

# RED WEEKLY

**INSIDE:**

**INTERVIEW WITH  
SYD BIDWELL**

(CHAIRMAN, 'TRIBUNE' GROUP  
OF MPs) -centre pages

19 JUNE 1975 No. 106

PRICE 10p



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

**Free contraception &  
abortion on demand!**



free  
contraception  
and abortion  
on demand

### In what ways does the James White (Amendment) Bill pose a threat?

James White, Labour MP for Glasgow, Pollok, claims that his Bill is an attempt to improve on the 1967 Abortion Act and to cut down on racketeering in the private sector.

But the 'Amendment' Bill is in fact a disguised attempt to make it even harder for women to get legal abortions. It threatens to change the medical grounds for abortion from the comparative clause of 1867 — 'continuing the pregnancy involves a greater risk of injury to her physical or mental health than an abortion' — to an absolute and highly restrictive basis, 'risk of serious injury', mental or physical. A study of the grounds used for obtaining legal abortions since 1967 shows that about 80,000 women a year will no longer be eligible if the Bill becomes law.

The Bill would prevent any woman under 16 from receiving advice on pregnancy control unless a parent was present. It would exclude foreign women entirely (unless conception occurred on British soil) because a 20-week residency restriction would match the proposed restriction banning abortion after the twentieth week of pregnancy.

Other clauses impose restrictions on doctors entitled to approve abortion; on the types of agencies entitled to counsel or refer abortions; on the freedom of the press to publish abortion-related information; and on the publication of the identity of someone giving evidence in court. The Bill would also change the law in relation to the burden of proof. If charged with performing an abortion outside the permitted grounds of White's Bill, it would be up to the medical staff to prove that they did not break the law. Usually British Criminal Law assumes the accused is 'innocent until proved guilty'.

### Should fetuses have full human rights from the moment of conception?

The exact moment at which human life begins is a question that has been debated for centuries. Genuine consciousness begins at birth. Viability — the ability to survive as an independent organism — can be established on average only in the eighth month of pregnancy. At conception the fertilised egg is not a human being, but only a potential human being.

Although governments issue birth certificates and not conception certificates, while a pregnant woman's passport acknowledges only one traveller, and foetuses are neither taxed nor tax deductible, the Church insists that the mass of cells scientifically known as foetal tissue are endowed with rights so powerful that they displace the woman's right to life.

In the few instances when a woman's life is endangered and the Church allows abortion, the woman is often mutilated to preserve the foetus intact. In the case of tubal pregnancy (when the fertilised egg begins to develop in the fallopian tube) the woman would die without an abortion, but the foetus would have no chance of full development under any circumstances. However, so great are the rights of foetal tissue that the Church only sanctions the removal of the entire fallopian tube — thereby leaving the foetus intact but sterilising one side of the woman's body.

### Is the foetal right to life so great because the Church condemns murder?

The Church claims that abortion is murder and cannot be allowed. But the Church still sanctions 'just wars', capital punishment and self-defence. It justifies *beforehand* any policeman who kills in 'self-defence', any soldier who kills in time of war, and any government that executes in error. But women are *condemned beforehand* for abortion.

While the Church has been inconsistent in its stand on abortion, and hypocritical in its stand on murder, it has always jealously guarded its right to determine what women may do with their own bodies.

### What forces are involved in the anti-abortion campaign?

The Catholic Church is not the only force involved in restricting abortion. In most countries women face prohibitive laws as well as Church rulings.

Those who oppose abortion are mainly

# questions and answers on abortion



NAC supporters marched through the East End of London last Friday to the local Labour Party headquarters, where 9,000 signatures on a petition were handed to Ian Mikardo MP.  
Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

allowing abortion on a few grounds, the anti-abortionists immediately reacted by forming SPUC, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child. It claims 8,000 members in 80 groups and can mobilise up to 80,000 on demonstration.

SPUC claims to be an independent body, although it is heavily funded and backed by both the Catholic and Anglican Churches. Mobilisations are organised directly from the pulpit, with coaches collecting people at the church door and transporting them to rallies and demonstration.

Although SPUC and Life deny any connection with the National Front, in Harrow the NF provided SPUC with stewards. SPUC denies concern with any issue except foetal rights, but in 1972 SPUC members circulated a petition for 'Public Decency' in support of The National Viewers And Listeners Association and the National Festival of Light — hardly concerned with foetal rights!

### If foetal rights are not really the main issue, why is the right to abortion opposed?

Under Roman law, no concern for foetal rights existed and abortion was normal practice. However, a law did exist punishing women who had abortion without their husband's consent. The crime was 'wifely disobedience',

on the 'right' to control female reproduction. Policing chastity within marriage for inheritance purposes has given way to an assertion of the 'right' to control and punish female sexuality.

Abortion has always been practised, whether legal or not. The dangers of illegal abortion are held up as the punishment for the crime of sex. According to Dr. Mary Belton (National Board of Catholic Women), 'young girls would think twice about sleeping around' if they knew about the dangers of abortion. Since legal abortions are not dangerous and since the wages of sin ought to be death, many anti-abortionists express their punitive attitude to women by their desire to make abortion illegal.

Sir Keith Joseph last year expressed concern that overly available contraception would encourage 'casual' copulation. Others have expressed anxiety that it would be difficult to control women if women could control their own bodies. Besides the prohibitions of the Church and State, the hierarchy of the medical profession plays a key role in controlling the administration and implementation of abortion regulations. In Britain a woman must find two doctors willing to approve her abortion. In other

### Why has the right to abortion become such an issue in recent years?

As women have begun to demand more control over their lives, the question of control over fertility has become more of an issue. Modern technology and medical advances have meant that medical abortions are safer than ever before, and contraceptive methods more reliable. But restrictive laws deny them the right to exercise that control.

The arguments of the anti-abortionists carry less and less weight. People have greater access to medical knowledge. Few believe that abortion leads to 'hardening of the

### 'ABORTION ON DEMAND and the struggle for Socialism'

Speakers: Linda Smith (NAC Steering Cttee) and member of French MLAC.

Venue: Roebuck pub, 108 Tottenham Court Road (Warren Street tube).

Date: Tuesday 24 June, 7.30pm

Why has the right to choose been restricted in all major countries—from the Soviet Union under Stalin to the 'advanced' capitalist countries? Hear and discuss a socialist perspective for the



Nurses at the Whittington Hospital in North London listen to points made by NAC speakers at an ad hoc meeting organised during a picket of the hospital last week. Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

the personality' as claimed by SPUC, or a '59 per cent increase in mental disorder' as claimed by SPUC's American counterpart, Birthright.

In Britain the experience over the last eight years since the introduction of the 1967 Act has been positive. The Lane Commission reported that the Act was beneficial and should not be amended, adding that it was also alleviating great suffering.

**What did the 1967 Abortion Act provide?**

Under the terms of the Act, 88,000 of the 109,000 women who received abortions in 1974 got them on health grounds. The Act, though still restrictive, still ineffective in implementing abortion on the National Health Service, and still abusive to women who have to prove themselves 'unfit' for the role of motherhood, at least introduced the concept of a right to legal abortion and provided many women with safe abortions.

Deaths and injuries related to self-induced or back-street abortions have decreased sharply since 1967. The known death rate dropped from 52 in 1965 to 12 in 1973. In 1973 the overall death rate for legal abortions was four per 100,000. Giving birth is about three times as dangerous.

The death rate for medical abortions would be much lower in Britain if it was not for the practice of carrying out sterilisation at the same time as abortion. Among those not sterilised at the same time, mortality was two per 100,000. It would also be lower (about one per 100,000) if abortion was carried out before the thirteenth week of pregnancy. If the procedures for obtaining abortion were speeded up and the medical profession discouraged from sterilising women at the time of abortion, we could expect an even lower death rate.

Since the introduction of the 1967 Act there has been a marked decrease in the casualties associated with illegal back-street abortion. In 1966 septic abortion discharges from English hospitals stood at 2,500. By 1972 this figure had dropped to 1,000. In 1965 18 per cent of the Female London Emergency Bed service admissions were for botched abortions. By 1974 only 9 per cent were abortion admissions.

In Italy, where abortion is illegal and contraception is banned by the Church, the rate of illegal abortion is very high, and 2,000 die every year.

**How could the 1967 Law be improved?**

Since the introduction of the 1967 Act many women have still had to get their abortions illegally or through the private sector, owing to the restrictions that remain in the law and the lack of abortion facilities within the National Health Service.

A conscience clause in the Act has allowed doctors to refuse to refer women, and hospital boards and groups of doctors to prevent

year had 12 abortions per 100 live births, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield and Birmingham area, hospitals had six or less per 100 live births.

Even where abortion facilities do exist, they are feeling the effects of the cuts in Government expenditure. The Tories took £111 million from the budget for social services. The Labour Government has not replaced this and has allowed the closure of abortion facilities as 'non-essential' services.

If these cuts continue and the James White Bill is passed, abortion under safe medical conditions, freely available on the National Health Service, would be even further away. In response to these attacks, the Women's Conference of the TUC recently passed a motion which 'recognising that a woman's right over her own body should be a fundamental right, demands that full and well publicised contraception facilities should be available to all women on the National Health Service and that abortion on demand should be available on the NHS'.

The 1967 Act makes women go through the humiliating process of trying to convince two doctors that they are mentally or physically incapable of continuing a pregnancy. The 1967 Act assumes that the normal state of a healthy woman is to be pregnant and happy. It does not make abortion freely available on the NHS and it does not give women the right to choose.

**How has the Labour Party responded to the abortion issue?**

So far the Labour Party has avoided taking a stand, claiming that it is a matter of individual conscience which way MPs vote on the White Bill. Although it would be logical to expect abortions to be available like any other

operation on the NHS which a Labour Government set up, the Labour Party is loath to take this position. There are pressures to cut the NHS and there are deep divisions within the Labour Party on whether women should be allowed the 'right' to abortion.

It is no surprise to discover right-wing groups like the National Front backing SPUC, but many people are surprised to find so many anti-abortionists in the leadership of the Labour Party. Vehement anti-female attitudes often emerge from the smiling facade of concern for 'the sanctity of life'. Many of the foetus worshippers in the Labour ranks in Parliament show hatred and fear of women exercising any degree of control over their lives.

When Leo Abse, Labour MP and sponsor of the James White Bill, said 'surely if you kill a man's child that is the penultimate step to the ultimate emasculation - to the castration of the male himself', he gave expression to one of the most deeply-rooted attitudes in our society - the belief that the role of women is to be breeders of men's children.

**Is the demand for abortion the same as population control?**

The Population Control Lobby is in favour of abortion and contraception, but their emphasis is on controlling the birth-rate. When women also demand the right to have children, the 'control' side of their argument comes to the fore. Population control is used especially against the Third World, with Malthusian arguments that world food 'shortages' are caused by excessive Third World population growth, causing famine in the 'underdeveloped' areas and high prices in Europe. With 40 per cent of its finance from US sources, the United Nations Fund for Pop-

ulation Activities claims that the failure of the UN Poverty Programme was due to 'crisis' population growth in the Third World.

The present law that is being used in Italy to prosecute anyone having or performing an abortion was first introduced under Mussolini, banning abortion as an interference in breeding the 'pure race'.

In 1944, a British Royal Commission recommended pro-natal incentives because 'a sub-replacement birth rate would encourage immigration and so reduce the proportion of home-bred stock'.

Black mothers on the United States Welfare service are told they will have their payments cut if they do not accept sterilisation. Conversely, many young white women in Britain who have not produced their 2.2 per cent quota of children are not allowed sterilisation on request because they represent 'socially desirable' breeding stock.

The pro-abortion movement believes it is the individual woman's right to control her own fertility and thus often links demands for the control of sterilisation to the demands for contraception and abortion to be made freely available.

**What is meant by the slogan 'A woman's right to choose'?**

The right to choose whether to terminate a pregnancy or bear a child belongs to the individual woman. It involves the right to control one's own body. The demand for safe legal contraception and abortion that is freely available on the National Health Service is part of this demand. It also involves the right to choose or decline sterilisation without coercion.

The James White Bill threatens to wipe out the limited gains of the 1967 Act. It would eliminate even the grounds of rape. James White claims: 'If a drunken thug raped my younger daughter, I'd see to it that she had an abortion if she wanted it.' It is a bitter irony that the recent House of Lords ruling (that a man accused of rape is not guilty if he genuinely believes 'no matter how unreasonable his belief was' that the woman consented) would now take away from James White's daughter the grounds of rape by which she might have got the abortion.

These attacks on women are all connected to the question of who controls a woman's body. Former Minister of Health, Sir Keith Joseph, is in favour of selective birth control applied only to lower income women. This anti-working class refinement of the population control lobbies makes it all the more important to explain the fundamental right of a woman to control her own reproduction.

**How is 'The right to choose' being fought for?**

The fight against restrictive legislation and for a woman's right to choose is being organised by the National Abortion Campaign. People are urged to support the National Abortion Campaign as a way of encouraging a mass response to the present attack and building an ongoing campaign that can take the struggle further to remove all restrictions on abortion and contraception and to make the National Health Service provide abortion, contraception and sterilisation for women as their right to choose.



GWYN  
VORHAUS

**NEW IMG  
PAMPHLET  
ON ABORTION !**

Free Abortion on Demand: A Key Task for the Workers' Movement - IMG pamphlet just printed, price 10p (post 5p). Bulk rates on application. This pamphlet explains why the fight for abortion helps to build the unity of the working class. It takes up the issue of the family under capitalism and shows in a clear way how this acts as an obstacle to the liber-



NAC supporters picketing King's College Hospital in South London last week were supported by many of the staff



Among banners on Leeds NAC demo last Saturday was that of Jackson Boilers AUEW Shop Stewards Committee—see interview with convenor Tony Maguire below.

# NEXT STEPS FOR THE ABORTION CAMPAIGN

Grumbles are now coming even from the Home Office about the problems contained in James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill. Hints are being dropped that the Bill will probably be shelved. Even some Labour MPs who oppose the Bill are now saying: 'Look, the Campaign is not so important now. The Bill will not go through.'

But the Home Office has no intention of tossing out White's Bill and replacing it with one that gives women the right to choose and provides free abortion and contraception on demand inside the National Health Service. The Home Office grounds for wanting to reject the White Bill are on the basis that it is 'impracticable'. Furthermore, the wave of protest that has begun to sweep through the labour movement against this reactionary Bill is making a number of Labour politicians more than a little uncomfortable.

It is these twin pressures which are leading to a situation where the Bill will either be shelved, or drastically amended. But does that solve the problem? Even the status quo is insufficient. The 1967 Abortion Act represented a gain but it did not give women the right to choose. It did not provide a full and comprehensive contraception and abortion service freely available to all women on the National Health.

Whilst it is correct to defend the gains made in 1967 against the attacks of White and his cohorts, the campaign must go beyond a defence of the 1967 Act. It must insist on the unfettered and unqualified right of the woman to take the decision on whether she wants to have a child or not.

## Legislation

For many of those who support restrictions on abortion — and there are a good number to be found in the precincts of the Home Office — the real fault of the White Bill is its clumsiness. They would prefer a more sophisticated Bill to be drafted, which would serve the same purpose, but in a less obvious way. In no sense can any reliance be put on these civil servants and the capitalist politicians.

The National Abortion Campaign demonstration this weekend has been built as the result of a determined nation-wide campaign. NAC has opposed all restrictive legislation on abortion and has won over to that position not just women but many workers inside the trade unions. A lot of people who first supported NAC on this one demand have learned through the campaign that women's rights are also restricted by the 1967 Act. Many of them have been won over to supporting free abortion on demand.

NAC has also driven home some good lessons in working class internationalism. On the demonstration will be contingents from all over Europe. By fighting the restrictions on foreign women having abortions — a central aim of White's Bill — NAC has extended the hand of international solidarity to the women in those countries in Europe who suffer from even more restrictive and reactionary legislation on abortion than their British sisters.

Just as it is correct to fight the repression of the Chilean workers, so it is correct to fight the vile laws of the Italian state which result in 2-3,000 Italian working women dying each year as a result of the abortion laws there.

The NAC campaign has shown the potential strength that women possess when they organise. What is more, it has spelt out to the labour movement a clear and dramatic lesson — to ignore the right of women to choose is both dangerous and politically criminal. The 21 June demonstration is not a 'women's' demonstration. It is a demonstration

Whatever happens to the White Bill, the fight for the right of women to control their own lives must not only continue but be extended. A basis for a big, genuine united movement has been created not only on the question of abortion, but also around the whole Working Women's Charter campaign. Such a campaign can play a vital role in unifying the labour movement and can thereby show women that their road to emancipation lies through the working class movement.

Irrespective of what happens to the White Bill, NAC should be working out concrete and practical steps for the next period. A national conference of NAC will probably take place in the autumn. Before then a series of local and regional conferences should be held to discuss both the way forward and the broadening of the campaign.

## 'We will fight for industrial action'

What support is the NAC campaign getting from the labour movement? We asked TONY MAGUIRE, AUEW convenor of Jackson Boilers in Leeds and a member of the IMG, who is currently leading a stoppage over the annual negotiations.

Why did your AUEW shop stewards committee decide to support the NAC demonstration in Leeds on 14 June?

In engineering we know how women are discriminated against — no apprenticeships, regarding to avoid equal pay, and so on. The equal pay clause is always the first one to be dropped in any pay negotiations.

But women aren't just discriminated against on the shop-floor. They can't play a full part in union activities because they have to go home to a second job of

Not being able to get an abortion if you need one is just part of this. That's why we decided to go on the demo on Saturday with the Jackson Boilers banner.

What is the situation in Leeds as regards getting an abortion?

I was talking to a nurse who was saying that as far as she knew they'd only performed two abortions in six months on the NHS at the Women's Hospital. And one of the consultants, a Mr

an abortion, and pay — and that's even without the James White Bill.

Also the city council is making big cuts in Leeds on health, education, everything, and so that'll mean even less chance of abortions on the NHS. We'll be picketing the next council meeting about this, on 25 June.

What's the Labour Party's attitude?

It's disgusting that James White is a Labour MP. We've learnt not to expect much from the Leeds Labour MPs — after all, Denis Healey's one of them. But the NAC campaign can put enough pressure on them to make them vote against White, even if it's only to protect their own interests.

The Women's Trades Union Congress meeting in March went on record for 'free contraception and abortion on demand provided by the NHS'. NAC should make it a central priority to get that resolution endorsed in every trade union branch, trades council and work towards getting it adopted by all the unions when they hold their national conferences.

The Labour Party has played a disgusting role on the White Bill. It has stubbornly refused to take any position, thereby providing a 'bi-partisan' cover for this anti-working class legislation. NAC should fight to get Constituency Labour Parties to support the Women's TUC resolution, so that when the Labour Party Conference meets in Blackpool this year it goes on record for that resolution.

## National Health Service

It is not possible to fight for free contraception and abortion inside the National Health Service without taking a stand against the cuts in social expenditure. In 1972, only 34 per cent of all abortions were done in the NHS. The rest were carried out in the private sector — costing never less than £60, often well over £200.

The decline of the NHS, resulting in hospital closures like the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital and the Liverpool Road Hospital, means still less facilities for abortion. At the same time the racketeering grows in the private sector.

It is working class people — particularly women — who are most drastically affected by cuts in the NHS. NAC should therefore link itself with the conference being called by the Medical Committee Against Private Practice, which aims to unify all those forces fighting for a full and comprehensive health service based on the needs of the working class.

If the White Bill gets defeated or is shelved, organisations like the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, groups like Catholic Action, and all the other anti-abortion groups will be enraged. There is no doubt that they will redouble their efforts to get new anti-abortion legislation prepared and accepted. NAC must set itself the task of fighting these groups.

It must be prepared to organise counter-demonstrations. It must mobilise teachers and students in the NUSS to oppose SPUC's propaganda in the schools. It must hold regular meetings in the areas and it must turn out leaflets and pamphlets defending women's right to choose.

For this campaign to be successful it means drawing in ever-larger numbers of women. It means taking the issues into the factories, the classrooms, the offices and onto the housing estates. But it also needs the support of all serious socialists and trade unionists who must give it their full and unstinted backing.



see it as a moral thing, you decide according to your conscience, but for us it's a political question, of discrimination against women, and especially working class women who can't afford Harley Street clinics.

If the Bill is passed, what's the next step?

We've heard that some doctors and nurses might refuse to

# WOMEN IN THE SOVIET UNION

The 1917 Revolution offered exciting possibilities for transforming the position of women in the new Soviet Union. The first workers' state, by providing the basis for the emancipation of women, could have inspired millions of working class women throughout the world to identify with the proletarian revolution.

Unfortunately it offered nothing more than a brief flicker of hope. Soon the light of women's emancipation was buried under the smothering darkness of Stalinism.

The Soviet bureaucrats needed an obedient compliant working class. The 'stable' family and the subservient mother were essential props on which that process rested. Who needs emancipated, political women 'interfering' in Soviet society, when the bureaucracy can take all the necessary decisions?

In her pamphlet *A Woman's Place in the USSR*, Tamara Volkova — basing herself on recent official surveys — shows the inequalities and oppression that Soviet women still suffer from. The USSR boasts that over half the workforce consists of women. But as Volkova explains, 'there are 19 million more women than men in the country.'

She explains: 'The real situation of female employment is grasped only if we look at persons outside the labour force; 94 per cent of those eligible but not working are of the female sex...' Surveys show 'that most of these women would be willing to work but the burden of domestic duties prevents them. In Leningrad 50 per cent of those questioned replied that they would work if there was somewhere to put their children....'

## HOUSEWORK

Housework, which has been women's lot since time immemorial, still retains its stifling grip. Russian sociologists have calculated 'that housework takes up to 150 billion hours every year: its abolition would be equivalent to the freeing of another 60 million persons for production.' The crippling burden of this work falls on the women.

A survey made of 8,468 women in Gorky shows that the less well off the family, the longer the wife is likely to spend on housework. Unskilled workers spend 3½-5 hours a day. The better paid specialists spend 2½ - 3½ hours a day. A survey of their working week showed that a woman with no children spent 28.1 hours a week on housework and personal care, whereas women with three children spent 48.5 hours.

Another survey carried out amongst 280 women in two Vilnius plants revealed that 67.1 per cent of the women did the washing and ironing by themselves in contrast to 1.6 per cent of the men; 81.2 per cent of women washed, dressed and fed the children by themselves, compared to 1.2 per cent of the men.

## 'KITCHEN FIRST'

This perpetuation of the age-old division of labour is reinforced when the Soviet magazine *The Week* (Vol. 6, 1974) approvingly publishes letters which say: 'A wife must be a wife and only second a doctor, an engineer or professor; not the other way round; or com-

plain: 'Why do girls try to be like men?' Another letter advises young men to 'find a representative of the "weaker" sex who is feminine, cultivated and an excellent housekeeper.'

That issue of *The Week* included 10 such letters, all printed without editorial comment — a sure sign of approval. It also had a caption which read: 'Feminity and more feminity — such is the opinion of the majority of our readers...'

### communism versus stalinism no. 4

#### A WOMAN'S PLACE IN THE U.S.S.R.



by Tamara Volkova  
preface by Branka Magas

IMG 25p

Even the one letter that did speak of women's emancipation said: 'The cultured man may not be gallant....He may not know how to cook a tasty meal, but he does know how to help his wife around the house.' There is many a trendy young Tory who would subscribe to those views.

## COMMUNIST PARTY

In 1970 only 21 per cent of Soviet Communist Party members were women. This represented an increase of 0.8 per cent in five years and is only 0.3 per cent higher than the 1950 figure. This absence, as Volkova explains, is 'not just a result of formal education. Although in the highest reaches of the educational system women are still under-represented, the educational opportunities appear in general to be genuinely equal....'

But the burden of the family, the onerous nature of domestic work, and the strains that these impose on the individual woman, mean that they have little time to think, study, or engage in political or social activities.



A Gorky motor works—while over half the Soviet workforce consists of women, there are 19 million more women than men in the country; as Tamara Volkova explains, 'The real situation of female employment is grasped only if we look at persons outside the labour force; 94 per cent of those eligible but not working are of the female sex'.

Two Russian sociologists who made a study of women in Leningrad and Kostrona wrote: 'A woman, especially if she is a mother, tries to spend as much of her non-working time as she can in the family....'

## HOUSEHOLD TASKS

Because there has been no real effort to socialise household tasks, the domestic jobs still remain like a fetter around women's necks. A mere 2 per cent of Soviet washing goes through public laundries. Even in Leningrad only 15 per cent of children are covered by creche facilities. Ten per cent of women in Leningrad who have just had children do not go back to work immediately because there are not enough nursery facilities.

There is still a chronic shortage of places to eat out which supply well-cooked cheap meals. When the two sociologists Kharchev and Golod questioned 1,230 women in Leningrad, 256 of them considered the expense of canteen food 'the main drawback' and 211 complained that the meals 'were poorly cooked'. Only 12 women, however, thought communal cooking was unnecessary.

As Volkova writes: 'Given that women have to shoulder the domestic burden themselves, receiving little help from the state in the form of communal facilities or co-operation from their husbands, there is nothing surprising about their secondary unequal position.'

## 'RELIC OF THE PAST'

The Soviet bureaucracy control production administration and propaganda in the USSR. Apologists for the bureaucracy claim that male chauvinism in Russia is a 'relic of the past'. It is of course true that old prejudices die hard, but whilst the socialisation of domestic labour drags at a tortoise-like pace the material basis for these ideas still remains.

Not only has the allocation of economic resources to public services been insufficient — in 1964 they accounted for only 5 per cent — the use by an all powerful government of the propaganda media has been scandalous. Volkova correctly denounces the media for 'not only holding consciousness at the level of economic development' but 'keeping it behind the level of possibilities that the productive forces now offer.'

## 'FEMININE VIRTUES'

After the revolution the school was considered to be a major instrument in destroying the conservative backwardness of the home. Today the school wages no serious fight to combat reactionary attitudes to women. Although education is co-educational, the school uniform accentuates the two groups. Boys do metalwork and carpentry — the girls do needlework and cookery. The now deceased Sukhomlinsky — a modern and officially well-received Soviet educator — sanctioned this division saying it was important to teach girls 'to be mothers and to possess the 'feminine virtues'

One reader wrote in 1968 to *Kominternskaya Pravda* asking: 'Why should I humiliate her (his girl friend) by bowing and fawning?' He explained: 'She does the same job as I. And works no worse than us lads.' The editors referred him to General Ignatiev, who said: 'One should never forget for a moment that women are the weaker sex, that every woman

Unlike the architects of the Revolution who grasped that a programme of action was needed to bring about the liberation of women, the epigones say that the family is a socialist institution. They claim that it will play a key role in education and the socialisation of Soviet citizens.

This is a position that has nothing in common with Marxism. The Bolsheviks were for the abolition of the bourgeois family. They understood that this corresponds to a central task of the proletarian revolution which is to end the oppression of women.

The abolition of wage labour through nationalising and socialising the means of production lays the basis for a planned economy. This establishes the means for the socialisation of domestic labour, ending for all time the alienation and exploitation which rests on the privatisation of labour.

## EMANCIPATION

The emergence of the bureaucracy temporarily brought a halt to that process in the USSR. By taking out of the hands of the working class the state power and appropriating it for its own use, Stalinism dominated the working class and excluded it from political life.

The bureaucracy are congenitally incapable of transforming the backwardness that runs right through Soviet society. What characterises the bureaucracy is its devotion to its own privileges and its deep hostility to the working masses. Soviet women will only achieve their emancipation in alliance with the Russian working class. That will involve transforming the political institutions of the USSR and once more putting Soviet power back into the hands of working men and women.

The world-wide struggle of socialists in the fight for the liberation of women can give impetus and act as an inspiration to the Soviet working class, when they — as inevitably they will — begin to fight for the restoration of Soviet democracy.

Dodie Wepler



## — Red Books News! —

**BENN'S THEORETICIAN**  
Spokesman Books has published Stuart Holland's *Strategy for Socialism*, 75p (post 8p). Holland played a key role in elaborating policies on the National Enterprise Board, public accountability, Planning Agreements, etc., which became known as Bennisism (indeed he got the reputation of being their 'theoretician').

**BENN SPEAKS**  
Spokesman has also published a collection of speeches and articles by Benn, covering such topics as Industrial Democracy, the Common Market, Mass Media, Civil Liberties, Open Government and Labour Party democracy. Entitled *Speeches by Tony Benn*, it costs £3.

**TWO CONNOLLY CLASSICS**  
The Cork Workers Club has reprinted *The Connolly-Walker Controversy*, 25p (post 5p); and *Ireland upon the Dissecting Table*, 60p (post 8p). Connolly's polemic with Walker (Belfast ILP leader) concerns the problems of Irish socialist unity and the need for socialists to take up the national question. Many of Walker's arguments sound suspiciously like those of present day sectarians.

*Ireland upon the Dissecting Table* is a mai or collection of Connolly's writing on such topics as Partition, Orangism and the Protestant working class, the National Question, Imperialist War, Strike Strategy, etc.

**SOVIET ECONOMIC DEBATE**  
Pluto has published a new book by

in *Soviet Economic Debates*, £3.95 (post 18p). This book demonstrates that these debates of the 1950s and 1960s, although couched in technical terms, were still at root political disputes. Indeed Lewin relates them to the disputes of the early 1920s between Bolshevik leaders.

**LABOUR PARTY**  
The discussions going on about the Labour Party, the evolution of the Labour Government, Bennisism, etc., make Ralph Miliband's *Parliamentary Socialism*, £1.50 (post 24p) extremely relevant. Sub-titled 'A study of the Politics of Labour', the book is an extremely well written account and analysis of the Labour Party's history

# Tribune letter to Wilson

The Tribune Group of MPs rejects the acceptance of coalition policies which embrace those of the CBI, the City of London financiers, the Conservative Party and the Cabinet as reflected by your shuffle of Ministers.

We cannot be satisfied that you now have any resolute intention to implement the major parts of the election manifestos, or to operate the principles which inspired them.

Consequently, we serve notice that we shall propose by all means and campaigns within and without the House to ensure that the policies of the Labour movement are pursued with the utmost vigour.

Having been elected to carry through the manifesto policies we reject reduction in public expenditure and the drift towards more unemployment as being incompatible with those policies.

## Wilson's reply

I have received your letter of 11 June about the Government's resolution in carrying out the policies on which it was elected. It seems to me regrettably hysterical in tone and inaccurate in context. The Government, the party and its leader, have rejected any ideas of a coalition, and by the same token have rejected any adoption of coalition policies. To associate recent ministerial changes with a fundamental change in party attitudes is ludicrous.

The Government will carry into reality the two manifestos on which we fought last year's elections. You will be the first to agree no government has done more to fulfil its pledges than this one, or done it more quickly.

If you are really talking about the Industry Bill and the National Enterprise Board, I have made it clear that the Government will fully honour what we set out in the manifesto, and in last autumn's White Paper on which you and I and all of us fought the October election.

I welcome your announcement of "campaigns within and without the House" in support of the manifesto, which I interpret as the full-hearted desire to support the Government which is carrying out the pledges in that manifesto. The Labour movement will be particularly gratified to see you and those on whose behalf you have written harnessing to this task those undeniable oratorical and debating talents which your friends have sometimes felt have been diverted to more diversionary objectives.

To amend the words of a distinguished predecessor, such a period of support on your part would now be welcome.

# TRIBUNE AGAIN

● What do you think Wilson's economic policies now amount to?

I think Wilson's policy is to hold out until he gets the oil from the North Sea. Until then he borrows and encourages US investment. I am sure that this is behind the so-called defence expenditure review, which doesn't involve any real reduction at all, as he won't break with the United States. We aren't abandoning nuclear arms, we are part of the US global strategy and the last Government did not even disown the Americans in Vietnam when everyone else did.

● What impact do you think the Tribune group's action in sending the letter of protest to Wilson has had?

I think Wilson has been rattled. This is the strongest worded rocket which has ever been sent from the Tribune group. My personal view all along has been that Wilson was on the right, but hitherto the Parliamentary left has tended to support Wilson. Now people are saying he's a phoney — no different to the rest of the right wing. The reshuffle has clarified a lot now.

● What do you think of Judith Hart's statement about a 'catastrophe' facing the Labour Party?

Judith Hart's not a member of the Tribune group. But we support her statement. We hope that she will join us and others will join us. Our aim is to win over the Parliamentary Labour Party.

● Do you think that Benn should have accepted his move?

I think Tony Benn should have dug in his heels and refused to go. It's reported that he took the advice of Jack Jones and Ron Hayward. I think they advised him wrongly. At the moment I think some trade union leaders are not as clear on these questions as some MPs — although Clive Jenkins grasped the point.

● What do you think about Prentice and demands for his expulsion?

He's inconsequential. Michael Foot called

Following the government reshuffle the Tribune group of MPs put out a letter of protest to Wilson. This received wide publicity in the press under headlines such as 'Left Rebels against Wilson'. To clarify the points of the Tribune letter, to find whether the Tribune MPs now intend to vote and organise against the government's policies on expenditure cuts and unemployment, or what is involved is confined to protest letters, Red Weekly interviewed SYD BIDWELL — the chairman of the Tribune group. The interview was given on June 12th — the day Wilson's reply was issued

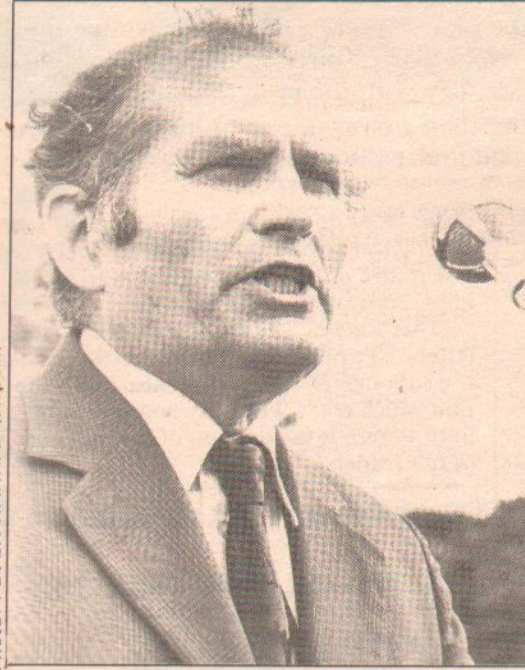


Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)

him an economic illiterate and I would call him a political illiterate as well.

He calls for 'moderation' as a way to deal with problems, but I would like to know how much his moderation has done for the old age pensioners in his constituency in East Ham. He chatters on about militancy and moderation because he doesn't know that the whole history of the labour movement was built on militancy. I believe there are moves against him in his constituency now.

● What tactics do you intend to follow in Parliament? Does your statement mean that you will vote against any public expenditure cuts?

If public expenditure cuts come before the the House we will vote against if we get the chance. But you can't defeat the Government for the hell of it, and we won't vote against on Tory terms. We try to get amendments down so that we vote on socialist terms which will be understood outside Parliament — al-

though the Speaker generally only calls Tory amendments. This is what we achieved on the defence cuts. We think we are achieving something of a breakthrough.

● What about struggles outside Parliament — for example, the NUR claim?

I think the NUR claim could be a decisive test for the Government and the left. I wholeheartedly support the railway workers. I have spoken on the question. I think the Government should meet their claim in full and I warmly support the NUR struggle.

● On another key issue, how do you see the struggle to release the Shrewsbury Two?

I know some organisations have called for a general strike. I don't believe you can have a general strike until the workers understand the issue and there is a solid strike in the workers' own industry. I believe the right way is for the TUC to refuse to talk to the Government on any issue until the Shrewsbury Two are released.

● What is your attitude to the so-called core of Government policy — the social contract?

We should be concentrating on the question of the inequality of wealth and of public ownership. Unless a Labour Government faces up to the issue of public ownership, of Clause Four, the battle within the Labour Party will get more bitter.

We should stop the nebulous terminology of the social contract. We need extra expenditure on education and the tipping of the economy towards public expenditure. We have to fight for this as part of fighting for a standard of living which the anarchy of the capitalist economy can no longer sustain.

## THE TRIBUNE LETTER — WHAT WE THINK

From the point of view of present struggles the first thing that must be said on the Tribune letter to Wilson is that if the Tribune MPs really do vote and campaign against future public expenditure cuts, and the unemployment this creates, this will be a real step forward for the workers' movement. We must, however, confess that we are sceptical about whether this will really occur. The Tribune group has voted against the Government on issues such as the EEC and defence. Individual Tribune MPs — Syd Bidwell, for example — have voted against measures such as the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. But the Tribune group did not, for example, vote against a Budget which already included swingeing public expenditure cuts.

However this question of votes is one on which we would be delighted to be proved wrong. But even if the Tribune left did vote against that would not in itself constitute an adequate political strategy.

Where the Tribune group statement is most obviously wrong is in its lack of any clear perspective for how to carry on the struggle outside Parliament. This leaves the statement without any real cutting edge in a situation in which Thatcher has already made it clear that the Tories will vote for any suitably anti-working class measures put forward by Wilson. Even if every one of the 80 Tribune MPs voted against, they couldn't defeat the 450 or so Tories, Liberals and right wing Labourites.

In the present Parliamentary situation the only way Wilson can be defeated in his pro-capitalist policies is in the way that the attacks of Heath, and earlier the anti-union *In Place of Strife* of the last Wilson Government were defeated — through the mass industrial action of the working

class outside Parliament. Certainly the Tribune MPs must vote in Parliament against any cuts, but that vote only becomes really significant if it is part of a campaign to mobilise the working class outside Parliament.

But on this really crucial point the statement of the Tribune MPs has no clear proposals — particularly as mounting a massive campaign in the working class requires both a clear goal and real organisation. On neither does the the Tribune letter spell out a clear answer.

Obviously the first step is to defeat the economic austerity package which everyone knows Wilson is preparing. But it is necessary to offer a positive solution to the crisis. *Tribune* has given some answers, but real solutions have to be based on a sliding scale of wages, workers' control, and other such policies. The Social Contract, which ties the working class's hands in front of Wilson and the capitalists' onslaught, must be decisively rejected.

But a real movement needs a clear political goal as well. Given even what the Tribune group says in its letter, this goal must be spelt out as including the removal of the Wilson leadership of the Labour Party and its replacement by a leadership opposed to his present policies. Without such a policy the Labour left is in a totally illogical position — it condemns Wilson and his policies, but refuses to call for his removal.

On organisation the position of the Tribunes is equally unsatisfactory. Of course, Syd Bidwell is right when he says that the Tribune group hasn't got a staff and can't organise everything — but that is not the point. The point is that they haven't put out a call for organisation of forces, particularly in the trade unions, to fight against the

policies of the Wilson Government. With much less influence than Labour MPs, even the revolutionary left and other forces have been able to organise real campaigns on certain issues — for example in the National Abortion Campaign.

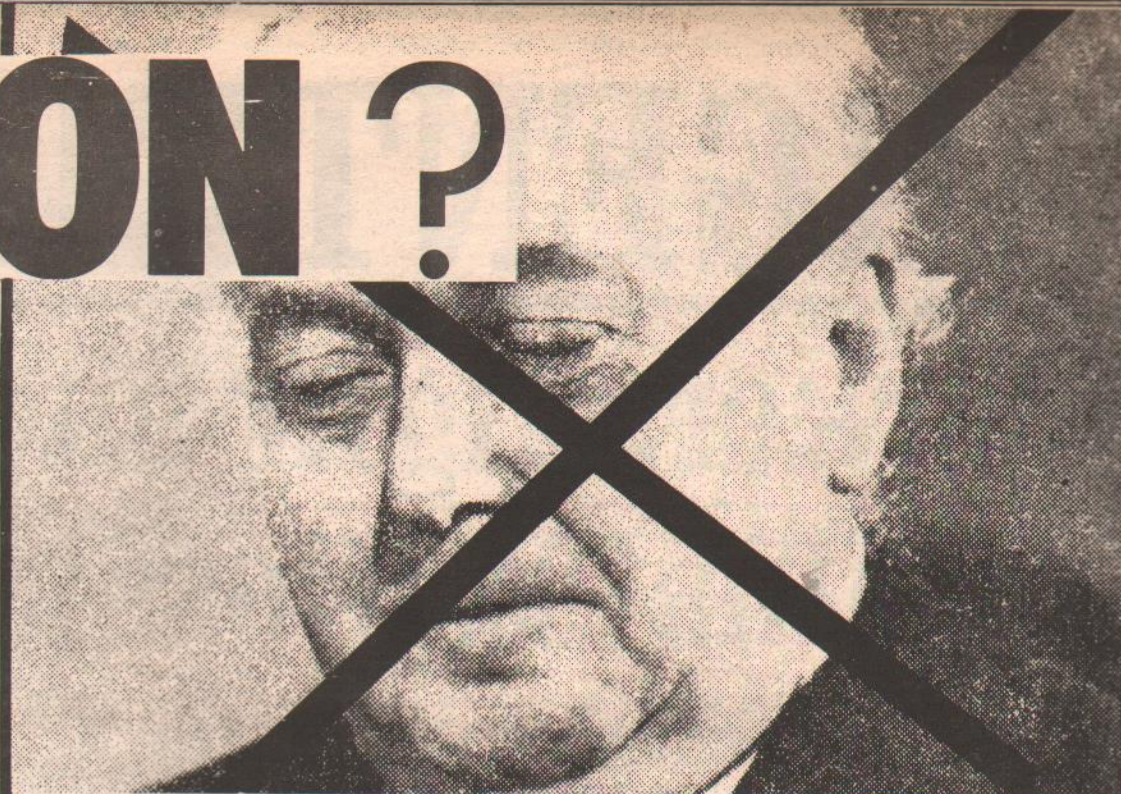
Within the labour movement there already exist organisations — for example, the Institute for Workers Control — which if they really wanted to, could organise very big forces. At present, however, none of them are really organising such forces. A decisive test for *Tribune* is whether it will put out the call for such organisation. Without it a really serious campaign cannot be waged. Benn and the other 'lefts in the Government should resign and organise forces to fight against Wilson's policies. The first step in this should be a massive campaign in support of the rail workers.

In short, we don't think that the Tribune statement can have a real impact unless:

- The Tribune MPs vote against all public expenditure cuts.
- The Social Contract and all forms of incomes policy are rejected.
- A platform of alternative socialist policies to maintain living standards and defend the right to work is clearly spelt out.
- A clear fight is made for the removal of the Wilson leadership of the Labour Party
- An open call is put out for the organisation of working class forces on this basis.

Without these steps there will, as so often before, be words but no action.

# AGAINST WILSON?



## The Revolutionary Left — and The Labour Left

The statement by the Tribune group of MPs calling for a campaign inside and outside Parliament against Wilson's coalitionist policies could, although only could, be one of the beginnings of a new relationship between the revolutionary left and sections of the Labour left. If, and we are still sceptical about this, the Tribune MPs were to move into opposition on central aspects of the Government's policy, most notably in opposition to the new package of austerity measures which Healey is preparing, then the situation for united action between the revolutionary left and the Labour left — so far confined to individual campaigns or questions like abortion, Chile or Ireland — would be radically transformed. Because this possibility, although not at all a certainty, is beginning to open up as a result of working class pressure at the base, it is important that revolutionary socialists should clearly spell out their attitude to united action with the Labour left.

The first thing which has to be grasped, particularly by the Labour left, is that revolutionary socialists are no longer a tiny group of people who can be totally ignored. The Trotskyist organisations alone in Britain have 6-7,000 members, and the revolutionary left as a whole influences some tens of thousands of people. Also, as it has shown in the past on issues such as Vietnam and Chile, and as it is doing at present on abortion, the revolutionary left acting in a united fashion can draw thousands of people into demonstrations and similar activities.

While it would be absurd to pretend that the revolutionaries influence the mass of the working class, they do contain a relatively high proportion of the activists of the socialist movement — activists who can play a decisive role in building any campaigns and action.

But if the Labour left has to understand that the revolutionary socialists outside the Labour Party now represent some real forces, the revolutionary left also has to overcome its frequent extreme sectarianism — both to itself and to non-revolutionaries. The 'theoretical' justification given for this sectarianism is that the 'Trotskyist' way to deal with anyone on the Labour left is to demand that they implement a revolutionary programme. When this is not done then the Labour left is supposed to be 'exposed in the eyes of the masses'. This tactic is then called the 'united front'.

### UNITED FRONT OF THE WORKING CLASS

The only people who are in general 'exposed' by such goings on are the 'revolutionaries', and the general approach this leads to creates gigantic — and correct — hostility among working class militants, as they see so-called revolutionaries actually failing to engage in the united action which is necessary now to take the class struggle forward. Trotsky, although he was a remorseless critic of reformism, had nothing but contempt for such antics. As he pointed out: 'To fight, the proletariat must have unity in its ranks. The tactic of the united front is not something accidental and artificial — a cunning manoeuvre; it originates entirely and wholly in the objective conditions governing the development of the proletariat.'

This is the attitude which Red Weekly and the IMG take, and which all revolutionaries should take, to the Labour left. We obviously disagree with them on how to achieve socialism and on many questions of how to struggle. We never conceal our views on these questions. But when any section of the Labour left takes a step which is in the interests of the working class then we support this step and want united action with the Labour left not as a trick or manoeuvre but as a way of taking forward the struggle of the working class. It is through united action that the working class can judge whose general policies are correct.

As Trotsky put it: 'It is necessary to elaborate a practical system of measures not with the aim of merely "exposing" (to ourselves) the social democracy, but with the aim of actual struggle.' That is the way we judge the Tribune group's protest, or that of any other section of the Labour left against Wilson's measures. It is the fact that the Labour left has not opposed most of the central pro-capitalist policies of Wilson which explains why the revolutionary left has not been involved in united action with the Labour left on most issues.

### UNITED ACTION AROUND SOCIALIST POLICIES

The coming months will see the sheep being cleared out from the goats both inside the Labour Party and on the revolutionary left. Inside the Labour Party it will show who is merely prepared to talk against Wilson's policies and who will actually vote and fight against them. Inside the revolutionary left it will sort out those who are so sectarian that all they can do is shout and scream, and those who — no matter what their disagreements on full long term policies — are prepared to unite in action both with each other, with the Communist Party, and with the Labour left in a fight against Wilson's policies. A decisive task of the coming months is to hammer out the socialist policies — against incomes policy, against expenditure cuts, for a sliding scale of wages, in defence of the right to work — around which, such united action can be achieved.

At every point in that united action — which already exists to some extent on abortion, on Ireland, in defence of the health service, and on Chile, but which must be extended to much wider questions — everyone must check to see which of the strategies being put forward is correct. But it is necessary to engage in the struggle and then events will be the best test of who is right. The IMG is quite clear on its position, and will unite in action with any working class forces which on any issue fight for the interests of the working class. It seeks such united action not as a trick, but because it is vitally necessary for the struggle — and no-one in the socialist movement, least of all the revolutionaries, will win if the working class is defeated in the decisive struggles of the coming months.

write to us and say that they've decided to set up a *Tribune* group. But the *Tribune* group doesn't have a staff or anything.

● How do you think organisations outside the Labour Party can best take part in the struggle which is developing?

I believe that all the socialist organisations, including the Communist Party, should stop contesting against the Labour Party electorally and should apply for affiliation to the Labour Party. I have always been against bans and prescriptions. Selection for every post in the labour movement, including local councillors and MPs, would then be on the basis not of who is in the Labour Party or the Communist Party or who is a Trotskyist, but who is best for the job.

*Red Weekly* readers and young Marxists, including members of the IMG, should forget the romance of other countries — Russia in 1917 and so on — and understand that you can't bypass the Labour Party. The Labour Party represents the history of the British working class and you can't overtake history overnight. The Labour Party was a federation initially and it still has its local autonomy and federal base. This is the reason for its stability. You have to refashion the tools the working class has fashioned. I believe all socialists, particularly young socialists, should join the Labour Party and get into the mainstream. I think the various Trotskyist groupings should assess the situation carefully and without romance, and should then help to take hold of the Labour Party locally and nationally for socialist purpose.

### Tribunites dissent

Little can be gained by hasty over-reaction or personal attacks on the leadership. I feel strongly that the letter should not have been sent to the Prime Minister in such terms; there are other more reasonable ways of stating a point of view. There is now an urgent need for a transfusion of reason and common sense into the tactics of the Tribune group.

(From statement issued by Leslie Huckfield MP and supported by five other Tribune MPs)

● What about the position of Wilson within the Party? Given what you've said in the *Tribune* letter don't you think that it's necessary to remove him as leader of the Party?

While he is Prime Minister there are no elections for leader. I believe we must sharpen up the situation by finding a new method of deciding the Labour Government. The members of the Government and the leader should be elected by the Party as a whole — by the Party conference. The *Tribune* group has published a pamphlet on this.

This is the only way to remove the vast system of patronage which exists in Parliament. The right wing will all have to be removed. But it has to be done by the processes of the movement. The elections for the National Executive now have a very high degree of importance — for example the stand of Eric Heffer. Also very important is the contest for Treasurership against Callaghan.

● What do you think about the statement in today's *Evening Standard* (12 June) that you won't vote against Wilson because it will bring down the Government?

I think it's nonsense. A Labour Government doesn't fall because it loses one vote — it has to lose a vote of confidence. We can vote against on something like defence and the Government won't fall — Wilson's not suicidal.

In any case, I don't accept that the fall of the Government would automatically lead to the return of the Tories. A general election wouldn't automatically produce a Tory victory.

● In the letter you sent to Wilson you talked of 'opposing by all means and campaigns within and without the House'. Do you plan an open campaign to group forces for such a fight and how should people organise to take up such a struggle?

We don't have detailed plans. We shall consult our friends inside the Labour Party and the trade unions. We will of course carry on our campaign inside the Labour Party. People



TONY BENN AND JUDITH HART IN HAPPIER DAYS - BUT WHO WILL HAVE THE LAST LAUGH?

# ARGENTINA

## Workers fight back against repression

Since the death of Peron last July the Argentinian regime has been unable to keep the masses in check except through repression. This has been carried out not only by official State bodies like the federal police and the armed forces — who are now engaged in a mini-civil war with the ERP guerrillas in Tucuman province — but also by unofficial murder gangs like the AAA (Argentinian Anti-communist Alliance). Among the targets of this sinister campaign have been revolutionary and worker militants, intellectuals, journalists and artists.

But under the impact of the crisis new working class struggles have continued to develop. In December 1974 a significant victory was scored in the steel-making town of Villa Constitucion after a big strike, when a united class-struggle slate threw off the hold of the Peronist bureaucracy by winning elections for the local leadership of the metalworkers' union. The town quickly became a national focus of the resistance to the regime, and thus also a special target of the repressive forces.

Less than three months later they moved in for the kill. But as L.E. RASIN reports below, they soon found that they had bitten off more than they could easily chew. Although the workers were finally forced to call off their strike on 19 May the example of Villa Constitucion cannot but be an inspiration to other groups of Argentinian workers preparing to struggle against the regime.

On 20 March thousands of police, federal troops, and members of the 'Puma' anti-riot brigade attacked the houses of more than 50 militants together with the local headquarters of the union, and brutally assaulted neighbours who had rushed to the aid of those arrested. In the next five days there were a total of 500 arrests.

Since there had not been recent conflicts between the employers of the region and the workers of the four big factories (Acindar, Marathon, Metcon, and Vilber), the Government was obliged to invent a crude justification for the terror. The operation was said to have been aimed at 'dismantling a terrorist conspiracy against heavy industry in the region.' Of course, nobody believed the story of this plot — not even the employers.

### • OFFENSIVE •

It is quite clear that the offensive was in fact intended to prevent local militants from using the concessions that had already been forced from the Government ('parity commissions' to negotiate new labour contracts) to develop the struggle still further.

There was already a basis for this fear. The metalworkers of Villa Con-

stitucion had worked out a counter draft collective labour contract calling for a 70 per cent wage increase and a minimum wage twice that set by the Government. But they also asked for something more important: workers control over industrial health and security and, further, workers control over the work rate.

### • OCCUPATIONS •

The first reaction of the workers to the Government offensive was to occupy the four big factories of the region, automatically halting production. After three days of hesitation, the Government proceeded to dislodge the workers violently.

The new workers' leaders were arrested, but they were immediately replaced by others, equally determined and effective. And although the repression continued to hit the new members of the Committee of Struggle, which was elected right at the beginning of the strike, new leaders arose out of the militant rank and file and fully assumed the functions of the arrested leaders. Four leaderships of the struggle were successively arrested, but nevertheless the Committee of Struggle continued to act



March in Villa Constitucion in support of the striking metalworkers.

Avanzada Socialista

mittee of Struggle. It organised kidnappings and murders and planted dozens of bombs in the houses of the most militant workers. But it had to confront a new level of unexpected response.

The workers organised to defend the working-class neighbourhoods with armed groups, which prevented the para-police gangs from operating at night. Several armed clashes put an end to the aims of the terrorist intimidation.

### • SOLIDARITY •

During this time, solidarity committees were spreading throughout the major regions of the country. The workers of the Indiel y de Rigolleau factory in San Justo (Buenos Aires province) organised an assembly and street demonstration for their own demands and to support Villa Constitucion. The assembly and demonstration were repressed by the police and the leaders were arrested. The workers responded with a week-long

stoppage in which the workers of the Martin Amatto factory also participated; it succeeded in winning the release of all the workers who had been imprisoned.

In Rosario, in the San Lorenzo industrial zone, assemblies and work stoppages took place in support of the Committee of Struggle, and a general demonstration was organised in Rosario in solidarity with the striking workers.

For their part, the railway workers and workers of the Fraternidad (an organisation including the railway machinists) in the city of Villa Constitucion itself organised solidarity work stoppages; their leaders were also arrested and they fought to free them. During an assembly the postal workers decided not to distribute telegrams sent by the Ministry of Labour ordering the workers to go back to work. The whole population pitched in, and the merchants and small-scale producers in the region demonstrated their solidarity, sending funds and food to the Committee of Struggle.

clandestinely.

The Government was taken completely by surprise. It tried to go further, unleashing a ferocious terrorist campaign against the leaders and militants who were supporting the Com-



Silvia Diaz, Eduardo Expósito, José Páez, Alberto Pujals, Oscar Juárez, José Kalauz

The repression aimed at the Villa Constitucion workers was extended to include four national leaders of the PST (Socialist Workers Party), an organisation which supports the Fourth International. On 17 May these comrades were holding discussions with two PST worker militants, members of the strike committee, when police burst in and arrested all those present (pictured above).

This raid occurred two days after the PST's headquarters in Rosario had been dynamited. The latest arrests bring the total of PST political prisoners held under the state of siege to 21.

## SOLIDARITY WITH ARRESTED MILITANTS



On Thursday 22 May the Argentinian federal police summoned the press to announce a 'spectacular' haul — the arrest of 12 revolutionary Marxist militants, members of a 'subversive group controlled from Paris by the Fourth International', and the death of two others in simultaneous police operations.

The arrested comrades are, according to articles in the Argentinian press which largely echoed the police declarations:

- Paolo Paranagua ('Saul'), of Brazilian nationality;
- Flavio Koutzii ('Rene'), of Brazilian nationality;
- Manuel Rallis ('Beto');
- Carlos A. Alvarez ('Luis');
- Susana Lobosco ('Marta');
- Norma Espindola ('Valeria');
- Maria Regina Pilla ('la Negra'), of Brazilian nationality;
- Julia N. Veniaglo ('Lita');
- Maria G. Mendez ('la Gorda');
- Julio Ramos ('Lito');
- Ingrid Rorr;
- Raul Rodriguez ('Rolo').

The two killed were, according to the Argentinian press David Armando Laniado ('Eddy') and 'Ramon', so far unidentified.

Detained for nearly a fortnight before the police officially announced that they were being held, we can be sure that these comrades have undergone considerable brutality and torture. So far no lawyer and no relative has been allowed direct contact with them. This situation will continue until they appear before the judiciary. However, it appears that

no judge will agree to take on the case....

These are the methods currently used under the constitutional regime of Isabel Peron. In this instance they are particularly disturbing in light of the charges which have been drawn up against the comrades by the police and freely reproduced in the press. They were supposedly responsible for the kidnapping and death of the Fiat director Oberdan Salustro in Argentina in 1971. The problem for the prosecution is that other militants have already been tried and found guilty under the military dictatorship for the same thing.

Besides other charges of the same kind, what most interests the Argentinian torturers is the international aspect of nationalist convictions of the comrades have been more than enough to encourage embellishments about 'international conspiracies' and a 'plot hatched abroad'. For a regime in difficulty, trying to play the nationalist tune to the limits of chauvinism, to deliberately confuse militant internationalism with 'foreign interference' is an old trick.

Nor is this the first attempt by the Argentinian police in this direction. A month ago they announced with the same publicity the arrest of 27 Uruguayan militants belonging to the Junta of Revolutionary Co-ordination (which brings together the Chilean MIR, the Bolivian ELN, the Tupamaros, and the PRT-ERP in Argentina). Since then another dozen militants of the Junta, also Uruguayans, have been pulled in. In each case this 'international plot' has been denounced.

But internationalist militants will not be taken in by the chauvinistic nationalism of Lopez Rega's bully-boys.

## WHAT'S ON

**NORTH LONDON TOM** Social at North London Poly, Ladbroke House, Highbury Grove, on Fri 20 June at 9pm. Irish music and disco.

**REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST CURRENT:** Reply to Workers Fight's 'Open Letter for Revolutionary Regroupment' is now publicly available. Copies from Red Books (Liverpool), 81a Renshaw Street, Liverpool 1. Send stamp with order.

**VIVA FRELIMO!** Mozambique Independence Day Celebration, Wednesday 25 June, at Camden Town Hall, Euston Rd, NW1 (Kings X tube). Admission £1 (children/OAPs/claimants 50p). Music, Theatre, Dancing, Bar, etc.—doors open 7.30pm. Tickets from CFMAG, 12 Little Newport St, WC2 (01-734 9541) or at door.

**ANTI-FASCIST PLAY:** 'Do You Remember Cable Street?', performed by professional socialist theatre co-operative, now booking (nationwide) for late July and October. Suitable for meetings, socials, etc. Phone: Howell, 01-722 7237.

**GLASGOW** Marxist Discussion Group meets every Wednesday in Iona Community House, 7.30pm.

**NORTH WEST LONDON TOM:** public meeting Thurs 26 June, 7.30pm, in Anson Hall, Chichele Road, Cricklewood (Willesden Green tube). 'The British Army Hand-in-Glove with Loyalist Assassination Squads—Its Real Role in Ireland'. Speakers invited include member of Brent Trades Council and Gery Lawless (TOM Executive).

**PRESTON** public meeting against James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill, Friday 20 June, 8pm at Unicorn Hotel, Garstang Rd. Speakers: Stan Thorne MP and Dr Sheila Abdullah.

**FREE DESMOND TROTTER** Campaign: Picket every Friday, 4.30-6pm outside East Caribbean High Commission, Haymarket, London SW1.

**BENGALI FRIENDS** in Europe and elsewhere, for Bengali books and 'Sran-Dal-Biplab' (Fourth International paper) contact: Bengali, c/o Internationalen, Box 3274, 10365 Stockholm, Sweden.

**NEW IMG PAMPHLET** 'Housing, Squatting and the Urban Crisis—Developments and the Way Forward'. 10p inc postage from Red Books, 97 Caledonian Road, London N1.

**RED LADDER THEATRE** wants actresses for work in touring collective based in the north, producing own material and performing to trade union and community audiences. Commitment important. Equity membership and musical ability an advantage. Applications in writing by 8 July stating (i) theatrical/playmaking/political experience (ii) reasons for interest (iii) when you can start (iv) where ad read (v) tel. no. — to 58 War Crescent, London N4 (01-263 1053).

**BIRMINGHAM ABORTION** Campaign: (1) Coaches for London demo, 21 June, leave Hall of Memory 10am. (2) Day conference on abortion, 5 July, Birmingham University Council Chambers. For details contact Birmingham NAC, c/o 40 Trafalgar Rd, Moseley, Birmingham 13 (021-429 1154).

**FOR CHEAP,** reliable IBM Typesetting with fast turn-around phone Carl or Martin on 01-837 9987.

**DEFEND NAXALITE PRISONERS:** Picket of Indian High Commission, Aldwych on Mon 23 June, 11am, to protest against death sentences on Naxalite prisoners Bhoomaiah and Gowd. Organised by IWA and supported by CRIPP and others.





Photo: ANDREW WIARD (Report)

## 6,000 march in Paris

The most important international demonstration in solidarity with the Basque strike movement took place in Paris. There 6,000 people took to the streets on 11 June at the call of various French, Spanish and Basque revolutionary organisations to denounce the 'state of emergency' in the Basque country and French Government co-operation with the Spanish regime, and solidarise with the struggle for a socialist Spain. Meanwhile in the French city of Pau, near the Spanish border, a young French revolutionary militant set himself on fire to dramatise the repression raging in the Basque country. As the left-wing paper *Liberation* put it: 'At a time when Franco's commandos are operating in Bayonne, in St. Jean-de-Luz, in Hasparren (French towns where 'Guerrillas of Christ the King', often plainclothes Spanish policemen, have carried out violent attacks) seeking to kill militants of the Basque cause, refugees or French, the suicide by fire of Jacques cries out to us: "Wake up! Spain, Euzkadi, is your problem too!"'

# FRANCO'S FINAL HOUR

Last week the tottering Franco dictatorship was pushed yet closer towards the cliff's edge. One hundred thousand workers in the Basque country defied the reign of terror and went on strike to back up their demands for political freedom, while important moves were made towards the building of an international campaign of solidarity with those fighting the fascist regime.

But the regime is still prepared to wreak bloody havoc in its dying days. Its latest criminal plot is a plan to bring two Basque militants — Garmendia and Echevarria — before a military court and murder them. These two militants have now been moved from the Carabanchel prison outside Madrid to Burgos in the Basque country, where they are to be tried. The prosecution, in its official submission to the court, has demanded the death sentence.

The Basque workers have already shown their determination to fight for the lives of Garmendia and Echevarria — and will undoubtedly do so again in the weeks ahead. Their example must be taken up by the workers movement around the world. Only international solidarity can stay the hand of Franco's butchers.

Last Wednesday (11 June) the workers of the Basque country gave the Spanish dictatorship their reply to the wave of terror that has been raging for the past two months.

Despite the systematic arrest and torture of suspected political oppositionists, the bombings and violent attacks carried out by the unofficial right-wing group ('Guerrillas of Christ the King'), and the presence throughout the region of thousands of armed police and plainclothes cops, 100,000 workers responded to the call of the workers' commissions and revolutionary left groups and struck to show their determination to fight the dictatorship's 'state of emergency'.

### Strike-call

The regime made a desperate last attempt to intimidate workers from taking up the strike call. For weeks before the strike plainclothes political police were crawling all over the coun-

try, and on the day of the strike itself groups of armed semi-military police were to be seen everywhere.

by **Chris Balfour**

Road blocks and police searches were mounted outside the major cities, and on the main road to Madrid traffic was forced to queue for two miles as armed police searched vehicles and checked identities. In the city of San Sebastian armed police units patrolled the central market to stop any attempt at a shopping boycott, and attempts to hold demonstrations in two cities were ruthlessly broken up by baton charges.

The correspondent of the Paris daily *Le Monde* gave a detailed picture of the way in which the strike unfolded in different parts of the country. Writing from Eibar, an industrial city in the heart of the Bas-

que country where even the authorities admit that 80% of the workers struck, he says:

'At first nothing seems out of the ordinary....Even the grey-uniformed Civil Guard, automatic pistols on their hips, standing on the pavement, are no surprise: it's just the "state of emergency in the Basque country"

### Folded arms

'But this Wednesday morning the workers of the Alpha factory did not start up the belt that drives the sewing machines. The Lambretta workers also folded their arms. The rest followed. In most of the factories in the city, assemblies took place and decided to strike on the spot. The young apprentices in the professional schools followed this example. On 11 June Eibar took up the challenge: to launch a general strike while the state of emergency was still in effect.

'The workers mobilisation seems to have been more or less important

according to the extent of the repression in the preceding weeks. The case of Hernani, a big town six miles south of San Sebastian, confirms such an hypothesis... "There has been propaganda, but nothing resulted", a student told us, stopping for an instant every time the door of the cafe opened. "It would be enough, undoubtedly, for the workers in one factory to stop work for the others to do likewise, but fear is stronger. Half of the known militants have crossed the border (into France). The others are in hiding. It's difficult to move, even if you want to."

### Word of mouth

'At Beasain, on the other hand, "they came out"...CAF — with 2,100 workers — makes containers and railway carriages...At 8 o'clock in the morning everyone turned up for work. One shop stopped work. By telephone, word of mouth, — "sometimes a simple glance", one worker told us — the movement spread like an oil slick. By 9 o'clock everyone was out, and, shortly afterwards, returned home. Meanwhile, the most determined formed picket squads to go to smaller factories and "persuade the comrades to stop work".

### Repression

Despite the difficulties encountered by the strike because of the repression, most foreign journalists agreed with the *Le Monde* correspondent's view that it was a 'relative success under the circumstance'. While it was, much smaller than the December strike movement — in which more than 200,000 workers took part — the organisers, and many workers, saw 11 June as a way of 'warming up' for even bigger struggles to be launched in protest at the dictatorship's attempt to try to murder Basque militants Jose Antonio Garmendia and Angel Otaegui Echevarria. The Communist Party did not take



Franco—tottering on cliff's edge

ke, along with the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE). Clearly these groups understand that the Basque working class is going to go ahead and fight the dictatorship irrespective of what bankrupt 'advice' reformists try to dish out to them.

Meanwhile, a former Franco cabinet minister, Pio Cabanillas, has publicly called for the resignation of Franco and the inauguration of Prince Juan Carlos as king, so that a few phony reforms can be tossed to the workers' movement. But the ruling class has already had to take up capitalism's weapons of last resort — repression and terror — in order to hold the Spanish workers down. It will take a lot more than a second-hand king and a cardboard capitalist 'democracy' to satisfy the working class now. The



Photo: ANDREW WIARD (Report)

# BUREAUCRATIC MANOEUVRES..

The decision by the High Court whereby branch balloting will be illegal in the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers is the most blatant act of state interference in the trade union movement since the days of the Industrial Relations Act. It sets a precedent which if ignored by the trade union movement could quite easily lead to much more drastic legislation on how unions conduct their own affairs.

The sudden burst of sympathy in the capitalist press for 'trade union democracy' is completely hypocritical. There was never any publicity, let alone defence of militants in the AUEW when Scanlon's right-wing predecessor Carron was carrying out his witch-hunts. In those days the press were keener to defend the right of trade union 'leaders' to control the shop floor affairs of the unions. The whole aim of the press campaign, of course, has always been to support the most pro-capitalist sections inside the unions — in particular the right wing inside the AUEW.

John Weakley, one of the two South Wales members of the National Committee disqualified from voting on the postal ballot/branch ballot issue, knew he could rely on 'outside' help in his campaign against Scanlon's decision. Rather than campaigning for an enquiry established by the workers' movement to look into the decision, he went instead to the capitalist courts.



Weakley—relied on 'outside' help

resolution could be taken before normal union business was dealt with.

But when a resolution moved by an IMG member was put to Birmingham East District Committee the next week, the right-wing chairperson insisted that it could only be discussed *after* all business items. As a result it was never discussed. No doubt this had something to do with the fact that the resolution condemned the right wing for using the capitalist state to 'settle' internal union matters.

But the Communist Party inspired 'Broad Left' has done nothing

to combat the right-wing campaign. The *Morning Star* has said virtually nothing about this fundamental issue. Indeed the 'lefts' paved the way to their own defeat by their blatant manoeuvring at the Rules Revision Conference to get the credentials of Weakley and his fellow South Wales delegate, Graham Healy, withdrawn.

## DEMOCRACY

The so-called 'lefts' waited for four and a half weeks of National Committee and Rules Revision meetings before challenging the South Wales delegates' credentials, completely exposing their bureaucratic notion of how to lead the union. On far more fundamental issues such as amalgamation, which the right-wing defeated on a 27-25 vote, the left kept silent about these credentials. It was only when the election process was challenged that the 'left' moved.

In reality, neither branch ballots nor postal ballots, put forward by

left and right respectively, guarantee union democracy. The postal ballot means that the membership are unaware of whom they are voting for, and are therefore open to press smear campaigns which always intervene on behalf of the 'moderates' such as Boyd. On the other hand branch balloting is unrepresentative — only about 10 per cent of the members vote in AUEW elections — and is recognised as such by the membership at large.

The only effective answer to the



Scanlon—lack of class leadership



Boyd—backed by press smear campaign

vacillations in the fight against the Industrial Relations Act, the retreat over the Social Contract at last year's TUC, and this latest bureaucratic manoeuvring — these are the real reasons behind the declining support for the Scanlon leadership in the union.

Although it will be necessary to defend Scanlon against the right wing and the witch-hunting of the press, this will only be credibly done by pursuing independent class policies inside the union. These must include:

- clear and unequivocal rejection of the Social Contract and any other form of wage restraint;
- submission of a national nil-norm threshold claim to the Engineering Employers' Federation to protect all members' living standards and any wage increase from the ravages of inflation;
- the organisation of factory occupations to meet redundancies, and the demand for nationalisation under workers control of all companies creating redundancies or receiving Government aid such as Ferranti and Herbert Machine Tools;
- the election of all union officials by factory votes after a full and democratic debate. The right of immediate recall by the membership of such officials.

John Graham (Birmingham AUEW)

## PRESS HYSTERIA

The very union that led the fight against the Industrial Relations Act and its Court found itself put in the dock not by the Tory Government but by a section of its own membership. At the same time as fuelling press hysteria, the right wing have been campaigning up and down the union to pass resolutions against Scanlon.

It is in this very campaign to 'safeguard union democracy' that these people have exposed how truly undemocratic they really are. Last week, Birmingham West AUEW District Committee passed a resolution condemning Scanlon's casting vote. In order to get the matter discussed, the right wing removed standing orders so that their

# ..OR WORKERS DEMOCRACY



While the Broad Left inside the AUEW has been helping to bring about its own defeat through bureaucratic manoeuvres, 450 workers on strike for over two months at Magnesium Elektron Limited, at Swinton near Manchester, have been proving the power of workers' democracy in action.

The workers struck on 24 April in pursuit of a demand for a 30 per cent rise across the board and the right of plant bargaining. For two months now they have been in an occupation impressive for its democratic organisation and the resulting high level of involvement and morale among the strikers.

The four unions involved — the AUEW, the electricians' EEUPTU, the General and Municipal Workers Union and the Boilermakers — have all declared the strike official. The AUEW has also declared a district levy. But the occupying workers have kept a firm hand on the running of the strike by electing a five person negotiating committee which will attend any negotiations in addition to the

This democratic body has increased the awareness and will to struggle of the strikers: on three occasions motions to return to work received precisely one, twenty six, and *no* votes.

The same spirit of total involvement has been demonstrated by the various sub-committees of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee. The women's sub-committee, which involves the 20 or so women employed in the plant together with the wives of other workers, has organised a demonstration through Swinton. The entertainment committee has arranged performances by two radical theatre groups. The security sub-committee operates a three-shift 24-hour system which fairly distributes the burdens of involvement and gives everyone a role to play. In addition a fire-fighting team is always on standby and constant maintenance of machinery and automatic equipment is organised.

The claim itself, by avoiding craft divisions, has helped guarantee the united response of the strikers. The 30 per cent figure is based on the earnings of a Grade 1 operator getting £41 a week. Both

hour to craftsmen and 12p per hour to process workers. Since this averages at 12 per cent no one was fooled. As Stan Walton, a G&MWU shop steward, told *Red Weekly*: 'We didn't want divisions — we are fighting on one front.'

Teams of occupying workers have been visiting local factories and this has produced good results — amongst others, workers at the Clifton Chloride Company have pledged £150 a week and miners at Agecroft colliery are taking weekly collections of around £50. The strikers will send speakers to any working class organisation and are particularly anxious to contact other plants in the Tube Investments Combine. Already the fall off in supplies has caused production to be cut by 50 per cent at the sister plant of Magnesium Electronics in Warrington.

So far a support committee has not been formally established to help create a broader campaign. But a committee to which trade union bodies, Labour Party branches, student unions and political organisations could affiliate would strengthen the strikers' ability

# HARD FIGHT FOR COUNCIL WORKERS

On the eve of the national struggle over their claim for £10 across the board plus 15 per cent, 1,800 delegates attended the national conference of the National and Local Government Officers Association in Blackpool last week. The delegates understood they faced the most severe attack in the union's history, but approached the need to struggle against cuts in both living standards and public services with much confusion and uncertainty.

With members in local government, gas and electricity running up against the brick wall of the employers and the Labour Government in pay negotiations, all the platform could offer was the well tried and often failed formula of 'leave it to us and if we need your help we'll come back to the members'. While this line was defeated in the gas and local government group meetings, so too was the call

from Hackney (London) for an immediate strike ballot. The motion passed from Scotland was for a national recall group meeting in July following the employers' final offer, with preparations to be made now for a strike ballot immediately after that meeting.

## CONFUSION

Confusion was not confined to the platform. The NALGO Action Group was split down the middle between the Scottish and Hackney positions with no clear line on solving the problem of giving confidence to an uncertain membership never before engaged in a national struggle. A crazy defeatism was displayed by some members of the International Socialists after the loss of the Hackney motion, whereas the need to campaign between now and the July meeting stuck out like a sore thumb. Only a lead in action such as the begin-

ning of local overtime bans leading up to the group meeting can cut through this uncertainty.

A major defeat for the platform at the conference was the passing of a motion from Islington branch making a commitment to industrial action against social service cuts. The real test for NALGO, however, is very close. The ability to fight on the wages front over the summer will determine its ability to defend the social services which its members organise.

## TEST

It will be a test too of the NALGO Action Group. To cry over spilt milk in a situation in which the bulk of militant delegates thought that an immediate strike ballot would reach the membership cold plays straight into the hands of the National Executive Committee's attempts to avoid a confrontation. George Johnstone

## HYPOCRISY ON WOMEN

A motion on women's rights which included support for the Working Women's Charter was overwhelmingly carried following the defeat of an amendment to eliminate positive discrimination. But when the implications of the motion were demonstrated by a hundred delegates picketing a stag night organised by the Blackpool branch the real polarisation took place — with members of the National Executive crossing the picket line.

This week's news that even according to official figures inflation was running at an annual rate of 25 per cent up to the end of May will increase the resolve of NALGO members to struggle for the national claim. But even though the claim will hardly keep pace with the cost of living, the local government employers have replied with an insulting and provocative offer.

While rejecting NALGO's claim for payment to be effective from May instead of the usual July date, the employers have based their offer on an estimate of the cost of living in April. Their estimate of a 21.7 per cent rise over the last year falls over 2 per cent short of the agreement already reached by the Post Office with its workers in March — a deal which included an additional threshold agreement which was triggered off only last week.

## LOW PAID

The local government employers are also proposing to deduct last year's threshold payments from their meagre offer. The resulting pay increases would amount to £2.51 (11%) for clerical workers now earning £28 per week, through to a £23 a week increase (19%) for principal officers already receiving over £7000 a year!

Not only is the offer one of the lowest to be made to any group of workers this year, but the lower paid would be discriminated against in a sector where 70 per cent of the workers already earn less than the national average wage. The employers may have hoped that by favouring the highest paid they would win acceptance of the offer by a union in which senior officers have traditionally been over-represented in the union hierarchy. However, the growing radicalisation of the union membership in recent years ensured that this year the union negotiators had to report back to delegates. This prevented the early sell-out that has been equally traditional in NALGO.

## POLITICAL IMPACT

The Labour Government's cuts in social spending mean that in the Labour-intensive local government sector the cuts must heavily erode both the living standards and jobs of council employees. The Labour 'left' has opposed the cuts in words, but not a single Labour councillor has broken the employers' ranks to call for support for the NALGO claim. Their unwillingness to mobilise workers against the social contract leaves them with no choice but to accept the cuts and attack the living standards of local government workers in practice.

As local government workers have little economic power, the way to win the claim is by combining the political impact of a united, national strike by 400,000 council workers in defence of living standards and the social services with the current struggles of other workers — especially the rail workers.

## BUREAUCRACY

However the NALGO leadership is already showing signs that it has no intention of leading such a struggle. In a letter to branch secretaries on 2 June, NALGO General Secretary Geoffrey Drain admitted that a full stoppage of work is 'probably the only meaningful action in national context in current circumstances.' However, he then went on to outline a plan of action which falls far short of this — a one-day stoppage followed by a strike at only ten local councils with a further ten branches being called out every week.

Drain's plan would leave the most militant sections on strike and isolated for weeks on end, as happened with the Islington branch during the campaign over the London Weighting allowance last year. The bureaucracy is taking this course

# PREPARE THE STRUGGLE

National strike action will be the decisive weapon in winning the claim. But to prepare the whole membership for strike action a campaign of mass meetings, demonstrations and a one-day national strike to demonstrate the solidarity of the membership leading up to the national recall group meeting in July will be necessary.

A national strike would allow the stronger sections to organise pickets to pull out those areas still hesitating. And by combining the fight to defend their living standards with the defence of social spending, NALGO members will gain broad support throughout the labour movement for their struggle.

Jack Lewis



## MASSEY STRIKE OFF

The six week-old strike of 4,500 production workers at Massey Ferguson's plants in Coventry is over. On 13 June a mass meeting of more than 4000 workers narrowly voted to accept the company's latest pay offer, giving just 45p more than an improved offer of £6 made by management three weeks ago. Despite this retreat — triggered by the success of management in using a court repossession order to get the Banner Lane plant evacuated — positive lessons can be learnt from the strike.

Most impressive was the democratic running of the mass meetings. The strike started when a mass meeting rejected a shop stewards' recommendation for a one-day strike and voted for all out action. Similarly it ended with a rejection of a stewards' recommendation following an hour long debate in which every worker had access to the microphone.

A vote was only taken after a unanimous decision to move to a vote. Mass involvement through mass democracy completely undermined the attempts of the local press to split the strike through charges of intimidation and violence and 'militant minorities'. Mass involvement was also guaranteed through the occupation, which provided a base from which to despatch flying pickets to local hotels where staff were attempting to work.

If these are important gains for the whole workers movement, there are also bitter — if old — lessons. The trade union officials scabbed throughout, and the strike leaders themselves made two important mistakes: no demands were raised linking their struggle with that of other workers and seeking support on that basis (collection sheets were only distributed in the fifth week of the strike); and the occupation was not used as a base from which to build united working class support in the area.

## STOP-GO AT FORD'S

The seven week-old strike against manning cuts by 80 doorhangers and setters at Ford's Dagenham continues. On 10 June a meeting of the strikers decided to start picketing the Body Plant in an attempt to close down Escort production at Halewood by stopping wheels being sent out. Production of cars at Halewood is only 24 hours behind wheel production. Engine production would have also been hit as the supply of engine sumps from the Press Shop dried up.

These moves could have begun to extend the Dagenham struggle into a national fight against Ford's productivity drive. The picketing force could have been extended to involve more of the 6,500 laid off workers, with flying pickets being sent out to other Ford's plants.

But for Communist Party member Dan Connors, convenor of the plant, the picket was nothing more than a token demonstration aimed at making management go to arbitration where jobs and conditions could be bargained away. The strike is thus grinding to a halt in isolation. A national Ford workers' delegate conference is urgent to work out a common policy to defend jobs, working conditions and living standards.

## ROVER STRUGGLE ON

On 11 June a mass meeting of 10,000 Rover workers in the Midlands voted overwhelmingly to give a mandate to the national Negotiating Committee to call industrial action as and when it sees necessary in pursuit of the January 1975 wage claim. A similar resolution was also passed by a mass meeting of Rover workers in Cardiff.

The union claim, worked out by a cost of living sub-committee to match the spending power of 1972 wages, is for £11.80 on top of the £6 interim award and the paltry £1.80 threshold payment Rover workers have already received. In reply Rover management have offered just 20p!

As the IMG's factory bulletin at the Rover Solihull plant, *The Organiser*, pointed out, this 'offer' was so provocative that Rover management must have prepared for strike action. It therefore argued that in this situation 'guerrilla' type industrial action — lightning strikes, overtime bans and so on — would be worse than useless. What is needed is all-out indefinite strike action in which the plants are occupied as a base from which to send out flying pickets to prevent the movement of stocks.

The stewards' meeting on Friday 13 June decided to call a three day strike from Monday 16 June followed by indefinite strike action from next Monday if no 'improved offer' is forthcoming from the management.



Another picket was held last Saturday — this time of the Tower Hotel in South Kensington, which is much used by travellers to and from Ireland, to highlight the plight of the women political prisoners in the South of Ireland. Although the hotel is a cul-de-sac, and the

# RED WEEKLY

## TUC Demands Wage Cuts

The TUC, with Jack Jones in the lead, is stepping up its efforts to head off the growing working class opposition to the pro-capitalist policies of the Wilson Government. The centre of these new manoeuvres is the new Social Contract proposal of Jones, whereby no trade unions would be allowed to negotiate wage increases greater than £10 across the board.

This proposal is a clear demand for wage cuts. For example, someone with a wife and two children and earning £42 a week at present — which is close to the average wage for a manual worker — receives roughly £37.20 after tax. After tax a £10 increase in pay would mean a real take home increase of £6.50 — roughly 15 per cent. With prices having risen by 25 per cent in the last year — and threatening to rise even faster — such an increase means a massive cut in living standards. Only an increase in wages of around £15 would keep a worker on this wage up with the cost of living.

### MASSIVE UNEMPLOYMENT

As for the suggestion that Jones's proposed increase is adequate because inflation will drop to less than 15 per cent, this is simply a straightforward lie. In fact every economic forecast shows that inflation will still be raging at a rate of at least 20 — 25 per cent throughout this year. A Social Contract with an open wage-cutting face is what the TUC is now putting forward. Worse still, this is to be accepted in the face of massively rising unemployment and huge social expenditure cuts.

Getting an agreement on a renewed Social Contract is vital for Wilson. If the Government simply attempts to introduce a compulsory incomes policy without trade union agreement, it will meet gigantic resistance. This fight back would not merely defend the living standards of the working class, but it would spell the beginning of the end of Wilson's leadership of the Labour Party. If the TUC accepts a further Social Contract, however, this will appear to concede that wages are responsible for the crisis, will demoralise sections of the working class as they see their leaders accepting wage cuts, and will leave Wilson unchallenged in the leadership of the Labour Party. By these means Wilson can prepare the way for a further compulsory incomes policy and unemployment if even the TUC enforced wage cuts are not sufficient for the demands of capitalism.

### ATTACK ON LABOUR LEFT

But what is at stake over the Social Contract is not simply the living standards of the working class. It is quite clear that Wilson used the negotiations over the Social Contract to help carry through his attack on the Labour left in the Government reshuffle. If the trade union leadership had clearly opposed the changes, Wilson would have faced working class opposition in a situation where even the trade union bureaucracy and Labour left opposed him. But because Jones and company wanted to try to wheel and deal with Wilson, and because Wilson undoubtedly told them that they had to agree to a wage-cutting Social Contract or there would be a coalition and even greater unemployment, the trade union bureaucrats accepted the Government changes. There is no doubt that Wilson discussed these changes with Jones beforehand. Furthermore Benn, whose whole policy is based on doing what the trade union bureaucracy wants, was discredited by taking Jones's advice to accept an alternative Ministry.

Wilson, of course, greets this with laughter. His negotiations on the Social Contract not merely allow him to see a way to cut the living standards of the working class, but they allow him to weaken even his opponents in the Labour left. The Labour left and trade union bureaucracy, because they are unable clearly to oppose Wilson and the Social Contract — indeed they are the main supporters of the Social Contract — cannot even defend themselves, let alone the working class.

The real alternative to the Social Contract begins to become clear when it is realised that if thresholds had still been in existence they would have been triggered 16 times since last November. At 40p a time that would mean an increase of £6.40. At the 70p a time which is really needed to defend wages it would mean £11.20. Instead of the Social Contract, the unions should be demanding a sliding scale of wages which gives automatic cost of living increases against inflation and for across the board increases on top of this.

### FIGHT FOR WILSON'S REMOVAL

On employment there is a tremendous shortage of houses, schools and hospitals, yet well over 120,000 building workers are on the dole. An emergency programme of useful public works is needed against unemployment. As for firms which sabotage the productive forces through redundancy — and that is what laying off workers is — they should be nationalised without compensation and under workers control. As there is no chance that Wilson will accept such policies, he must be removed from the leadership of the Labour Party as part of the fight for these policies.

Instead of shifting the burden of the capitalist crisis onto the workers, the unions should be campaigning for a programme of action to maintain living standards and defend the right to work. Instead of propping up Wilson, the unions should be fighting for his removal from the leadership of the Labour Party. To fight for these policies needs a clear rejection of the Social Contract in its existing and new forms.

# SOLIDARITY WITH N.U.R.

As the NUR prepare for their first national strike since the 1926 General Strike, the Labour Government is uniting against the rail workers. Wilson dragged the NUR leaders to Downing Street last Saturday night to make one thing clear: that his hard-line policy of making the workers pay for the economic crisis will find its next victim in the rail workers. The next day so-called 'left' Michael Foot joined in Wilson's witch-hunt.

For the membership of the NUR, victory in this struggle — though the increase they are going for is only an other £2 over the top of the tribunal's offer — will strengthen their determination to fight both to defend living standards and against the onslaught on jobs which British Rail is preparing. Although the last national strike was almost fifty years ago, the traditions of the union and memories of the Triple Alliance with the transport workers and miners are still strong.

Mass involvement of rail workers through the strike committees, mass meetings and picketing will lay the solid base on which links can be forged with other workers. Shop stewards committees, trade union branches, the Labour Party and the left organisations should establish support committees in every area. If Benn and the Labour lefts are serious about fighting Wilson's Tory policies, they must denounce his confrontation moves, demand immediate set-

tlement on the rail workers' terms, and campaign up and down the country in support of the rail workers.

Wilson knows the coming battle is one he cannot afford to lose. A successful strike would be the last nail in the coffin of the already defunct Social Contract Mark 1 and prepare the way for struggles against Social Contract Mark 2. If the rail workers win, we all win.

James Hurst

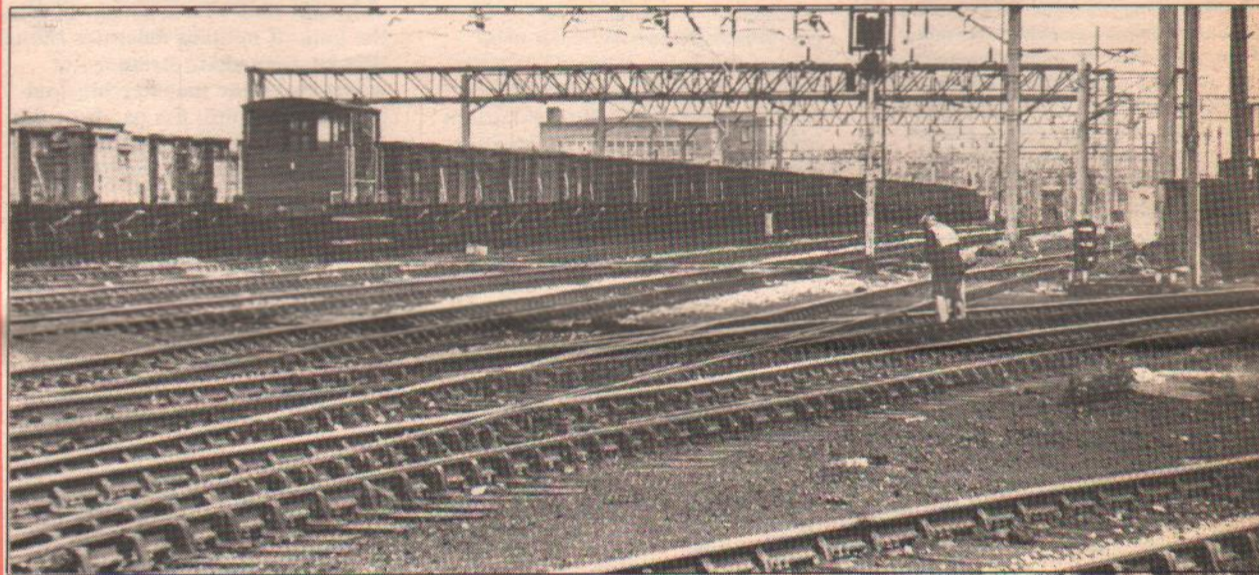


Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

Hesitations about striking for such a small rise are now giving way to a solid determination not to be beaten into the dust by the Government. Support has been promised by the leaderships of the miners, post office workers, electricians, transport and print workers. SOGAT has instructed its members not to move papers normally shifted by rail.

These promises should be turned into solidarity action at every level: no stocks to the power stations, no coal from the pit-heads, no ore to the steel mills, not a paper to be moved! Flying pickets should be arranged by the strike committees in every area to ensure this.

In 1926 C.T.T. Cramp, industrial secretary of the NUR, declared that 'if you are going to have a strike which should be effective...you have to shut down everything in the way of transport which might compete with the railways. If you are in a war you have to fight with both hands.'

At a time when rail workers are in a war with a Government which is crawling on its belly before the bosses of industry and finance, these words have a burning relevance. If goods are shifted by road or canal they must be stopped. Dockers should black all internal cargos. Airport workers should ground any plane shifting cargo usually transported by rail. No additional bus or coach services should be allowed to run.

When Tory MPs demand that social security payments be withheld or cut for rail workers, the strike committees being set up should organise mass visits to the social security offices — as the miners did so successfully in 1972. And social security workers — many of whom will be involved in the NALGO pay claim

## RED WEEKLY CAN'T SURVIVE ON POLITICS ALONE

After last week's good start the Red Weekly Fund Drive has slowed to a trickle. We had in another £37.45 to make a total so far this month of £213.40. Another week like that and we will be in real trouble.

So we make a big appeal this week. IMG members must ensure that their branch sends in its Fund Drive quota. What is more, make sure that you do this before Saturday 21 June. Also we appeal directly to every reader for a donation. This could be a perilous week for us financially and without your help we are sunk.

Our target has to be a bigger, more widely read Red Weekly. That will not be possible unless we keep the Fund Drive rolling. Rush all donations to Fund Drive, 182 Pentonville Road, London, N.1.

## RED WEEKLY

### SUBSCRIBE

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

DOMESTIC: £6 per year  
£3.00 for 6 months

FOREIGN: £9 per year surface mail  
£12 per year airmail

Write to RED WEEKLY (distribution)  
182 Pentonville Road,  
London N.1. ENGLAND.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....AMOUNT ENCLOSED.....