

RED WEEKLY

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inside:

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Students - day of action

Storm clouds rumble in France

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS of workers marched in Paris and provincial cities throughout France last Tuesday. They were observing the one-day national strike called by the CGT and CFDT union federations, and the federation of teachers' unions, the FEN, in solidarity with striking postal workers.

Strikes swept through France's public sector after a group of postal workers in Paris walked out spontaneously on 17 October. But it is the postal workers who have remained to the fore, demanding £19 a month across-the-board increase; a minimum wage of £155 a month, and an increase in the number of workers.

The strike has had an enormous impact: tens of thousands of postal workers and their supporters have demonstrated in the streets of Paris. Their slogans have reflected the fact that the period of trial for French President Giscard's Government has come to an end. And while trade union leaders claim that the strikes are 'not political', one of the main chants has been: 'Giscard, Bastard! The masses will settle accounts with you.'

EXAMPLE

Given the 15% inflation rate in France the postal workers' strike has provided an example for many other workers. The dustmen, gas workers and electricity workers have also come out. The trade union bureaucrats, remembering only too well how they were outflanked in the great strike wave of May '68, are today supporting the strikes, although constantly attempting to keep them firmly under their control.

Nonetheless, tension between the Government and trade unionists has reached new peaks. The police succeeded in clearing post offices occupied by striking workers, but the result was massive protest demonstrations reminiscent of May '68.

The army has been sent in to clear the streets of rubbish, but members of the FCR (Revolutionary Communist Front—French section of the Fourth International) have distributed leaflets calling on soldiers not to scab. In some barracks soldiers are already beginning to protest.

Meanwhile the French workers' parties have been adjusting themselves to the growing crisis situation. While the French CP has given up all talk of socialism and stated its readiness to serve in a 'government of national unity' with the Gaullists, the Socialist Party has moved further to the left. Its programme calls for 'non-bureaucratic socialism and self-management'. So while the CP is trying to make itself acceptable to the capitalists, the Socialist Party is prettifying itself to strengthen its working class base. Neither, however, offers the workers any solution except the parliamentary one.

The CGT and CFDT are trying to hold back the struggle by proposing the Common Programme of CP-SP 'Union of the Left' alliance and the election of a 'left government' as the solution.

'Strike by all means, for higher wages, but don't challenge the government' is their message—'leave that to the Union of the Left'. This strategy only demobilises the masses and leads even to electoral defeats for the workers' parties.

C. Howard.

Labour rattles pay laws social contract in trouble—

Miners vote out Labour's fraud

The three to two vote of the miners against the National Coal Board's productivity deal has put them right in the forefront of the struggle against the social contract. This vote is a big political defeat for the ruling class, who saw the deal as a way of destroying the unity of the miners, their toughest opponent in past struggles.

Up to now the Labour Party leaders have played their cards close to their chest. They preferred to let the NUM right-wing make the running. The vote against the deal has inflicted a stinging defeat on Gormley and co. and is forcing the Labour right-wing out into the open.

Jenkins, Prentice and Williams have been arguing at recent cabinet meetings that the Government should openly threaten a statutory incomes policy if the unions do not toe the line. Last weekend at the Prime Minister's holiday camp, Chequers, accompanied by their 'think tank' civil servants, the

cabinet ministers put pay laws right on top of their agenda.

Williams and her friends know time is running out. Healey's Budget has let the cat out of the bag. All it offers is a decline in working class living standards. The fraud of the social contract is being exposed as Labour's so-called social reforms are quietly buried beneath the capitalist economics of the Budget.

As the British economy slithers steadily towards disaster the Government realises that voluntary wage restraint will be blown apart by the first big confrontation with a decisive section of the

working class.

A successful miners' fight on wages—be it the suggested £30 rise of McGahey or Scargill's £42.50—will completely destroy any chances the Government has of holding the lid down on other sections' wage claims.

Here the miners can set an example to other workers, not only of how to fight but on what issues to fight. This is why it is important that they do not restrict their demands to a simple wage claim. By taking up the demand for a sliding scale of wages and social benefits—applicable not only to themselves but the rest of the working class, particularly the lower paid—they can show the most effective way to fight inflation.

In seeking support for a future struggle over the claim they should approach other workers in the energy industries and transport, not just on solidarity alone but with a view to submitting joint wage claims.

By taking up the issue of a joint plan for the running of the energy industries and the establishment of workers' control, they can take the first steps towards providing alternative workers' solutions to the capitalist solutions of the Labour Government.



Over 100 tenants and trade unionists took part last Saturday in the first picket of Islington speculators Prebble's since Judge Forbes's ruling that this—and all other non-industrial pickets—are illegal. The police took the judge's hint and arrested four people. But supporters of the campaign will not easily be deterred, and the weekly pickets will go on. It has also been decided to make the one on 7 December a mass picket in support of the right to picket. An IMG spokesperson (inset) appealed for support from this for all trade-unionists in London, drawing a parallel with the recent attack on the Shrewsbury pickets. Photo: ANDREW WIARD (Report)

FUND DRIVE

It's been another magnificent week, taking our total to

£1392

Our thanks in particular to:
Camden IMG, £50 raised at a party after the Red Weekly Rally; Sheffield IMG, £30; IMG Equity fraction, a further £8.50; and J.W., £200.

Chancellor Denis Healey has seen to it that prices will be going through the roof very shortly. So please send all you can afford—before it disappears into thin air.

All donations to: RED WEEKLY FUND DRIVE, 182 Pentonville Road, London, N.1.

COVENTRY CONFERENCE CAN CHART

ANTI-FASCIST STRUGGLE



In Coventry this weekend, militants active against racism and fascism have their first chance in a long time to get together to discuss the lessons of the recent struggles and the tasks of the future. The setting is appropriate: Kevin Gately who was killed in Red Lion Square opposing the National Front was a Warwick student.

The Conference has much to take into account. Two major anti-fascist actions on the streets of London over recent months have made the fascists of the National Front and their policies a talking point in factories, sites and union branches up and down the country.

Alf Jennings

In Leicester, Asian workers at Imperial Typewriters won a partial victory against discrimination at work, but in the teeth of opposition from fellow white workers and local union bureaucrats. The Imperial strike is the sort of event that forces trade unionists to face the issue of racism on the shop floor.

The recent election marked the return from 'exile' of Enoch Powell, the arch-racist, trailing the reactionary Loyalist legions behind him, and thrusting Ireland into the centre of the class struggle in Britain. Powell in the past has even been able to get some of the best organised workers to take strike action in support of his racist policies.

Powell is poised to anchor himself even more firmly into those backward sentiments that form part of the everyday culture of millions of working people: racism, hatred for Irish republicanism, a chauvinist 'little Englander of Dunkirk' opposition to the EEC, the admiration for the 'Churchillian' leader-figure, and the sexist moral prudery that surrounds family matters.

Powell

Because of this, Powell is a potential tenant of Downing Street, leading a government which would proceed to break the back of the unions, drive down living standards, give the police a free hand, and promote racial persecution, to 'save the country' in a 'national crisis'.

This is not going to happen in six months or a year. But the next period will see these forces of the right making inroads into the workers' movement and trying to politically disarm it—just as the ruling class are encouraging the courts and the police to strengthen their repressive powers without a by-your-leave from Parliament, and are preparing for the eventual return of a strong government.

The threat from the right as a whole is serious. The racists will be out to promote racial violence. The male chauvinists, moral hypocrites, censorship crusaders and law and or-

der fanatics will bang their drums more loudly. And at least a section of workers are in immediate danger of falling under the spell of Powell (and even the NF) because of the unashamedly nationalist and chauvinist basis on which the Labour Party, TUC and Communist Party oppose the Common Market.

Legal curbs

There will be several questions at the Conference around which controversy already exists and debate will take place. How to fight against the National Front, for example. There are many, including the CP, who believe a campaign designed to achieve legal curbs—e.g. by strengthening the Race Relations Act—will do the trick. Revolutionaries argue, however, that only the mobilisation of workers and students on the streets can effectively deprive the NF of a platform.

Again there will be many who believe it sufficient to call on black workers to 'unite' with their white brothers against the common enemy, yet remain blind to the simple fact that fellow white workers are often complicit with the management in holding down blacks. The IMG argues that if black workers are not to become hostile to trade unions altogether, the independent organisation of blacks within the unions, when necessary, and vigorous campaigns of support wherever black workers go into struggle, are vital.

Debates

Underlying these 'tactical' debates lie fundamental 'strategic' issues. Do we combat the forces of political reaction and the increasing repression from the state that these forces help promote, by relying on an alliance of 'democratic' forces to 'defend democracy'? Or do we rely on the independent organisations of the working class to overturn capitalist parliamentary democracy and replace it with workers' democracy?

These issues will not be resolved at Warwick. What the conference must do however is alert the labour movement to the fact that the fight against racism and fascism are in the interests of all workers. Racism and fascism harbour the growth of a strong state; and can only be combatted effectively by the workers' movement taking up in a systematic way the issues that are strong points of the right.

The resolution passed by the Manchester Anti-fascist Committee and submitted to the Warwick Conference is the sort of basis on which local anti-fascist bodies and the anti-fascist/anti-racist movement in general can unite, despite differences on other matters.

As a first step to developing a systematic response to these developments, its support for the idea of a trade union conference on Ireland, already called for by Joan Maynard, should be taken up by the Warwick Conference.

SCARMAN TRIBUNAL CONTINUES ATTACK ON WORKERS' RIGHTS

The Scarman Tribunal resumed its hearing on Monday in the midst of an unprecedented offensive against democratic rights by the judiciary.

Widgery has sent down the Shrewsbury Two, while his fellow-judge Forbes has handed down the notorious Prebble's judgment making picketing illegal for all non-industrial disputes.

Scarman will be under heavy ruling class pressure to keep the pot boiling by recommending that the police are given more powers.

The position of the International Marxist Group is to oppose all new powers for the police. IMG spokesperson at the Tribunal, Dave Bailey, told *Red Weekly* that he would also be putting forward a demand for the repeal of the Public Order Act:

'In our view, the time has come

to get rid of this pernicious legislation, so that the labour movement can take up the burning political issues of the day—like the fascist threat—without police interference.'

As democratic rights won by the labour movement after decades of struggle come under fire, we will have to step up the campaign to defend them. The Scarman Tribunal is only one platform where these demands are being taken up. The trade unions and the Labour Party are others.

A campaign must be built demanding:

- Repeal of the Public Order Act.
- Disbandment of the special 'anti-demo' police, the SPG and the mounted police.
- Dropping of all charges under the Public Order Act and the Conspiracy Act

Workers' strike - 'censorship' Bosses' lock-out - 'democracy'

Appeals to defend the 'freedom of the press' are flying thick and fast these days.

The cause of all this uproar is none other than the National Union of Journalists, which has suddenly replaced the print unions as the chief bogeyman of the newspaper bosses.

The NUJ achieved this distinction simply by applying a few 'sanctions' to back up its wage claim against the provincial employers in the Newspaper Society—in other words, by blacking copy from non-union sources.

The response of the employers has been to scream blue murder about 'threats to democracy'—and in the case of the Westminster Press, to sack 63 employees in the *Kentish Times* group. On Monday an all-out strike of journalists working on Newspaper Society papers began in the London area to demand their reinstatement.

'DEMOCRACY'

The whole affair has thrown a rather interesting light on the nature of 'democracy' and the press under capitalism. The editorial director of the Westminster Press, for instance, justified the *Kentish Times* sackings on the grounds that the

journalists' action 'interfered with an editor's right to decide what appears in his newspaper. This is censorship.'

In other words, if one editor, answerable only to his capitalist proprietor, determines with an iron hand what goes into a newspaper—that's 'democracy.' But if his employees, whose collective efforts alone ensure the production of the paper, interfere at all with this boss-given right—that's 'censorship'.

WAGE CLAIM

Editors and newspaper bosses are now pleading with Michael Foot for exemption from any future legislation enforcing the closed shop. They claim in particular that this would hit a small grouping called the Institute of Journalists, which claims to be a 'recognised trade union.'

Recognised by the workers' organisations in the 10 million strong TUC, is it then? Well—not exactly. No, these 'professional' people are 'recognised by the Registrar of Trade Unions, as one of a few scab outfits left on his books after the withdrawal of most unions over the Industrial Relations Act.

The fight by journalists, both against the 'democracy' of the employers and for the closed shop, is thus a vital one for all trade unionists.

But at the same time, sight must not be lost of the wage demand which sparked off this confrontation. The original ballot for all-out strike action on the claim was lost

by a small majority. The employers' response to sanctions, however, has changed the situation; it has shown you can't go some of the way without being prepared to go all the way if necessary.

The all-out strike in London, called by the NUJ Executive after a call from its London action committee, is an excellent move in this direction; but its terms must be extended to include the fight for the claim as well as the reinstatement of the *Kentish Times* journalists. It is also important that this move is used as a focus around which to campaign among Newspaper Society journalists outside London for similar action.

John Marston

ACTION COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENCE OF JOURNALISTS

Public meeting: Wednesday, December 11th, 7.30pm.

END STATE INTERFERENCE IN THE MEDIA! STOP THE DAVID MAY TRIAL!

St Bride's Institute, Bride Lane, EC4

Speakers include David May, Eamonn McCann and a Labour MP.

POLICE WHITEWASH OVER LENNON KILLING

The brutal killing of Kenneth Lennon last Easter raised a storm of protest.

Three days before his death he had visited the offices of the National Council of Civil Liberties, and told them that he was scared that the Special Branch were going to kill him. Lennon was a police informer who infiltrated the Republican movement in Britain and helped to set-up two Irish militants in Luton (both are still in jail).

Roy Jenkins asked the police to investigate the killing. Inevitably, they have prepared a whitewash report exonerating the Special Branch.

Judge Widgery, no mean white-washer himself—he exonerated the army over the Bloody Sunday killings in Derry—said while dismissing an appeal by Lennon's family, that in these days of troubles the Special Branch had to do a lot of 'unpleasant' things. The learned judge could have gone on and added: '...including killing off troublesome ex-informers'.

WHITEWASH

The coroner at Epsom, Lt. Col George McEwan, no doubt got the message loud and clear from the Home Office. He refused to allow the lawyer for the Lennon family, John Platts-Mills, QC, to summon the two Special Branch officers, Commander Rodger and Det. Inspector Wickens.

The Lt. Colonel remarked: 'I think it best that these officers should not attend'. The foreman of the jury reaffirmed that he did not wish the Special Branch officers questioned and the jury conveniently decided that Lennon had been murdered by 'a person or persons unknown'. George McEwan is a coroner who knows his job so the whitewash is complete, with only the police report commissioned by Jenkins remaining to be published.

Not a single capitalist newspaper has made the Lennon affair into the Watergate of the British police establishment. Too much else would



come out, and the proprietors of our for publishing Lennon's statement before he was killed and breaking it to the press, is somehow got rid of. The establishment also dominates the NCCL.

'Free press' might get tainted. Whenever a massive cock-up involving the Special Branch or the Army or the Secret Service occurs the British establishment closes ranks. Both wings of the Parliamentary Labour Party eagerly concur with only the odd Labour MP striking a discordant note. An oppressive curtain of silence is drawn over the whole affair. Even the National Secretary of the NCCL, who was responsible

Only the socialist press of the revolutionary left (*Workers Press, Socialist Worker and Red Weekly*) will question the coroner's decision and they, unfortunately, reach a small audience. Nonetheless, over the next months we have to ensure that the question of Lennon, Littlejohn and the use of SB provocateurs is raised whenever Labour MPs and Ministers attend meetings. Lennon was killed so that he could not tell any more tales, but his victims are still in prison.

Roy Jenkins must not be allowed to get away with concealing the identity of Lennon's murderers.

C. Howard

IN FOCUS WORKERS MOVEMENT & IRELAND

THE APATHY OF THE WORKERS MOVEMENT about the role of the Labour Government in Ireland was taken up last week by the two opposite ends of the political spectrum based on the Catholic working class in the Northern six counties of Ireland. That John Hume of the reformist and collaborationist Social and Democratic Labour Party could be pushed into tongue lashing all wings of the Labour Party indicates how far the Labour Government has gone in compromising with the Loyalists.

Only five months ago there was a Cabinet Minister in a government that presided over Long Kesh and defended the whole policy of internment. But the SDLP is subject to two quite contradictory pressures which force it into periodic somersaults—the Southern Irish bourgeoisie and the Catholic working class in the ghettos of the North. In 1970, the five MPs who later formed the SDLP voted for the Criminal Justice Act which carried a mandatory six months prison sentence for anyone arrested by the British army snatch squads. However only one year later, the upsurge of the Catholic masses had forced the SDLP out of Stormont. They gave their full backing to the mass anti-internment, rent and rates strike pledging never again to accept office until internment was ended—and then entered the power-sharing administration which ended so abruptly with the Loyalist general strike in May. Not only did they do nothing about these pledges but hounded the rent and rate strikers they had previously backed so vociferously.

Now with their power-sharing house of cards collapsed and Long Kesh in ashes, they are once again on their 'militant' bandwagoning desperately hoping they will not lose support to the republicans.

With his pathetic accusation that 'internment acts as a recruiting agent for the Provisional IRA,' Hume is making a plaintive plea for a few crumbs from British imperialism to assuage the insurgent base in the ghettos.

In doing that he exposed the type of rubbish that Labour Minister Merlyn Rees goes in for. Hume proclaimed 'to argue that internment is necessary in Northern Ireland because of the violence that exists there' is dishonest. 'Internment has increased rather than decreased the violence.'

Hume had no solutions, but Dáithí Ó Conail, Vice President of Provisional Sinn Féin, speaking on ITV's *Weekend World* programme was able to spotlight the real problem—'the terror waged by the troops in Ireland.' His answer was far more relevant than that of the SDLP. He wanted the troops out of Ireland. He didn't just want an end to internment but 'the opening up of the jails in Ireland and Britain.' And he was clear that Irish people should be free to sort out their own affairs free from British interference through an 'All-Ireland Conference.'

Unfortunately, the bombing campaign in Britain which he threatened to step up is not the way to achieve these ends. The fact of the matter is that the Irish Catholic working class is still under the tutelage of the SDLP. The key task is the winning of these forces to the essential demands of the withdrawal of troops and for self determination. The struggle of the Irish people has not yet reached the stage of all-out war, except in the heads of the Provisional leadership. All the political problems of winning the Irish people to that stage of mobilisation where a fight to the death against British imperialism is on the cards have not been solved. Because of this misestimate of where the struggle is at, the demands that he put forward of a 'statement of intent' rather than 'immediate and unconditional withdrawal' can only confuse the masses in Ireland and undermine the solidarity movement for the withdrawal of troops in this country.

O'Conail was absolutely correct to insist on the need for the armed defence of the Catholic ghettos. He cut through all the hypocrisy that it is British troops which are preventing a civil war. A sectarian war has been going on for three years under the cover of the British army.

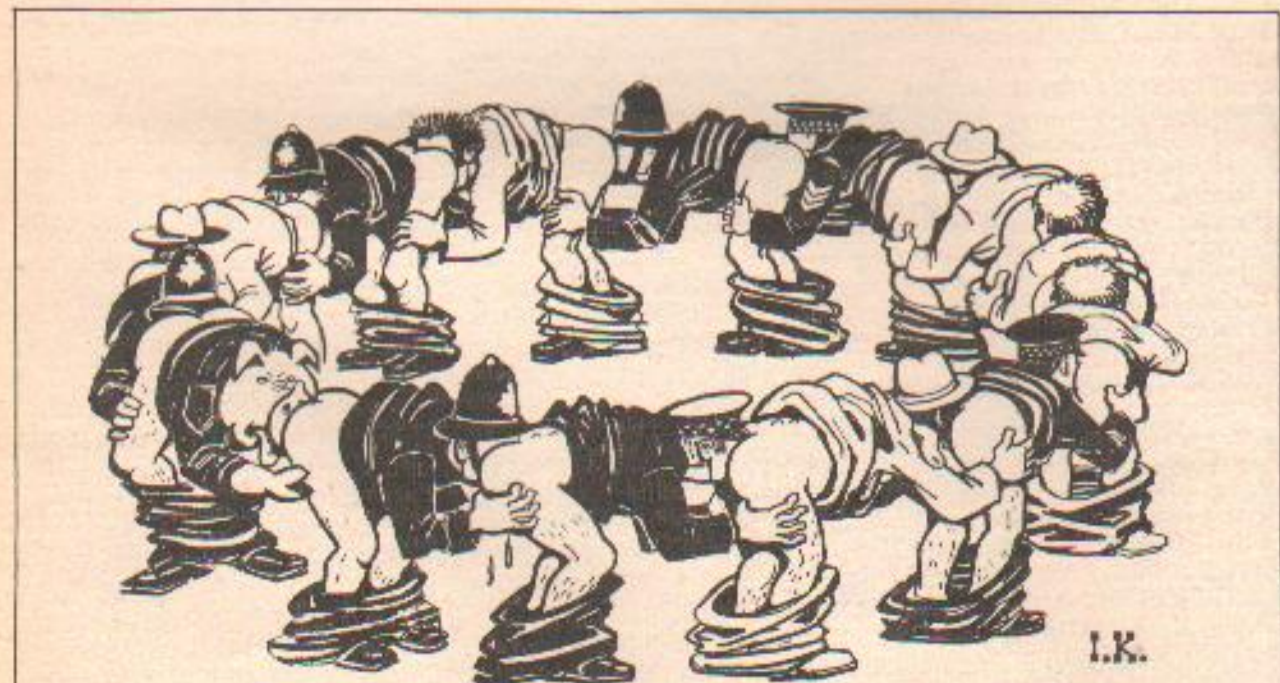
The Provisionals recognise that this sectarian conflict would probably continue after the withdrawal of troops. But the IRA did not seek confrontation with the Loyalists. 'We seek dialogue with all shades of Irish opinion. But the chief obstacle at the moment is the presence of an army which is hostile to the very idea of a free Ireland, coming into its own in the development of a free and independent nation.'

These troops have to be got out. Even in a situation where the Loyalists launch a civil war, O'Conail clearly pointed out the Irish dimension. 'The people of the South will create an army that will not permit the slaughter of Catholics on a massive scale. The Irish people right across the nation will not stand idly by, irrespective of what the politicians will say. Significant sections of the Irish army will not stand by irrespective of what orders come from politicians'. The mistake of those who argue that the British army is needed to stop a civil war is precisely that of those who look at Ireland through the imperialist spectacles of the Six Counties alone.

The insistence of the SDLP that it was 'high time that the labour movement was left in no doubt and was fully aware of the outrages for which it was responsible' despite the hypocrisy hits the mark. Unless the British trade union movement begins to take up its responsibilities on Ireland the consequences will be far worse than IRA bombs.

It will be at the expense of the unity of the working class in the face of a chauvinist campaign led by someone like Powell on a programme of national salvation.

O'Conail certainly does not provide any relevant answers with his bombing campaign, but he raises some of the crucial problems confronting the Irish people. A trade union conference to discuss the responsibilities of the British trade union movement, as called for by the Troops Out Movement, especially in the face of a Labour government administering imperialist policy, would be a worthwhile first step.



SPECIAL BRANCH INVESTIGATING THE LENNON/LITTLEJOHN AFFAIR

TORTURE IN WEST GERMAN PRISONS

Holger Meins, a 33-year-old political prisoner on hunger strike in a West German prison, died last week.

This sparked off demonstrations in all the major German cities: 5000 militants marched in Berlin alone. Meins was a member of the Red Army Fraction (RAF — known also as the Baader-Meinhof group) and his death brought instant repercussions. West Berlin's chief judge, Guenter von Drenkmann, was shot dead by six masked commandos, and more reprisals were threatened.

The hunger strike was begun by the 42 imprisoned members of RAF last September in protest against 'Special Treatment and Destructive Imprisonment'. While the tortures inflicted on the prisoners may not appear to be as brutal as those carried out by the Greek torturers or by the Chilean military, the effects of the sophisticated tortures used in

German prisons could nonetheless cause permanent damage.

ARRAIGNED

Psychologists who have been studying the effects of similar torture used in Ireland in the internment camps have already produced some devastating evidence and as a result the British Government is at the moment being arraigned before the Human Rights Commission. In West Germany, the RAF have become the victims of new forms of psychological torture, which include:

- systematic segregation from other prisoners; exclusion from all communal activities and a ban on all conversation with other prisoners.
- special screens fixed outside the cell window which distort any perceptions of the outside.
- solitary exercise with no opportunity to see or speak to other prisoners and handcuffing during exercise
- censorship and confiscation of books and papers.



In the case of special prisoners a new scheme of isolation has been devised known as the 'Tote Trakt' where the prisoner is cut off from any normal human sounds. He does not hear anything, not even footsteps. Ronald Augustin was held in the 'Tote Trakt' of Hanover prison from May to October of this year. The inside of his cell was insulated by an

iron threshold 5cm high and a sound-proof screen was placed on the cell window. This total sonic vacuum can have extremely damaging effects.

Scientific research has established that torture through withdrawal of sound has the same effect on the human body as continued electric shocks. It was against these methods that the RAF decided to launch a hunger strike and since last September more than 30 prisoners have been forcibly fed.

When Ronald Augustin was removed from the 'Tote Trakt' they stopped forcibly feeding him, but also stopped supplying him with water, hoping thereby that he would be forced to drink milk or beer. For 3½ days he went without water. The washing water was poisoned with chemicals! It was only solidarity from the other prisoners that forced the authorities to resume supplying Augustin with drinking water. Meins died after being forcibly fed, like Michael Gaughan, the Irish political prisoner who died last summer in similar circumstances.

The political prisoners of the Fourth Reich, governed today by German social-democracy, find themselves isolated from the Ger-

man labour movement. Only the groups on the revolutionary left (including the German section of the Fourth International), who disagree totally with their tactics (urban guerrilla warfare in German cities) are in the forefront of their defence.

The RAF prisoners have been held since 1972 without trial. The manufacturing of evidence and witnesses takes slightly longer these days. But the tortures are beginning to arouse discontent. Even the West German branch of Amnesty International has been compelled to ask its London headquarters to set up an independent commission of inquiry.

The German social-democrats and the CP are extremely short sighted in tolerating these tortures. It is not inconceivable that in the years to come their own members might also be subjected to them.

Further information can be obtained from: Komites Gegen Folter An Politischen Gefangenen In Der BRD — Committee Against Torture of Political Prisoners in the FRG, 2 Hamburg 60 — Alsterdorfer 85 Str, Germany.

Joan Stott

US miners close down coal fields

By JEFF KING

America's 120,000 miners closed down the coal fields at midnight on Monday 11 November.

The miners are calling for a substantial wage increase and big improvements in safety. Last November the miners got a seven per cent increase but since then inflation has shot up past 12 per cent and the price of food has gone up by 20 per cent. This year miners have suffered a cut of five per cent in their living standards.

Up to six months ago a miner was allowed to buy coal for \$10 a ton — the cost price. Now he has to pay \$21. Coal prices have gone up 61 per cent and profits are up by 181 per cent.

SAFETY

Safety is of tremendous concern to the miners. In the 39 days whilst negotiations were taking place between the coal owners and the United Mineworkers' Union, 39 miners were killed.

Since 1900 100,000 miners have died as a result of accidents or diseases like the notorious 'black lung'. At present miners get no disablement pension unless they have an accident when they are over 51 years old and have been working in the mines for 16 years.

The UMW has called on the Department of Interior's Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration to come down on unsafe conditions but MESA has failed to deliver the goods.

Although MESA has the power to fine coal owners who fail to meet safety requirements it just never gets

round to collecting the fines. The big companies simply ignore the fines and carry on in the old way. The Pittson Company has paid up only \$7,300 of its \$2.1 million fines. It was Pittson who tried to blame God when its dam broke and showered death and destruction along Buffalo Creek, West Virginia in 1972. Obviously they think MESA should ask God for the fines.

Consolidation Coal, owned by Continental Oil — after tax profit for first six months of 1974 \$209,601,000 — has paid \$800,000 out of \$2.9 million Rockefeller and his family now own 300,000 shares in Consolidation. In 1968, 78 of their miners were buried alive in a fall. This 'public-spirited servant' offered no help or compensation to the miners' families.

Island Creek Coal, owned by Senator Gore of Tennessee, forked out only \$249,000 of the \$2.3 million assessed by MESA.

PROFITABLE

For some, black lung and accidents are profitable. Coal-country lawyers are scooping in fortunes in black-lung fees from the state compensation programme, which is kindly underwritten by the Treasury and which ultimately cuts into the claiming miners' compensation. In 1972 and 1973, lawyer Kelsey Friend Sr. of Pikeville, Kentucky, collected a cool \$2.2million in fees.

For years the UMW was ruled by a gangster-like bureaucracy which plundered the funds, physically smashed up its opponents, and even sold out the UMW hospitals in the

Appalachian mountains. These hospitals were built with union money for the free treatment of miners and their families.

In 1963 the UMW was taken over by 'Tony' Boyle who inherited the corrupt Lewis regime and used it for himself and his henchmen. In 1969 the Boyle regime was challenged by Joseph Yablonski but in the 1972 elections Boyle, by fiddling the ballot, kept Yablonski out. Three weeks later Boyle had Yablonski and his wife and daughter murdered.

Yablonski's revelations — for years he had been a Boyle man — and the assassination triggered off a revolt in the ranks. Miners for Democracy, an opposition group inside the union, won a new ballot against the discredited Boyle men.

AWAKENED

The rank and file were awakened from a long torpor of apathy and demoralisation. They saw the election of the new regime led by Arnold Miller as the go-ahead to start a serious fight for better wages and improved safety.

The economic crisis leading to swelling living costs and the increases in world oil prices have given that mood a further shot in the arm.

In the summer of this year, after 13 bloody months, one of the most bitter and violent strikes in American coal mining history came to an end. The 400 miners of Harlan County, Kentucky won the right to union pay scales and conditions. The Dule Power Company, sixth largest utility company in the world which owns three mines in Harlan was brought to heel. The miners now feel that they have the strength to take on the coal bosses.

The miners are demanding a six-hour day, 30 paid sick days per year, no compulsory overtime, more effective safety committees with one full-time safety officer on each shift to be elected by the miners and paid for by the coal companies.

The coal owners' fear of a long strike — which would rapidly hit other sectors of the American economy — has already been shown in the speed with which they have returned to the negotiating table to offer the UMW bureaucrats a few more concessions in return for a new contract. Instead of taking advantage of this weakness to press their full demands, however, the bureaucrats have agreed to a compromise which will be put to a



Big audience for Portuguese Trotskyists

In the wake of the big victory of the Portuguese workers' movement over the reactionary forces in September, the Portuguese sympathising group of the Fourth International (LCI — International Communist League) has been organising a series of mass rallies throughout the country.

On 12 October a big crowd of workers and students turned out at the Sports Pavilion for the LCI's rally in Porto, the country's second largest city.

This gathering was the culmination of a series of mass actions that the LCI has undertaken in Porto since 25 April: a demonstration against colonialism and the colonial wars; a demonstration and mass meeting against redundancies; and a demonstration and meeting in solidarity with the Chilean workers, held on 14 September.

The rally opened by paying homage to revolutionaries who had fallen in the fight against capitalist exploitation. Seven speakers then addressed the meeting on the political situation after the victory

over the right and the tasks of the workers' movement; the economic problems facing the working class; the problems of women workers; the attacks on workers' rights; the need for a workers' united front and a revolutionary workers' government; the building of a revolutionary workers' party and section of the Fourth International; and the LCI's programme for the class struggle.

In between the speeches, the crowd chanted slogans such as 'Down with capitalist exploitation', 'Only one solution — smash reaction' and 'Workers of the world — united we shall win'.

As *Luta Proletaria* (Proletarian Struggle), the LCI's paper, put it:

'The present situation is one of growing political instability and strengthening of the position of revolutionaries within the working class and labouring masses. This meeting of the LCI allowed it to crystallise out around a revolutionary perspective the experience acquired by broad sections of working people in the recent class struggles...'



Another war in the Middle

East?

Once again there is widespread talk of another war in the Middle East, writes SALEH JAAFAR. For the bourgeois press this is simply a question of idle speculation on the probable military trends and outcomes of such a war, but for Marxists it is above all else a political question. It is likely it will be difficult for Israel to take the military initiative however, much it may want and need to for internal purposes — without at least the prior knowledge and tacit approval of American imperialism. It is equally certain that the latter will not be forthcoming until there has been a further round of diplomatic manoeuvres over the question of the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and Sinai.

The US is far more aware than Israel of the acute repercussions that any war could have on 'stability'

within the Arab world. Even more importantly, it is extremely reluctant at a time of worldwide capitalist crisis to risk the international spillover effects that tend to be generated by Arab-Israeli wars: heightened inter-imperialist tensions, changing oil politics, and a question mark over detente with the Soviet Union.

American policy is therefore working in two directions. First, it is massively re-arming Israel, partly in preparation for another war and partly as a 'deterrent' that might frighten off the Arab regimes. Secondly, it is searching through Kissinger for the 'holy grail' of Middle Eastern bourgeois politics — the 'magic line' that will separate Israel from the Arab world in just such a way as to make all parties happy.

But this policy is doomed to failure, because this magic boundary does not exist in the objective conditions in the Middle East. The conflict between Zionism and the Arab masses is only superficially a territorial one.

On a more fundamental level, it is Zionism's role as the principal ally of imperialism in the area, combined with the inability of the Arab ruling classes to meet even the most elementary needs of the Arab masses, which stands in the way of any long-term 'stabilisation' of the area. The effects of this are already visible.

In EGYPT a crowd of more than 2,000 recently set fire to two trams in Cairo in protest at having to wait three hours to get home from work.

The Egyptian Government has officially described this and other such spontaneous mass actions which have been building up over the last few months as 'regrettable incidents'. But unfortunately for the regime, this particular expression has now been turned against them in a peculiarly Egyptian way.

It has now been systematically incorporated into everyday speech, newspaper cartoons and articles as a means of highlighting the regime's total inability to deal with the steadily worsening economic situation inside the country. A new mood is developing amongst the Egyptian masses. It is very different from the waves of optimism which followed on the heels of the October war last year; indeed, it is beginning to bear a striking resemblance to the pre-October situation, with its student demonstrations and working class strikes (in the Helwan complex).

President Sadat's response to the ferocious inflation which has been sweeping Egypt was to impose price controls. On the face of it, nothing to complain about. But these measures have been introduced in the wake of increasing denationalisation of the Egyptian economy (begun by Nasser after the 1967 defeat) which has made Egypt increasingly dependent on the world capitalist market.

Price controls in such a situation have simply led to chronic shortages of basic commodities. The quality of the public services has also worsened as the economy is no longer geared to provide for them — public transport and sewage have been particularly hard hit.

This 'transformation of Egypt' into a haven of cheap labour for imperialist capital is being brought about at a price which the Egyptian ruling class is determined to exact from the masses. But the Egyptian masses are now telling Sadat that they don't intend to pay up.

The regime is therefore in a fix. On the

one hand it is under tremendous pressure to translate its 'great victory' over Zionism in October into something more tangible than a meagre strip of useless desert. This would require at least the return of the Sinai peninsula and an improvement in the standard of living of the population.

But on the other hand, the means by which the Egyptian ruling class has chosen to fight Zionism — by slavishly adhering to American imperialism in the hope of bringing about a change in the imperialist align-

pound by 43%, along with drastic cuts in Government subsidies on fourteen basic

In many ways the dilemma of the Zionist regime is even greater than that of Sadat. Not only is the economy in shambles, but the Israeli political leadership is deeply divided within itself as a result of the relative diplomatic achieve-

GREEK RIGHT WINS FIRST ROUND

It is clear as we go to press that the conservative 'New Democracy' party of Constantine Karamanlis has won an outright victory in the Greek elections. But the way in which it was achieved means that his Government will surely face troubled times ahead.

Karamanlis presented himself as the sole guarantee that there would be no return to the days of the junta — in other words, 'Karamanlis or tanks'. The very real fear he played on was underlined — particularly in rural areas — by the survival of many local and state officials from the days of the junta.

This was symbolised at the top, of course, by the continuation of General Gazikis — one of the leaders of the second military coup in November 1973 — in the presidency.

VOTING SYSTEM

Karamanlis was also able to impose a voting system which was bound to give his party big advantages. The elections were conducted on the basis of voting lists drawn up by the junta (from which many oppositionists understandably withheld their names). The hundreds of thousands of Greek workers abroad were denied a vote. The minimum voting age was set at 21.

The effect of the last measure — which excluded nearly 10% of the electorate — was clearly seen in the student elections held a week before the general election. Here the group supporting Karamanlis succeeded in winning only 47 out of the 316 seats, while the various left-wing groups won more than 200.

But the main reason for his success was that he alone was able to unite the Greek capitalist class behind a clear political project with an

experienced and sophisticated machine to carry it out.

Karamanlis's failure to purge the state bureaucracy, the army and the police is no accident — the only way he can hope to contain the workers' movement is through the repressive apparatus of a 'strong state' which downplays the importance of parliament. This is why he has expressed so much admiration for the French presidential system, which was built up in just this way by de Gaulle.

LEFT DIVIDED

The left, on the other hand, was deeply divided and largely unprepared. The two factions of the Communist Party — the hard-line 'orthodox' wing and the more liberal 'interior' group — joined together for the purposes of the election under the banner of the United Left. But this could not conceal the real crisis of perspectives for the Stalinists in Greece — their emphasis on 'national unity' and 'democracy' in the weeks after the junta was overthrown played right into the hands of Karamanlis.

They also lost votes heavily to the new Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) led by Andreas Papandreu, which at least talked — if only in a very demagogic way — about the need for socialism (and was attacked by the CP for doing so).

One thing is certain, however — the honeymoon will not last long. The effects of the world-wide economic crisis are being sharply felt in Greece, where the rate of inflation is already more than 30%. But attempts by Karamanlis to make the workers pay for the crisis will meet with heavy resistance. The fight has only just begun.

John Marston



The weakening of Israel's international bargaining position was shown most dramatically last week when Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was allowed to address the UN Assembly

ment — has meant up to now no recovery of territory and a reduction in the standard of living of the masses.

This paradox is producing an increasingly unstable situation which is now beginning seriously to undermine Sadat's political authority in Egypt.

In ISRAEL the situation when viewed from inside the country does not look markedly different.

With a rate of inflation of 40% a year, and with military expenditure on new equipment (including the cost of the decline in production resulting from six months of mobilisation) estimated at 40,000 million Israeli pounds — more than the country's Gross National Product! — the Government has clearly been sitting on a volcano of discontent for some time.

The first explosions have now been set off with the devaluation of the Israeli

ments of the Arab regimes following the October war.

The frustrated and incomplete character of the Israeli military victory in October has quite seriously weakened Israel's international bargaining position. All it has going for it at the moment is US imperialism's implicit agreement that it is still the most dependable ally in the area.

This recognition need not necessarily be reflected too strongly in Kissinger's political antics. Where it comes through very clearly is in the increasingly frequent shipments of arms — including warplanes and whole weapons (not just spare parts) — to Israel by the US.

According to a report by the International Institute of Strategic Studies, these have not only restored Israel's armaments to their pre-October 1973 level, but have also considerably strengthened Israel's advantage over the Arab regimes on a purely military level.

Our Common Struggle

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'Fascists out of London' was the message which greeted Portuguese Defence Minister Vitor Alves at the reception organised for him by his embassy last Friday, when a number of Portuguese militants turned up to ram home their call for a purge of reactionaries from the embassy staff.

Last Saturday more than 30 militants from the newly-form-



ed Spanish Solidarity Committee held the first of their regular series of pickets outside the Spanish consulate in London. The Committee was set up to organise solidarity with all opponents of the Spanish dictatorship, and the picket laid stress on the plight of political prisoners.

The picket was considered a big success, although marred

by the absence of most British left groups. Pickets will now take place every Saturday, from 10 am—12:30, at the Spanish Consulate, 3 Hans Crescent, SW1 (off Brompton road—nearest tube Knightsbridge).

The Spanish Solidarity Committee also meets regularly—anyone interested in further details should contact the secretary of the SSC, Sue Fox, at (01)-249-1498.

STARVATION: Ca

Food crisis - our minimum demand is Socialism

Ten million people are expected to die this year — from starvation. Most of them will be children under five, and virtually all of them will be the children of workers and peasants.

They are dying and will die not in Europe or America, nor for that matter in China and Russia, but in imperialist-dominated Asia, Africa and Latin America. In three months this year nearly 200,000 people starved to death in Bangladesh. This is the price the world has to pay for the continued existence of capitalism in the imperialist countries.

It is the functioning of the capitalist system — its methods of production and distribution — that is the root of the problem. It is capitalism which thrives on the co-existence of a situation of plenty side by side with the most grinding poverty.

Over the years American farmers have destroyed crops and cattle (8 million head of cattle were destroyed in the USA in 1934!) simply in order to prevent their market from becoming flooded with food, thereby lowering its price and driving the farmers to the verge of bankruptcy. This is the logic of a system which is based on the private ownership of all the means of production.

The World Food Conference which ended in Rome last week was not a discussion on how to plan priorities on a global scale in order to do away with famine forever. It was in essence the United States offering the 'third world' a deal on its own terms: *We are prepared to give you food in quantities we think are both suitable and desirable, provided you accept all our conditions.*

That was the message that Kissinger gave to the Conference. What it means has already been shown

in Bangladesh, where the US imperialists recently agreed to supply *one-sixth* of the amount of wheat requested by the Mujib regime — provided Bangladesh would agree to stop exporting gunny sacks to Cuba!

The prophets of doom suggest all sorts of solutions: from 'Malthusianism' (i.e. welcoming wars, epidemics and famines as a 'natural' way of keeping the population down) to forced sterilisation and three fish fingers less each week for everyone in the West.

But the discarding of the outmoded and outworn system from which these problems originate is never mentioned.

After all, overthrowing systems requires revolutions, and revolutions are...violent! This argument comes from those who tolerate the institutionalised violence of capitalism, which takes the lives of millions every year.

There is a way of solving the problem, and it has a name: socialism. To make this more concrete, let us consider how the land is organised in a large part of Asia and Latin America. It is privately owned. In other words, anarchy prevails in terms of determining priorities of production nationally and internationally.

Secondly, the less-developed capitalist countries are compelled to remain less developed as long as they remain tied to the capitalist world market, as a study of India shows. In other words a rational organisation of agriculture is not possible within the capitalist system. Extensive land reforms, co-operative farming and — at a later stage — collectivisation is not possible in the countries afflicted by the famine.

The fact that on a world scale millions of acres of fertile land remain uncultivated because of lack of resources, advanced technology, etc., gives us an indic-

ation of the possibilities that exist and the unexhausted potential that remains. But the industrialisation that would permit this of the countries of capitalist Asia, Africa and Latin America would not be good for the American or the European farmer, and so the vicious circle continues.

It is only those countries like China, North Korea and North Vietnam that have broken out of this circle that have escaped the experience of mass starvation.

The solution is thus a political one. As Lenin wrote in his article addressed *To the Rural Poor* in 1903:

...the only way to put an end to the poverty of the people is to change the existing order from top to bottom and to introduce a socialist order: in other words, to take the land from the landowners, the factories from the manufacturers, the money capital from the bankers, to abolish private property and hand it all over to the toilers of the whole country.

'When this is done the rich who live by the labour of others will no longer command the labour of the workers; this will be done by the workers themselves and by persons elected by them. Then the fruits of united labour and the benefits that arise from improvement and machinery will go to all the toilers, all the workers. Wealth will begin to grow at a faster rate...the workers' standard of living will be higher, all their conditions of life will become completely changed...

'This requires a great deal of work and stubborn fighting...' Lenin could have added: not only in Russia, but on a world scale.

C. Howard

INDIA AND BANGLADESH are in the grip of a severe famine. Thousands of peasants are starving to death every day.

Neither the 'Empress of India', as the *Economist* dubbed Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, nor the self-styled 'Friend of Bengal' Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, have been able to take any serious measures to reverse this situation — apart from sending envoys to the west with begging bowls in their hands.

The Indian subcontinent is today paying a heavy price, the result of not breaking with imperialism and capitalism. Mass starvation is the cost of maintaining a system based on a combination of capitalist and pre-capitalist forms of exploitation.

PLUNDER

The continued under-development of India has its roots in the occupation of the country by British imperialism and the systematic plunder which characterised the latter's rule. The industrial revolution in Britain was financed to a large extent by the riches of India.

Between 1757 and 1780 alone, Britain extracted £40 million from India, and this figure doubled and redoubled in the decades which followed. To carry on this plunder it had to prevent Indian industry from developing, particularly in textiles, in order to secure the British monopoly.

A country which exported cotton goods to Britain in 1815, India was turned in to a country which had to import textiles by 1850. Flourishing cities were transformed into jungles as the country became a colony, totally dependent on British imperialism for manufactured goods.

Although local Indian capital was able to develop in certain fields at the beginning of the 20th century, taking advantage of the competition and rivalry between the different imperialist powers, the real damage had been done.

Indian capitalism had been left with a permanent handicap. To see how imperialist colonialism

and exploitation deformed Indian development one has just to note that Japan was also an underdeveloped country in 1850, in fact well behind India!

CONGRESS PARTY

The Congress Party which fought and won independence for India in 1947 was a party representing the interests of both the Indian capitalists and the landlord class which

held sway in the countryside. For the Congress Party independence did not mean a break from imperialism. The Congress party merely took control of the old British-created state apparatus and used it to develop Indian capitalism — but in such a way as not to antagonise the landlords and the rich peasants.

Indian 'state-capitalism' has therefore been an important element in holding together the different class forces that are represented by the Congress Party. Today the crisis in the world capitalist system has brought the Indian economy to its biggest-ever crisis since independence.

Coupled with the droughts which have also struck, the situation for the masses is desperate. The big cities of Calcutta and Bombay are as poverty stricken as Shanghai and Canton were before the 1949 revolution in China. Delhi, the capital, is only a little better

off. Because it has to receive foreign heads of state some of the slums get whitewashed and cleaned up now and again.

The contrast between capitalist India and a country which had similar problems but broke with imperialism and capitalism — China — shows to millions of starving poor what a revolution can do in a semi-colonial country. Even the worst enemies of China admit that no one dies from lack of food there, and that social services are highly developed. The country operates on the basis of a national plan which allows the priorities of the people to be rationally determined, rather than left to the mercy of either the monopolies or state-capitalism as in India. Of course there are many defects in China — not least the lack of socialist democracy — but there can be little doubt that compared to India it is a paradise.

The Indian ruling class is not seriously concerned with taking any measures to alleviate the suffering of the masses. While thousands starve to death and millions of others beg for food, the 'Empress of India's' response is to say: 'Let them eat atom bombs'. Nothing is so bizarre or cynical as the sight of the Indian capitalists exploding nuclear weapons while the population starves.

Over 40 per cent of the population lives on less than 2½p a day. Workers and peasants die in the streets either for lack of food or because they have been shot down by the police for protesting against their misery, whilst the food hoarders, black marketeers and smugglers rake in fortunes. Oiling the palms of Congress politicians, police officials and civil servants ensures that they are not touched. Corruption has become a way of life in India.

In this situation the Indian Communist parties have shown their total bankruptcy. The CPI — the pro-

Moscow Party — hangs on to the coat-tails of Indira Gandhi on the open instructions of Soviet CP chief Brezhnev — on his last visit to Delhi, Brezhnev stated that he did not know why there was need for an opposition to Indira Gandhi!

The CPI(M) — which claims to be independent of both Moscow and Peking — cannot put forward any strategy for socialism, and links up with reactionary parties — even some neo-fascists — in order to 'unite the opposition'. The Maoist CPI(M-L) has largely disintegrated.

The masses do not want to go on in the same old way, but their organisations give them no serious alternatives, and the result is the rapid rise and fall of leaderless mass movements.

This is the real tragedy of the Indian revolution, and it has to be overcome if capitalism is to be destroyed in India. The latter could have important repercussions in the capitalist heartlands: having played such a vital part in the birth of capitalism, we have to ensure that India now helps in its downfall.

Taric Ali



Capitalism's harvest



CAPITALIST 'EXPERTS' PASS THE BUCK

The UN's World Food Conference has led to a flurry of discussion in the press and on TV about starvation in the 'third world'.

But almost all these discussions are based on the sort of thinking that was worked out almost two centuries ago by two of the first capitalist economists — Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo.

Malthus argued that population will always tend to grow at least as fast as the productivity of labour. Thus any increase in economic production could not raise living standards for long, but would be eaten up supporting more people. His message was simple — poverty will always be with us.

SORRY TALE

Ricardo told a slightly more sophisticated version of the same sorry tale. According to him, as population grew farmers would have to till more and more less fertile land, in order to grow the additional food required. More labour would be required to produce the same quantity of food on this less fertile land as on the better land, and so the average cost of producing food would go up. This would then set off a chain reaction: food prices would go up and higher wages would be necessary to enable workers to buy the necessities of life; profits would then fall and the money

available for investment in new capital would be cut back. As a result economic stagnation would set in.

However, let's look at some facts. Since the war, the population in a country like India has risen at 2½ per cent a year. On the other hand, the rate in the US has been less than 0.6 per cent a year, Britain's 0.3 per cent, and Germany's population has actually fallen! In other words, things have been the opposite of what Malthus predicted: in the countries where labour productivity has risen most rapidly population growth has been the slowest.

Part of the explanation for this lies in the fact that in the colonial and semi-colonial countries production is carried out mainly by physical labour, without the aid of machines, and is organised through the family. Since there are few state provisions for 'social security', it is also the family which must take care of the sick, the injured and the aged. Thus people are driven to have large families in order to eke out a living and give themselves some small measure of security.

CAUSE

For this reason, poverty is much more a cause of high population growth, rather than its effect.

Nor are the facts any kinder to Ricardo's arguments. The production of basic grain (a main source of human food, both directly, and through providing feed for domestic animals) is rising at a rate of about 3 per cent each year. Most of the increase is concentrated in the United States, and is not due to the use of more land and labour, but to the higher productivity of land and labour brought about by mechanisation

and the use of fertilisers. Starvation results from the distribution of the food produced. In the early 50's both the advanced capitalist and the underdeveloped countries, looked at separately, produced roughly enough grain to meet their needs. Yet by 1973 the advanced countries were producing 50 million tons more than they needed each year, while the underdeveloped nations were short by about the same amount.

So much was being produced in the United States that the Government was paying farmers not to produce, in order to keep prices up.

Meanwhile, the poor countries have become less and less able to pay for imports of grain. The price has quadrupled over the last two years, while agricultural aid has halved and oil prices rises have pushed up import bills. Natural difficulties such as crop failures have been grossly exaggerated. The scale of the shortage is only 30-35 million tons — half of the deliberate restriction imposed on US production! High prices pushed up further by hoarding and speculation are a much more serious problem.

As Marx pointed out a century ago when he destroyed the arguments of Malthus, Ricardo and their supporters, the source of the problem lies in capitalism, and not 'natural' causes like shortage of land or too many people. Poverty exists in the third world today because capitalism and imperialism maintain their stranglehold over these countries.

Now the advanced capitalist countries are themselves faced with big economic problems, and the competition and rivalry between the big imperialist powers is growing daily. Neither the UN nor anyone else will be able to persuade the US, the other im-

perialist powers, or the oil-exporting countries to step up agricultural production and organise a fair world-wide share-out of the necessities of life. Capitalism has much more 'important' things to worry about than mass starvation.

John Harrison



Famine victims locked up in camps

As thousands of famine-stricken refugees stream into Dacca and other towns in Bangladesh, they are rounded up by police and herded into government-sponsored 'relief camps', also known as 'gruel kitchens'. The 4,500 such camps throughout the country were ostensibly set up to provide emergency relief to some of the more than five million Bengalis threatened with starvation.

In a dispatch from Dacca published in the 21 October *Washington Post*, however, correspondent Myron L. Belkind reported the real function of some of the camps. Describing three of them in Dacca, he wrote that they 'have become, in fact, internment camps whose inmates are slowly dying.'

The Government placed armed guards at the camps to keep those inside from roaming the streets causing social unrest.

Each of the three camps, Belkind reported, was crowded with 3,000 refugees, whose number was growing by at least 200 a day. (In early October, the number of refugees in Dacca had already reached 300,000.)

Samazuddin Sheikh, a refugee from My-mensingh district who fled to Dacca with his family, told Belkind: "We had no food. We came to Dacca last week by boat. Then we were brought to this place [a camp]. We are dying without enough food. We want to leave, but we can't because of the guards."

According to supervisors of one of the camps, about three persons a day do leave the camp — dead.

"Some diplomats", Belkind reported, "offered what they said were conservative guesses that a million Bengalis would die of starvation or related diseases within the six weeks before the autumn food crop is harvested."

A statement blaming the regime and its backers for the famine conditions in Bangladesh was signed in Dacca on 11 October by seventy prominent intellectuals and professionals. The statement noted that the 'gruel kitchens have come to be regarded as torture centres...'

After explaining that the Bengal famines of 1769 and 1843 were caused by the ruling classes and the imperialists, the statement said: "We want to state in unequivocal terms that the famine in Bangladesh is man-made. A class of people who have no connection with production and who are known hoarders, smugglers and black-marketeers flourishing under the protective wings of the ruling class are primarily responsible for this crisis."

The mad anarchy of capitalism: calves are slaughtered (left) to keep up beef prices, while (below) the only food this Indian could find was grass.



WILL NUS LEADERS DEMAND RELEASE OF CZECH STUDENT?

The Communist Party faces a decisive test next weekend on its attitude towards the repression of dissidents in Eastern Europe. The National Union of Students' conference in Margate will then be discussing a report prepared by the CP-dominated NUS executive on its relations with the Czech student organisation CSUV.

At the last NUS conference, delegates foiled an attempt by the executive to whitewash CSUV, which was set up by the Kremlin's puppet regime in the wake of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Its new report coincides with an international campaign to free former Czech student leader Jiri Mueller, jailed for 5½ years in 1972. Delegates will undoubtedly want to know what action the NUS executive proposes to take on the case.

Mueller was a leading opponent of the bureaucratic regime and its domination of the official youth organisation, the CSM, from his earliest years as a student. In April 1964 he came under attack for an article, *The Party and Us*, in which he opposed the Communist Party's suppression of the aspirations of the youth.

As a result of this and subsequent activities he was expelled from the CSM and the Prague Engineering Faculty in December 1966 and drafted into the army.

RE-INSTATED

A year later, the Novotny regime fell apart, and a new leadership team under Alexander Dubcek was elected. Trying to gain a popular base, the Dubcek 'reformers' loosened the bureaucratic stranglehold over the mass organisations. Mueller was reinstated, and the CSM leaders attempted to take the steam out of the student movement by adopting some of Mueller's earlier proposals.

However, the CSM was very rapidly bypassed by the mass of students. In 1968 it was replaced by a new student organisation, the SVS. Mueller successfully fought against attempts to tie the SVS to the control of the Party.

After the occupation of the country by 600,000 Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968, there was no shortage of voices calling for 'recognition of the new reality' and urging 'moderation' in every sphere. Mueller's voice, however, was not amongst these.

In the autumn of 1968, Mueller was instrumental in forging a series of accords between the SVS and leading trade unions, calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops, an end to the compromises with Moscow, and the setting up of workers' councils. When the SVS was banned in June 1969, a number of strikes



Jiri Mueller—jailed for his long struggle against bureaucratic regime in Czechoslovakia

were called in Prague.

EXPELLED

By the spring of 1970, the Husak regime was strong enough to expel Mueller once again from the university. A hurriedly organised petition demanding his release evoked a massive response from the Prague students. Forced to take a job as a travelling

salesman, he continued to oppose the 'normalisation' in the name of the struggle for socialist democracy.

On 29 November 1971, he was arrested together with the former CP leader, Jaroslav Sabata, and accused of producing a leaflet, reminding Czechoslovak citizens of their constitutional right to abstain from the farcical elections prepared by the regime and to strike out the name of the single, official 'candidate'. This was characterised as 'subversive activity against the established socialist state and society', for which all the defendants were sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

Mueller, like his co-defendants, refused to recant and pointed to 'the fundamental difference between political activity directed against the policies pursued by those at present in power, and activity which is anti-socialist and anti-social in nature'. His own activity he proudly declared to be 'based on socialism, but...opposed to a regime created as a result of the invasion of Czechoslovakia'.

CAMPAIGN

The imprisonment of Jiri Mueller and many other communists and socialists in Czechoslovakia calls for vigorous action in the student and labour movement to force an end to the repression.

A defence campaign has been launched in this country by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, focussing on the cases of Mueller and Sabata. With the support of the International Marxist Group a series of meetings are being organised around the country at which Czech exiles—including Jan Kavan, a close collaborator of Mueller both before and after the invasion—will be speaking.

Furthermore, the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists will be organising a public meeting at Margate during the NUS conference. The question is—where does the NUS leadership stand on this issue?

RUSSELL FOUNDATION APPEAL

Last April the Russell Foundation joined forces with Jiri Pelikan, the editor of the Czechoslovakian Socialist Oppositional journal *Listy* and Pavel Litvinov and Andrei Sakharov of the Soviet Initiative Group for Human Rights, in issuing an appeal on behalf of political prisoners in Eastern Europe, especially in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. In particular we named three Days of Protest, on which we appealed for meetings and petitions on behalf of named prisoners. The first of these days was designated Grigorenko Day and was marked by demonstrations in a number of countries. Subsequently we were very happy to learn of the release of ex-Major-General Grigorenko. The second of the designated days was named after Jaroslav Sabata and Jiri Muller, as representatives of the large number of political detainees currently being held in Czech prisons.

In support of these prisoners the Foundation has called a public meeting in London on Friday, 29 November. It will be

held in the Conway Hall at 7.30 pm—the speakers will include Eduard Gokstucker, Marion Sling, E P Thompson, Chris Farley and Audrey Wise MP.

A petition which has been circulating for some time has been endorsed by Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg, Erich Fromm, Mary McCarthy, Howard Fast, Christopher Hill and a very large number of other writers, artists and academics. A programme of meetings marking Sabata-Muller Day is scheduled for American and European universities and the case of these prisoners is also being pressed by Amnesty International.

Can I appeal to readers of your journal to write in if they wish to have details of these campaigns or if they are willing to help in any way?

The next world-wide Day of Protest is called in support of Vladimir Bukovsky and will take place on 29 March, 1975.—KEN COATES, Nottingham.

The National Union of Students will be judged not only by its well-publicised commitment to the anti-imperialist struggle, but by its readiness to mobilise students against the anti-socialist crimes of the Brezhnev and Husak regimes in Eastern Europe. To cover over these crimes, to side with the CSUV against the jailed students' leader—such actions can only serve to identify socialism with bureaucratic dictatorship, and thus provide ammunition for the arsenals of imperialist propaganda.

Far from playing into their hands, the fight against bureaucratic repression robs the capitalists of one of their ideological weapons against the

workers' movement. An independent campaign to free Jiri Mueller is in the best interests of the world struggle for socialism.

It is by such forceful, independent activity that the socialist prisoners will be freed from Husak's jails, not by words of advice whispered into a bureaucrat's ear at a cocktail party in Prague or Moscow. The Western Communist Parties have a particularly heavy responsibility to openly demand their release in the students' and trade unions—indeed, wherever their members are. It will soon be clear whether the NUS executive measures up to this responsibility.

Joe Greenwood

'New technology'—how will it be used

William Thompson's review of the pamphlet *The New Technology of Repression*, published by the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science [*Red Weekly*, 26 October] was seriously inadequate.

Although Thompson did urge that the pamphlet 'should be given the widest possible circulation in the British working class', he failed to point out just how much important and invaluable information it contains. At the same time he overlooked its very real political weaknesses.

When it comes to the political context, the pamphlet runs out of steam. All it proposes to the British working class is that in the event of a military coup, a general strike would be necessary. Given the (more likely) variant of a 'gradual rightward drift', it says industrial action would be needed, up to and including a defensive general strike.

While there are clear signs that the military has strengthened its position within the state to the extent that it can openly defy government policy (as, for example, in the Ulster workers' strike earlier this year) it remains a small professional force with no independent base in society. In Chile, for example, the military coup was only possible because of the mass support from the middle classes. Clearly, a military coup is not on the agenda in Britain today.

As the pamphlet explains, what



WHY THRESHOLDS ARE IMPORTANT

I have noted with interest the number of disputes that have been fought over the question of the threshold payment.

The impression I get when talking to people of the left is that they seem to be against the acceptance of the threshold in principle, because it takes away the motivation to fight for your annual wage award, and this in turn would reduce the need to belong to a trade union.

I see the question of thresholds somewhat differently. First, we must safeguard what we have already got. Second, we should try within our own factories to get our own improved domestic threshold agreements. Third, I do think that any factory that fights to get the threshold would also fight over a national wage claim within its own industry or an annual wage claim.

It needs to be spelled out that even with an improved threshold it would, in some cases, only be a question of standing still—and unless everything that increases costs to workers is taken into account (such as rents and mortgage charges) it would not even allow

us to stand still.

In conclusion, I do not think we should ever be satisfied, and like Oliver Twist should always be going back for more. Indeed, the employers and their friends are always coming back, what with wage freezes and productivity swindles. Now it's their social compact.

Although for my sins I am a member of the Labour Party, and intend to remain with it, I think a lot of Party members agree with the point of view that the social compact is a new name for a wage cut and must be exposed. — E. JACQUES, (Leeds AUEW Shop Steward).

RED WEEKLY REPLIES

We agree with comrade Jacques about the thresholds. Ever since their introduction, *Red Weekly* has campaigned for the defence of the thresholds and their extension into a real sliding scale of wages.

The argument that thresholds would undercut workers' militancy is completely wrong. At present, as workers find their annual wage rises being worn away in no time at all by rocketing prices, they have to launch wage claims and industrial action two, three or more times every year. To think that this automatically makes them more militant is crazy. They are more likely to become fed-up and demoralised.

If militants cannot show them a way to avoid such frustrating prospects, then many will become prey to the Labour Party and trade union bureaucrats who do claim to have another answer to inflation—the 'social contract', incomes policy or whatever.

Far from weakening trade unionism, the winning of a sliding scale would be a big step forward for the trade union movement. The unions should be concerned with all the questions that affect the welfare of the working class.

They should be developing their own, socialist plan to meet the capitalist crisis and organising steps to carry that plan into action (regulating prices, taking over firms that go bankrupt or try to declare redundancies, rehousing homeless people working people in unoccupied property, and many other things). The winning of the sliding scale should be just the beginning.—The Editors.

Billions for the bosses

The main purpose of Labour's budget was to dole out thousands of millions of pounds to Britain's bankrupt capitalist industry. The pay-off from the Budget for the capitalists has been widely described as £1.5 billion — but in fact they will get this amount in the next six months alone. Over the next twelve months they can expect to receive a total of more than £3 billion.

The vast bulk of this huge sum will come directly out of the pockets of working people — through

higher prices for the goods produced by private and nationalised industries alike. Prices next year will be pushed up by an extra 4% in order to pay for Labour's scheme to bail out capitalism. Inflation is now bound to top the 20% mark — and could go far higher. This fact casts far into the shadows the tiny increases the Government has made in social security payments.

Of course the capitalists are not satisfied — the Confederation of British Industry says that some

£2.5 billion is needed to bail them out just within the next six months. But they realise that Healey is firmly committed to solving the crisis within a capitalist framework, and that further handouts must eventually come. As the leading capitalist newspaper, *The Financial Times*, put it: 'If it is only a matter of weeks since Mr. Healey's last budget, it is only a matter of weeks until his next. At least he is now beginning to walk firmly, despite considerable difficulties, in the right direction.'



Over 200 teachers and trade unionists picketed a meeting of Oxfordshire County Council on 12 November to protest against proposals to cut education spend-

ing by half a million pounds in 1975/76. Chancellor Healey's Budget proposals positively encourage such cuts. But in Oxfordshire at least they will not go

through without a struggle. A committee of teachers, trade unionists, parents, students and others from across the county has now been set up to continue the campaign.

Workers fight for their own solution

THE RESPONSE of the TUC to Healey's bosses' budget was to welcome it with only one or two minor reservations! Such is the price exacted by adherence to the social contract. The alternative of leading a struggle based on mass action for a workers' solution to the crisis has of course been rejected out of hand by these bureaucrats.

But the first faltering steps in this direction taken by workers in other European countries show that such a struggle is not only necessary but also completely possible.

In Italy, for instance, the trade unions have been to the fore in fighting price increases of the kind envisaged by Healey. No less than 76,000 workers in Turin have now written to the electricity company informing them that they won't be paying a recent increase of 70 per cent in the tariff. In Milan the trade unions have gone even further, defying an increase in bus fares by issuing their own tickets to passengers at the old rates.

In Portugal, too, sections of workers are beginning to realise the need to develop their own action on these questions. A conference was recently organised by IIT workers with delegates from all the multinational's Portuguese factories, to demand measures such as action against those seeking to divert cap'tal

abroad, and the imprisonment and confiscation of property of bosses found guilty of sabotaging production.

Meanwhile in France there has been a massive outburst of industrial action against the Government's recently announced austerity measures, which aim 'to restore the economy by cutting back workers' living standards.

All these examples are of the utmost importance for British trade unionists as they face up to Healey's Budget offensive. The social contract cannot be fought on the question of wages alone. It is by learning from the first, hesitant steps of our European comrades that we can begin to take up these broader questions, and so develop an alternative workers' plan for the economy.

Martin Meteyard

Social services bear the brunt

In order to allow his big handouts to private business, Healey has had to make cuts elsewhere. At the top of his list was public spending, which he announced would be limited to an annual increase of 2½ per cent in real terms—i.e. after allowing for inflation.

At the moment real public spending has been rising at the rate of 7 per cent a year, so Healey's plan involves a dramatic cut-back. Where is it going to come from?

Labour has long been talking about making defence cuts, but given their oft-repeated commitment to NATO and imperialism generally, that can only be a tiny drop in the bucket. The brunt of the cuts will fall on the nationalised industries and on local authority spending.

In the first case Healey is talking about trying to scarp all Government subsidies to nationalised industries by having them put up their prices. If such a scheme were fully implemented it would mean taking a total of £1000 million out of the pockets of the working class. Worse still the burdens of this increase would fall most heavily on the worst off.

Gas, coal and electricity (all of which will be going up in price), for example, cut up some 13 per cent of the budget of poor families, but less than 3 per cent of those at the top.

As for local authority spending, Healey has said this must be limited to what is 'absolutely inescapable.'

Yet local authorities face the following

*their spending on housing, building generally, and new equipment has already been pared to the bone;

*the population is continuing to grow, creating new demands on the social services (for example the school-age population is presently growing at 3 per cent a year—so spending on schools would have to top Healey's miserly limit just to stand totally still);

*the massive cuts made by the Tories in May and December 1973 have still not been made good, as a result of which social services have deteriorated very badly.

Under these circumstances the main outcrops will have to come off the labour force, and Healey did specifically say that there could be no expansion of local authority manpower for the foreseeable future.

But what about pensions? Hasn't Labour 'generously' hiked them by 16 per cent?

Indeed it has—but, as we have shown above, it also will be clawing back a huge slice of this by hiking up old age pensioners' fuel charges, not to mention other price rises.

Moreover, this increase is to be paid for by the working class through a new wage-related national insurance contribution. This is virtually a second income tax on all workers, and is estimated to cut workers' incomes by another ½ per cent on top of all the other measures in the budget.

In short, Labour's anti-working class policies are going to fall very heavily on the social services in the period ahead. If you think things have been bad up until now—wait until you see what Healey has been cooking up for you!

LABOUR RATTLES ITS BIG STICK

Although the Labour leaders had no carrots to offer in the Budget they had plenty of stick. What is more that stick is intended for the backs of the working class.

Prices Secretary, Shirley Williams, makes no bones about her intention of cracking down on workers who have the impudence to try and defend their living standards. She has suggested that employers could be penalised through the prices code if they pay workers 'very high wage rises.' What Williams is advocating is using the employers to crack down on the workers so that the Government does not have to soil its hands.

No wonder that the top capitalist magazine the *Economist* waxed enthusiastic about what it described as Williams' 'birch in the cupboard.' It described her proposals as the 'first attempt to give the social compact some teeth' and delighted in the fact that 'the Government is clearly going to have to move to a statutory wages policy some time.'

If the ruling class and its spokespersons are pleased about Williams' 'birch' they are even more enthralled with Mr. Healey's big club. Orchestrating the moves by Labour's rightward compulsory pay laws, he threatened in his budget speech that the unions would face unemployment if they did not stick to the social contract.

He said, 'If wages rise beyond the guidelines set by the TUC the Government will be compelled to take offsetting steps to curtail demand. And the effects on the financial position of the company sector are bound to lead to unemployment.'

For the capitalist companies it is dollops of cash to save them from bankruptcy and concessions which allow them to put up their prices— even more. For the working class, Labour offers to birch them with Williams' wage restraint or club them into submission with Mr. Healey's

WHAT'S ON

LONDON RED FORUMS: Every Tuesday at 8pm in the General Picton pub, Caledonian Road (King's X tube). Tuesday 26 November: 'The Struggle for Workers' Power and the Building of the Fourth International'.

IMG GAY GROUP: Contact J. Mills, 153 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds.

'BRITISH LEYLAND — An Economic Report', pamphlet on the background to the present crisis inside BLMC. 10p per copy, send cash with order to: 72, Cambridge Road, King's Heath, Birmingham.

'NATIONALISATION or Expropriation' second edition of pamphlet produced in 1973 by the Ligue Communiste, French section of the Fourth International. 10p per copy, send cash with order to 72 Cambridge Road, King's Heath, Birmingham.

SHEFFIELD RED CIRCLES: Every Wednesday at 7.30pm in the Lion Hotel (corner of The Wicker and Nursery Street).

WATFORD RED FORUMS: Fortnightly in the Green Man, Watford High Street. Next meeting, Tuesday 26 November: 'The Workers States'.

WEEKEND CONFERENCE on education cut-backs and how to fight them. Labour and trade union speakers. Contact Sussex Students Union (Brighton 680380). Accommodation available. 23-24 November.

'SEXISM, SEXUALITY and Class Struggle' — now pamphlet including interview with French women bank workers, produced by Bristol: IMG for Red Weekly Fund Drive. Single copies 15p inc p&hp, or 10 copies for £1 post free. Order from: Jo Ray, 4 Badminton Road, Bristol 2, of K-K Corp., 20 Ville Road, London SE24

CADRE SCHOOL for IMG members working in the NHS, London, 7-8 December. Applications to J. Knight, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1., not later than Wednesday 27 November.

COMRADES (3 or more) seek cheap self-contained flat/house, South/central London preferred. Contact Val, 837 6954 (day).

OPEN LETTER For a Revolutionary Regroupment. The Open Letter calls for revolutionary regroupment, lays down 12 points as political guidelines, and maps out practical steps towards unity. Copies from Workers Fight, 98 Gifford St., London N.1. Please enclose a 4½p stamp.

FOR SALE in aid of Red Weekly Fund Drive: poetry book 'Last Summer's Diary' by Robert B Findley. Send 20p for book and postage (with address) to Bob, Keynes Tower, Flat 1, University of Essex, Colchester.

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST Group public meeting: 'Unemployment and inflation — the way forward'. Wednesday 27 November, Hanover Arms (by Oval Tube), 8pm. All welcome.

CHILE SOLIDARITY: Hackney festival evening of films, music, theatre, poetry — Friday 22 November at 8pm at Centreprise Community Centre, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E.8. Admission free. Programme includes film 'Companeros'.

FUND DRIVE PARTY Saturday 23 November, 117 Broxholm Rd., SE27. Brixton Tube, take bus 2,2a,2b to York Hill. Or: Clapham Common Tube bus 137 to Broxholm Road, Drinks, music, etc. All welcome. 9.30. 40p (includes food).

NUM: A century of struggle vindicated

FOR THE PAST CENTURY miners have been fighting a long, uphill fight to establish uniform national conditions of work and pay throughout their industry.

Yet no sooner have they succeeded in that fight than the right-wing of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) bureaucracy attempts to send them back down that dangerous slope again. For the NCB's proposed productivity deal — which the NUM right backed — flies in the face of everything miners have struggled for.

Trade unionism in the mines has always been hampered by the fact that *natural conditions* play a key part in determining both the amount of work required to dig the coal, and the possibility of substituting mechanised techniques for human labour.



Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)

Thus the productivity of the individual miner is largely beyond his control, and the normal laws of capitalist production produce a wage system that varies immensely according to individual circumstances and sets 'area against area, pit against pit, and man against man'.

From the standpoint of the capitalists — whether they be the mine owners of yesterday or the NCB

bureaucrats from the capitalist state today — such a situation is quite desirable. But it is a threat to the very foundations of trade unionism, as the founders of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB), the forerunner of the NUM, understood.

The MFGB was set up in 1889 as a federation of county unions committed to smashing the infamous 'sliding scale' system under which wages were tied to the current price of coal. By 1893 the MFGB was backed by most of the county unions in England. In that same year, they launched a determined strike that lasted for 12 weeks, and won their main demand of a minimum wage for day-workers in place of the sliding scale.

Faceworkers, however, remained totally dependent on piece-work. Some faceworkers, who found themselves working difficult 'abnormal places' could end up earning nothing at all after a hard day's slog. After the war the long-standing demand for nationalisation of the mines was met by the Labour Government. One of the few real gains the miners were to get out of nationalisation was the eventual — although very gradual — establishment of a national wage structure.

In 1947, a uniform working week and shifts were established for all workers, between 1947 and 1954 a national rate was won for certain groups, and uniform rises on the day-wage rates narrowed the district differentials for others. In 1955 a uniform national day-wage was agreed on for all non-face workers.

In 1910, the 'abnormal places' problem produced a massive strike wave throughout the South Wales coalfield. And in 1912, after futile attempts to discuss with the mine-owners (who rejected national negotiations on the grounds that wages had to be fixed at the district level), the MFGB launched the country's first national miners' strike. They wanted district minimum wages for all mineworkers. The strike lasted just over a month, and was brought to an end when the Government introduced a bill establishing the principle of the minimum wage but with-

out meeting the MFGB's demands as to amounts.

NEGOTIATIONS

Throughout all these years the MFGB fought for *national negotiations* with the mineowners, but the owners steadfastly refused. National wage negotiations were only established towards the end of the First World War when the Government took control of the mining industry to ensure that the European slaughter wasn't interrupted by a coal shortage.

After the war the miners realised that the chaotic state of the industry under private ownership was a major obstacle to the establishment of a national wage structure, and so demanded nationalisation of the mines.

Despite the fact that this demand was supported by a Government Commission set up to look into the industry, the Government rejected nationalisation, and announced the ending of controls for 31 March, 1921.

From the beginning of March onwards the mineowners posted notices at the pit-heads announcing the ending of all contracts. They knew that national wage agreements were not in their interests, and were determined to scrap them. The miners were equally determined to defend the national system and so the great 1921 lock-out began.

The MFGB expected to be backed up by their allies in the 'Triple Alliance' — the railway and transport workers — but the bureaucrats from these unions sold them out and left the miners to fight alone. After a bitter three month struggle the miners returned to work on the owners' terms.

HOPES

After the defeat of 1921 the miners hopes for a uniform national wages system had to wait another half-century for fulfillment. National negotiations were re-established during the Second World War, and But it wasn't until 1971 that the sweat and blood poured out by generations of miners came to fruition in a uniform national wage structure covering all mine workers.

In rejecting the right's attempted sell-out the rank-and-file have struck a blow for unity and have vindicated the generations of their forebears who worked, fought, and died to advance the cause of their workmates and of their class.

RAY ALEXANDER

but a campaign of pressure inside the trade union bureaucracy is *not enough*. The best way to build such a committee is precisely through organising support around a particular struggle. No attempt was made by the Communist Party to mount such a campaign, although they were easily in a position to do so at least in Manchester, and this also applies to building support in the AEU itself.

2. The women at Wingrove & Rogers mounted such a campaign in the local AEU. They learnt to organise themselves and not rely on official trade union structures. The SEI dispute was marked by a lack of regular mass meetings, discussion or votes on how to organise the strike. This was particularly crucial given the difficulties facing them — scabbing in the other SEI factory and by the men at their own factory, GEC etc. An elected strike committee and regular mass meetings were never instituted: from this resulted the fragmentation and demoralisation of the women.

3. A combine committee does not specifically take up the problems of women workers. It was the Charter



THE AUEW HAS ONCE AGAIN ducked the issue of the social contract. TERRY CRAWFORD looks at the proposals of the AUEW National Committee and suggest what steps should now be taken by the members in the wages battle.

When the recall National Committee of the engineering union met on 5 November to draw up the next pay claim for manual workers in the industry, everybody knew that what was really at stake was Labour's social contract. Would Hugh Scanlon and his band of 'militants' sound the battle-cry was the question being asked in the capitalist press.

But Scanlon had plenty of reason to feel hurt at the suggestion he was going to lead a struggle against the social contract.

Time and time again he has pointed out that the leadership of the AUEW has bent over backwards to cooperate with the Labour government's attacks on the working class. Hadn't motion 49 — opposing the social contract — been withdrawn at the TUC? Hadn't they scabbed on the last national claim because they didn't want to rock the boat of the new Labour Government? And the very fact that the next claim had been postponed to 5 November was itself a special concession to Wilson and company. What more could they do?

UNDERLINED

The reasonableness of the AUEW was once again underlined when the NC rejected the motion calling for a £50 basic in the skilled rate and pro-rata increases for other grades. Instead, they called for a 'substantial increase' — a formula which is designed to allow the negotiating team to agree to anything it wants.

This was clearly a conscious decision to keep within the limits of the social contract. That the demand for £50 was rejected is an indication of what is meant by 'substantial'.

This decision and the experience of the last pay claim offer little prospect of the Executive Council organising any national fight against the employers. The failure to unite with the miners when they took industrial action last winter, the adoption of the useless tactic of a national overtime ban and the eventual sell-out all show that Scanlon and company will do anything to avoid an all-out confrontation with the employers.

Scanlon, as usual, did not explicitly state his position one way or the other at the NC, but even the

Morning Star reported that his speech just before the vote was widely interpreted as support for the right wing.

The problem for militants in the industry now is what can be done apart from waiting for the outcome of the prolonged negotiations with the employers? The Communist Party's answer is very little apart from pushing for a 'militant' interpretation of 'substantial increase'. The prospect of spending the next few months sending resolutions to the Executive Council and trying to get 'left-wingers' delegated to the next NC is not likely to whip up a great deal of enthusiasm.

NO FOCUS

The NC's decision provides no focus around which militants can organise. The last claim was at least specific enough and 'substantial' enough to provide a series of demands which could be fought for.

If the claim had been won in full it would have represented a decisive victory for engineering workers. But this time, it must be the rank and file themselves who draw up the demands as well as organise a national struggle. The kind of demands which should be fought for are:-

£50 basic rate for skilled workers and across the board increases for other grades

35 hour working week
Immediate equal pay for women and abolition of the women's grade altogether.

Two weeks extra paid holiday
A national nil-norm threshold agreement for the engineering industry on top of any other increases.

CONFERENCE

A national conference of delegates from shop stewards committees should be held to draw up these demands and to popularise them throughout the industry. A co-ordinating committee should also be elected from the conference to organise the struggle for these demands on a national scale.

This is the choice that militants are faced with. Either they succumb to passivity of the official leadership at the expense of their living standards or else they take up the struggle themselves.

WHAT WENT WRONG AT S.E.I.

The following consists of extracts from a letter sent to the *Morning Star* and *Socialist Worker* as well as *Red Weekly*.

In the present economic crisis housewives and women workers are often the hardest hit by inflation, low wages and lack of social facilities for themselves and their children...

That is why the Salford Electrical Instruments and Wingrove and Rogers strikes were of decisive importance to the whole labour movement.

The lessons of both disputes show the need for *solidarity action* to help win such strikes. This is particularly true given that women are left to fight on a local level while firms such as the GEC group have an effective national machine to disrupt implementation of the Equal Pay Act. But the debate centres around how such solidarity action should be organised.

The *Morning Star* of 23 October cites the Bury District Secretary as saying that the lesson of the SEI strike was the need

to organise a GEC trade union combine committee. The IMG welcomes the moves to set up such a committee during and since the dispute, as an important weapon for the trade union movement. But we think the following points should be clarified:

1. The only effective solidarity action in the SEI dispute was that campaigned for by the IMG, the Working Women's Charter campaign, and latterly the International Socialists. Although the action was supported by local AEU officials and CP members, it was not initiated by or campaigned for outside the locality, or called for in their press. It was left to the small forces of the revolutionary left, after 10 weeks, to mount a campaign of action.

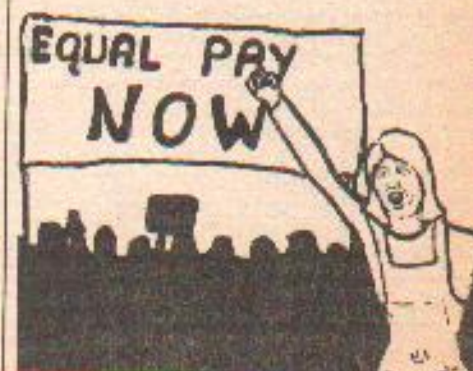
The difficulties of organising a combine committee are obviously immense;

campaign that raised the question of nursery facilities, time and place of union meetings and women's groups inside the union. The importance of the Charter is that it takes up women's problems at home as well as at work. The lesson of the SEI strike, with or without a combine committee is that women workers must develop their own organisations to take up their specific problems...

The question of an alliance with 'progressives' such as Scanlon and other trade union officials on the question of a combine committee or the fight for equal pay was put before actually building support for the struggle, even if building active support meant a break with officials higher up in the AEU. This strategy, which puts pressure inside the AEU before the mass struggle itself, is the direct cause of the women's return to work without the full claim, only six days before massive solidarity action was planned, and is a sure way to build an ineffective combine committee.

Manchester IMG

WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER





Hoover workers on the picket lines.

When 150 skilled toolroom men at Hoover Motors in Perivale in West London came out on strike recently, the management used this as a pretext to lay off over 2000 workers.

Management have claimed that the lay-offs need never have taken place if the toolroom men had been more 'reasonable' and accepted the offer made to them. Despite these attempts to divide the workforce, the Hoover workers remain united—the laid-off workers stand on the picket line with the toolroom men.

About half the workforce are women, many of whom face great hardship as they cannot obtain unemployment benefit because they do not pay the full insurance stamp.

Last week the Brent Conference on the Working Women's Charter pledged its practical support to all women's struggles. In response to a call by Margaret Thompson, a Hoover worker who spoke at the Conference, forces were mobilised last Friday for the picket line at the factory gate where Ingrid Falconer from the Brent Working Women's Charter Campaign spoke to MARGARET THOMPSON and THERESE SAYID about their struggle.

HOOVER WORKERS SWEPT OUT BUT NOT BEATEN

—How did the dispute happen anyway?

Margaret: Well, during the wage freeze last year the management promised that when the freeze was lifted the toolroom men would have parity with the better paid factories in the area. Afterwards, however, they backed down on this, saying they couldn't afford it.

Well, what a cheek!—they can afford to build a posh suite on the factory premises to entertain VIPs—cost a bomb it did, imported doors from Holland at £600 a time. And last year they made record profits, about two million pounds. They are just conning us—they must think we are daft.

—And you say the toolroom men have the support of the workforce?

Margaret: Oh yes, the union is well organised here—we stand by the toolroom in this dispute. They have supported us in equal pay fights in the past and would do so again.

When the management first locked us out we forced our way into the work manager's office demanding the right to work. We were going to occupy the factory actually—in fact we got stocks of food and

clothing set up in our lockers for this purpose.

We desperately need support in this struggle against the lock-out, especially from other local factories. This is going to be even more important, because we have heard that the strikers at the Hoover plant in Cambuslang in Scotland are going back.

This could mean that attempts could be made to remove stocks that are here and take them up to Scotland. If that happens we could be out for weeks yet. That's why we have got a 24 hour picket at the warehouse.

—I see there's a very significant number of women on the picket line.

Therese: That's right—many of us are having a real struggle to make ends meet since this lockout. It makes me mad when people say women only work for pin-money. That's just rubbish. Most families really need two wages these days—and that's for necessities, not for luxuries.

Women depend very much on their own wages. Besides there are plenty of single women, widows, unsupported mothers here—they have got to keep a home going on women's wages.

We could do with lots more people on the picket line—you see many people who might otherwise be here, were forced to go and look for other jobs especially where a man and wife were both laid off. There's one woman here whose husband has been unemployed for ages, and now she's laid off without unemployment benefit as she's not been paying the full stamp. I don't think many women realise the implications of paying only the married women's stamp.

—How have you managed with your kids while you've been on the picket?

Therese: Well my husband's looking after them today, but last week I had no alternative but to take them on the picket line with me. Many families are suffering huge domestic upheavals because of this lockout.

We really need a nursery in this factory—because of the lack of nursery facilities around here, I have had to pay £8 a week to a private baby-minder. Even if you can get your kids into a nursery, most only open nine to four. Well that's no good for us—we start work at 7.30 here. That's why it would be useful if we had a nursery at the workplace, as long as the women control the running of it.

—What about equal opportunities for women at this factory?

Margaret: The union have really worked on this, but there is still a long way to go. There's lots of jobs which are men-only jobs. For example in quality control it's all men—I wouldn't mind a job in there, we wouldn't get callouses on our hands like we do now from working on the assembly line.

You'll find it's always the women who have to put up with the most boring jobs—but why shouldn't I be in the toolroom or drive a truck? The trouble is that there are no women as apprentices here so we never have a chance—that stems from the whole lack of educational opportunities for women for training for skilled jobs.

Speakers from the Hoover Factory will be touring local workplaces to discuss the dispute and get support. This is being done through the auspices of the Brent Working Women's Charter Campaign and Brent Trades Council.

Support for the Hoover workers' picket—daily from 7.30 am at the Bedford Lane entrance of the Hoover factory off Western Avenue, Perivale.

All donations and messages of support to — E. Jones, 48 Eastcote Road, South Harrow, Middlesex.

Workers vote for 'guerilla action' LIGHTNING STRIKES AT STC

Following the two day strike at the Standard Telephone Cables in London last week, a mass meeting decided—on the recommendation of the joint shop stewards committee—to adopt the tactic of sectional lightning strikes. The snag was that the power to call any shop out lies in the hands of the convenors.

The workforce as a whole has no say in the particular form of action to be taken. This means that the convenors can stop action whenever they want. This is what happened for a period.

Immediately after the decision on Tuesday, the whole factory went out for the rest of the day. On Wednesday and Thursday, the convenors negotiated for hours on end with the management and called no action whatsoever. For twelve hours the convenors grovelled before management asking them for a formula to let them off the hook. The management would not give way. Far from softening up the management, the lack of action gave them the confidence to dig their heels in.

women are striking with the men, but they have not taken any lead, thus making it easy for the right-wing to sell out the equal pay demand.

NO HOPE

This is because of the whole sick reactionary history of the factory, where some of the unions have played an actively racist role. In this situation, the women—many of whom are black—have seen no hope, and even now when some initiative has been taken, they still haven't the confidence to take the control out of the hands of the shop stewards committee.

The second weakness is the lack of democracy in the struggle. Although there have been two mass meetings in the course of the struggle, they have been strictly controlled by the convenors who have entirely determined what should and what should not be decided upon at the meetings.

BASIC RATE

The mass of workers have had no say on the question of the amount of the basic rate, no strike committee has been elected, and the only tactics which they have been allowed to vote on—have been laid down by the shop stewards committee. In order to unify the struggle and allow the women the opportunity to have a say in what is going on, it is essential that the control of the strike is put into the hands of the workforce as a whole.

REDISTRIBUTION

At the end of the twelve hours the management simply came forward with a redistribution of the offer they had already made. All it did was take some from the semi-skilled and the women workers and give more to the skilled.

Management's tactics are clear. They intend to sit it out and let the divisions amongst the workforce bring the struggle to a halt. It is particularly easy for the skilled to scab on the sectional strikes.

However, lightning strikes were called on Friday and they were 100 per cent solid. This has worried the management and they keep on throwing a few more crumbs in in an attempt to dissipate the struggle. So far these crumbs have come to 75p. for the men and 92 per cent of 75p. (69p.) for the women.

There are two weak links in the struggle, in addition to the right-wing leadership. The first is the lack of involvement of the women. The



Workers on the picket during the last STC strike. The racist leadership of that strike divided the work-force, and has contributed to the weakness of the workers in the present struggle.

HUSH-UP ON BALLOT-RIGGING GIVES CHANCE TO RIGHT-WING

Two members of the East Kilbride branch of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering workers have been jailed for three years. Doug McLeod and Thomas Dunn were found guilty of forging more than 200 signatures in a union ballot for the AUEW's Final Appeals Court.

Attention was first drawn to the ballot-rigging late last year and enthusiastically taken up by the *Economist* in its edition of 10 November 1973. The *Economist* saw the issue as a first-class chance to bash the left in the AUEW—the Kilbride 'vote' had ensured the victory of Communist Party member Jim Callan over right-winger John Byrne.

When the matter was first reported to the seven-man AUEW executive, after listening to the report of an official investigator sent to inquire into the East Kilbride vote, they decided by only four votes to three to nullify the result. But the EC refused to discipline or ask for any explanation from the branch of

The reluctance of the union leaders to take any action opened the door for the capitalist media. Thames Television moved in like a flash and on 17 January 1974 in its programme 'This Week' did a feature on East Kilbride, using the programme to try and drag up other alleged ballot-rigging incidents. The right wing in alliance with the TV reporters made hay, but Scanlon and the executive refused to appear on the programme.

By 26 January the *Economist* was calling for police action, pointing out that the police 'will have to move fast' if they are 'to investigate the ballot-rigging in Mr Scanlon's AUEW'. In accordance with union rules the ballot papers were due to be destroyed on 13 February.

ALLIES

New allies for the right wing were appearing on the scene. Aims of Industry—front organisation for big business—wrote to the Home Secretary to ask the police to look into the affair. Woodrow Wyatt, the ex-Labour MP who specialises in writing anti-union articles for the capitalist press, asked the Judge Advocate to take action.

As the clamour from the capitalist press grew louder the AUEW leaders

maintained a discreet and stupid silence.

The lack of action by the AUEW executive provided the anti-union forces with ammunition to discredit militants in the union. Because the executive failed to take action to put its own house in order it allowed papers like the *Economist* to present themselves as defenders of democracy inside the union. What is even more serious it opened the way for the police and the capitalist courts to interfere in the affairs of the AUEW.

PLIANT

The great ballot-rigging scandal in the Communist Party-dominated Electrical Trade Union opened the way for the Cannon-Chapple leadership which converted the union into a pliant servant of the right wing. Members of the CP are now denied the right to hold office in that union and the rights of the rank and file have been trampled underfoot.

Unless the left shows itself to be the most firm defenders of union democracy inside the AUEW it can suffer the same fate as the ETU leadership did and the people who will pay the biggest price for that are the members.

Messages of support to Dave Landau, Secretary of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee, (STC), 31 Hornsey Rise Gardens, London N19.



PHOTO: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

'If you want higher grants clap your hands' — there is a clap of thunderous applause, the skies open, and pounds pour forth.

If only it was that simple. The erosion in student's living standards

will not be stopped by students simply parading their poverty: This demonstration of 30,000 in London last Friday could have been a real springboard for a militant campaign in the colleges. Actions earlier in the week by students in Coventry

and Leeds who occupied their town hall showed just one possibility. Unfortunately it was only isolated groups of students like those above who posed the need to build a fighting alliance with sections of the labour movement.

LEEDS STUDENTS CALL THE TUNE

On Tuesday 12 November the biggest ever Union meeting was held at Swansea University. Two thousand students voted by two to one to continue the week-old occupation in defence of victimised philosophy students.

Three weeks earlier the call for an occupation could muster only 400 votes. So why the change?

DIRECT ACTION

At the end of October the six victimised students, who had twice boycotted examinations in the philosophy department, were recommended by the students union to sit exams conveniently provided by the authorities. They were given assurances that changes would take place and there would be no victimisations.

But the militants at Swansea were prepared for victimisations, and responded quickly. The defence committee, in opposing the decision to sit the exams, called a series of action forums to defend the six. On the day of the exams the forum organised a boycott of lectures.

When the 'results' came out, with five of the six students still victimised, an emergency forum, attended by two hundred students, was called. At this meeting the IMG and various independents argued the need for immediate direct action. A big majority agreed. The building housing the philosophy department was occupied.

Within five hours the occupation was ratified by the Union council, and three days later 1,300 students at a Union meeting voted to occupy the administration building.

The mass of students were thus drawn in behind minority direct action. At a university like Swansea with no tradition of struggle the issue on its own was insufficient to

Three thousand students marched through Edinburgh last Friday. With hundreds of teachers out on strike there was a great opportunity to build links between students and strikers.

But the Scottish NUS Executive refused to allow a speaker from the All-Scottish Action Committee to bring greetings from the teachers. Furthermore, they pushed a motion through the Scottish NUS conference the following day supporting the Education Institute of Scotland as opposed to those actually in struggle, represented by the Action Committees.

generate action. The students always took the line of least resistance.

But the determined action of the hard core found a response among the mass of sympathetic students who were unsure of which way to move. To have taken a formal approach and waited for a Union meeting would have meant letting time slip away — the opportunity would have been lost. It is vital to strike while the iron is hot.

SUPPORT

Support has however been forthcoming from other directions. A Trades Council delegation has visited the occupation, while the Swansea Fords shop stewards committee has passed a motion of support. The solidarity of the local trade union movement is vital for the reinstatement campaign.

The authorities have taken a hard line, making support from other students nationally very important. The weight of the NUS must be brought to bear. For this reason Swansea students have called a national demonstration for Wednesday 27 November. Messages of support and donations to the occupation fund should be sent to the Occupation Committee.

Kent University is in the throes of a similar struggle. But because of the scabbing role of the 'Broad Left', there has not been the same mass involvement or success as at Swansea.

In an article in the Communist Party's paper, the *Morning Star*, on Friday 15 November, it is argued that the way to solve academic problems is by more student participation in decision making. They see the student world through rose-tinted spectacles.

The supposed aim of this policy of participation is to 'mobilise the mass of students.' Surely only the blind or the mentally infirm would fail to see that it was direct action at Swansea that mobilised the masses.

It is a pity that such action was not taken at Kent. The blame for that must be laid squarely at the door of the Broad Left, who failed to act on the mandates given by three Union meetings to take action.

RESIGNED

The IMG at Kent had continually argued the need for direct action to reinstate the victimised. The members of the IMG on the Union executive, including the President, John McGeown, felt they could no longer remain on an executive that had failed to defend its members.

The capitalist press latched on to this, but failed to bother with the facts. In his letter of resignation McGeown said:

'I consider it necessary to align myself with those forces prepared to take action to put the reinstatement campaign back to the fore of campus life... The International Marxist Group has always fought for the full accountability of Union officers to General Meetings. When elected... to post of Union President, I pledged myself to uphold this essential principle.'

It was to try and win the reinstatement campaign, to establish real democracy, and defend the Union, that McGeown and two other IMG members resigned from the executive. It was not — as the capitalist press claimed — due to the awakening of the now legendary silent majority of moderate opinion.

the union bureaucrats but for workers struggling to make ends meet on the appalling pay which ancillary workers get it is nothing less than a sell-out.

The picket deserves the support of all workers in the NHS. Trade unionists wanting to fight cut backs in the health service and build an NHS responsible to the working class should also give support to the picket.

The picket must be seen as the first step towards forcing action on the claim. Unless rank-and-file action is organised on a national scale the union leaders will simply settle within the terms of the social contract.

Direct action wins through

The relative calm of the NUS 'Week of Action' in Leeds last week was rudely shattered by a large demonstration and picket of the meeting of the Leeds Council education committee, which was discussing the latest round of education 'rationalisations'.

Most of the demonstrators were from Further Education Colleges and the local Polytechnic. At these institutions facilities are non-existent or completely inadequate; most students still have to rely on their parents for financial support; discipline is reminiscent of a primary school and, to cap it all, at the F.E. colleges Student Union activity is strongly discouraged by the authorities.

SPONTANEOUS

To drive home their point, an entirely spontaneous occupation took place of the Education Department central office. Once inside a call was made to the Education Committee chairman, Councillor King, demanding his appearance at the occupation to explain why his committee was intent on cutting an already inadequate budget. This he refused, and, when a delegation was sent to the committee, he again declined to even discuss the issue.

In response, the occupiers decided to continue the action for the rest of the afternoon, to discuss the strategy for the coming months.

IMG member Mark Turnbull spoke stressing the need for a demand that could unite all sectors of students in further and higher education. The sliding scale of grants was such a demand if it is linked with a campaign against the cuts. On this he outlined plans which are underway to call a conference of students and all other workers

in T&G, ATEI, NALGO, ASTMS, NUT, etc., who are also hit by the general reduction in social expenditure.

An excellent discussion followed. Another speaker Chris Pratt criticised the NUS Executive's whole approach — the refusal of the council to even listen to the delegation was ample demonstration of the uselessness of the 'pressure politics' tactic. Direct action was the only way, he said.

ENTERTAINING

Meanwhile, back at the council a brass band from the local Music College was 'entertaining' the meeting, just outside the nearest window, at full volume! The band then led those students who had not been able to get into the occupation back to the Education Department, where as a united body the students then marched back to the Polytechnic for a meeting.

IMG member Rick Hatcher called for a strike of students and campus workers to coincide with the next Committee meeting — which was enthusiastically accepted. He also drew attention to the Prebbles decision on non-industrial picketing.

'Are we going to let this stop us picketing in our thousands for the next council meeting?' 'NO!' roared the meeting.

Limited though this action was, it provides a platform for extending and developing the campaign against the cuts and for higher and non-discretionary grants. The 400 students who took part can act as a 'battering ram' into the rest of Leeds students, to hammer home the urgency of opposition to the education rationalisations — precedents established in the next few months will cost us dearly in the years to come.

Leeds University IMG

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National picket called by ancillary workers

Ancillary workers from the Portsmouth Group of Hospitals have called a national picket around the ancillary workers' pay claim.

The picket is being held on Friday 22 November outside the Department of Health and Social Security, Elephant & Castle, London SE1, starting at 1.00pm.

Ancillary workers are angry at the inadequacy of the present official claim

which calls for a minimum wage of £30 for 35 hours. They point out that the threshold limit was triggered by three points last week and further big price increases are guaranteed by Labour's Budget.

The present claim has been designed not to breach the social contract, which means that the lowly-paid NHS workers are expected to bear the burden of the present crisis. This might be all right for

