpool. Having analysed the CAV closure as being the first major Common Market rationalisation we were able to argue why it was so important for the whole working class to rally to the

cause of the CAV workers. Consequently we argued for practical proposals which would have widened the struggle — the building of support committees, a conference of Merseyside shop stewards, a campaign to spread the blacking to more industries and areas (see *The Red Mole*, 59, in particular).

LEADERSHIP

Finally what of the leadership of the CAV workers themselves? It is ridiculous to talk in terms of a sell-out by the stewards — after all their own future was tied to the success or failure of the occupation, and they had nothing to gain from the final agreement. If any sell-out took place, it was the negative attitude of the union leadership. Nevertheless it must be said that mistakes were made in the running of the occupation and we should be prepared to learn from them.

Right from the start there was an unnecessary division between the two major unions involved, the TGWU and the AUEW. These were aggravated by the TGWU's disgraceful policy of only paying partial strike money to women. None of the stewards supported this policy, but it should have been taken up positively to add an extra dimension to the struggle and to unite the workers rather than allowing it to create additional tensions amongst them. This division however was an irritant rather than a fundamental strategic error. The basic mistake was the failure to extend the campaign for increased blacking and in particular to force the local labour movement to take a definite stand on the question of industrial action. For far too long they were allowed to sit on the fence, supporting the "principle" of blacking, but never coming to terms with the practical problems. The final blow was the decision to allow the reopening of LIE, which let the Lucas management off the hook just when the economic effect of the closure was beginning to bite.

It is easy to make these criticisms, of course, and we must remember that the main reason for them was the complete isolation of CAV, but this does not make mistakes any the less crucial. One factor not affected by external considerations was the relationship between the stewards committee and the mass of the workers who were frequently not involved in the decision making process. The stewards were not sufficiently aware of the problems which could arise without mass involvement at every stage. This is not an abstract moral question, but a practical consideration of how the struggle can best be won. If the rank and file are isolated from discussions and decisions there will inevitably be demoralisation and isolation from the day to day activities of the struggle.

The Red Mole has consistently argued that the fight at CAV was a fight for the whole working class. We insisted that it was our duty to ensure that the burden of the struggle did not remain on the CAV workers alone. The working class and the left failed in this duty and the result is a defeat, not just for 350 men and women, but for the class as a whole. We must understand this and learn from it. Then the sacrifice and courageous struggle of the CAV workers will not have been in vain.

Teachers Debate Strategy

Rank and File, the left-wing teachers' organisation within the National Union of Teachers, held a conference in London over the weekend of 10/11 February. The conference was attended by some 200 members.

The central feature of the conference was the emergence during the perspectives debate of two alternative strategies for the organisation. The previous strategic orientation had been contained in a Rank and File pamphlet, *Democracy in Schools*, produced by comrades in the International Socialism group. The ambiguous term 'democracy' has been used in this context as a cover for putting forward what is actually a *participation scheme*. The IS comrades have argued that the control of schools should be in the hands of a reformed Governing Body with equal representation for teachers, pupils, parents and members of the local education authorities, all working within the framework of national education policy.

The IMG argued that the so-called 'equal' parties are in fact unequal, and their interests remain opposed whatever the formal veneer; the scheme represents an attempt by radical teachers to make an *alliance with the capitalist state* in the hope of solving their problems. Hence their struggle against authority in the schools has turned into a struggle for 'democratic' participation in the activities of the capitalist state. IMG comrades argued that this would mean in practice that these new forces could not play an effective role in the class struggle, because the state would co-opt them on to its bodies thus making them appear in the eyes of the working class as *responsible* for the problems in the schools.

The IMG perspectives document went further to propose a new strategic orientation: an alliance with the working class and its allies (including pupils), *against* the capitalist state and the interests of the ruling class in education. The IS forces were confused. Many IS members insist that the thing now is to organise the staff independently of the state, while others spoke of re-writing the pamphlet, *Democracy in Schools*. Yet, IS block voted against IMG on all the major issues.

Such confusion and dishonesty can only alienate non-aligned militants in Rank and File. An organisation should carry out an honest assessment of its past. The only way in which an organisation like Rank and File can move forward is by recognising *ideological* differences (e.g. between libertarians and Marxists) while uniting in action all those forces who are prepared to struggle along a principled strategic axis and on a clear class basis. By the end of the conference, 75 members signed a petition requesting a special conference of the organisation to discuss Ireland and the question of women in education and the union. The petition reflected the frustration of at least a third of the militants at the Conference over the axing of many debates and the premature ending of the Conference.

A positive feature of the conference was the salaries document written jointly by IS and IMG militants, proposing concrete steps for Rank and File in the London allowance struggle and the national claim. If IS can break with its past there are big chances for building Rank and File. **JIM DONOGHUE**

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PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY SOCIAL—Friday, 23 Feb., 8 p.m. onwards at Dame Collet House, London E.1.

(Stepney Green tube). Disco dance, bar. Tickets 30p at door or 25p from Patrick Doherty, 34 Dalston Lane, London E.8.

SAVE FAMILY ALLOWANCES! Public Meeting organised by North & East London Women's Family Allowances Campaign—will include break-down of the Green Paper and discussion. All welcome. Conway Hall, 26 February, 7.30 p.m.

LETTER FROM LONG KESH

Dear Comrades,

Greetings from Long Kesh Camp. Please accept this short letter as an acknowledgement and also as an appreciation for the interest that IMG has shown me as regards the socialist political material which I have gratefully received.

I have been Interned/Detained since the first round up of political dissidents on the morning of 9th August 1971, and have been held without charge or trial at the above Camp since then. My local Peoples Democracy group (PD) have gone to great pains to ensure that my time is not wasted by sending me a wealth of material to study. The IMG paper, 'Red Mole', is really top class, and I sincerely hope you achieve the objective of a weekly paper. My financial resources are rather limited but please accept the enclosed £1 (one pound) towards the Fund-Drive.

Comrades, you are assured of the support of the Irish Revolutionaries in your fight against British Capitalism, and in return your support for our

struggle against British Imperialism has not gone unnoticed. Our objectives are just ones and we are confident of success although this has been made more difficult by the fostered differences in the working class created admirably by the establishment; but I do believe they shall eventually see that they are only but tools in the hands of the British Government.

Thank you Comrades for the concern shown to my country and to myself.

Yours fraternally,

Phil McCullough

Phil McCullough
(Political Detainee, Long Kesh Internment Camp, Lisburn, Ulster)

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