

Socialist Challenge

TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND!

NOW!



OUR POLICIES

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

Socialist Challenge believes that the two vital tasks confronting revolutionary socialists are:

- To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character, grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

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

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

- I am interested in more information about activities in my area.

- I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs. (Delete if not applicable)

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EDITORIAL

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Build the United Troops Out Movement

THINGS ARE not going well for the British in Ireland. The tenth anniversary of their latest 'civilising' mission in the North of Ireland has been greeted with flak, flak, and more flak.

The Brits are under ever increasing pressure to do something to sort out their Irish mess. There is the threatened intervention of Jimmy Carter; the events in Ireland and elsewhere at the weekend; and the increasing calls for British withdrawal — the magazine *New Society* being the latest.

In this situation, the response of revolutionary socialists must be clear and unequivocal.

Exciting opportunities are opening up for campaigning on Ireland in this country, but these will only be grasped if that campaigning offers political answers to the questions now being raised.

It is excellent, for instance, that the Young Liberals and the Young Communist League went onto the streets of London on Sunday to demand that Britain commits itself to a policy of withdrawal.

It is excellent because as more people demand withdrawal and take action to back it up, then others will be forced to consider Britain's war in Ireland. Most importantly, it makes it easier to raise the issue in the working class

movement.

It is only when the campaign in this country against British imperialism in Ireland begins to have real roots and real support in the working class that it will emerge as a real mass movement.

What should be the basis for such a campaign? From the point of view of revolutionary Marxism, the answer is simple. The right of the Irish people to self-determination is an immediate one, not to be postponed or bartered over. That means troops out now.

Yet, as so often with the theoretical positions of revolutionary Marxism, that demand has a practical reality beyond all the others now being suggested.

A movement simply in favour of withdrawal can and will continue to build one-off actions such as Sunday's demonstration. But what it does not do, because of its vagueness, is to provide the political answers which are needed when Ireland is argued about in trade union and Labour Party branches.

The same applies to those who say that only a campaign based explicitly on the slogan of 'solidarity with the IRA' will do. Of course, we should argue for solidarity with all those fighting British imperialism in Ireland. But this

should not be the basis for a mass solidarity movement in Britain.

The reason is simple: we would have to wait years, if not decades, before the British working class adopts that position, and neither the IRA or any other anti-imperialist force in Ireland can afford such a wait.

It is not the case that 'troops out now' is a convenient middle way between a vague withdrawal demand and the demand for solidarity with the IRA.

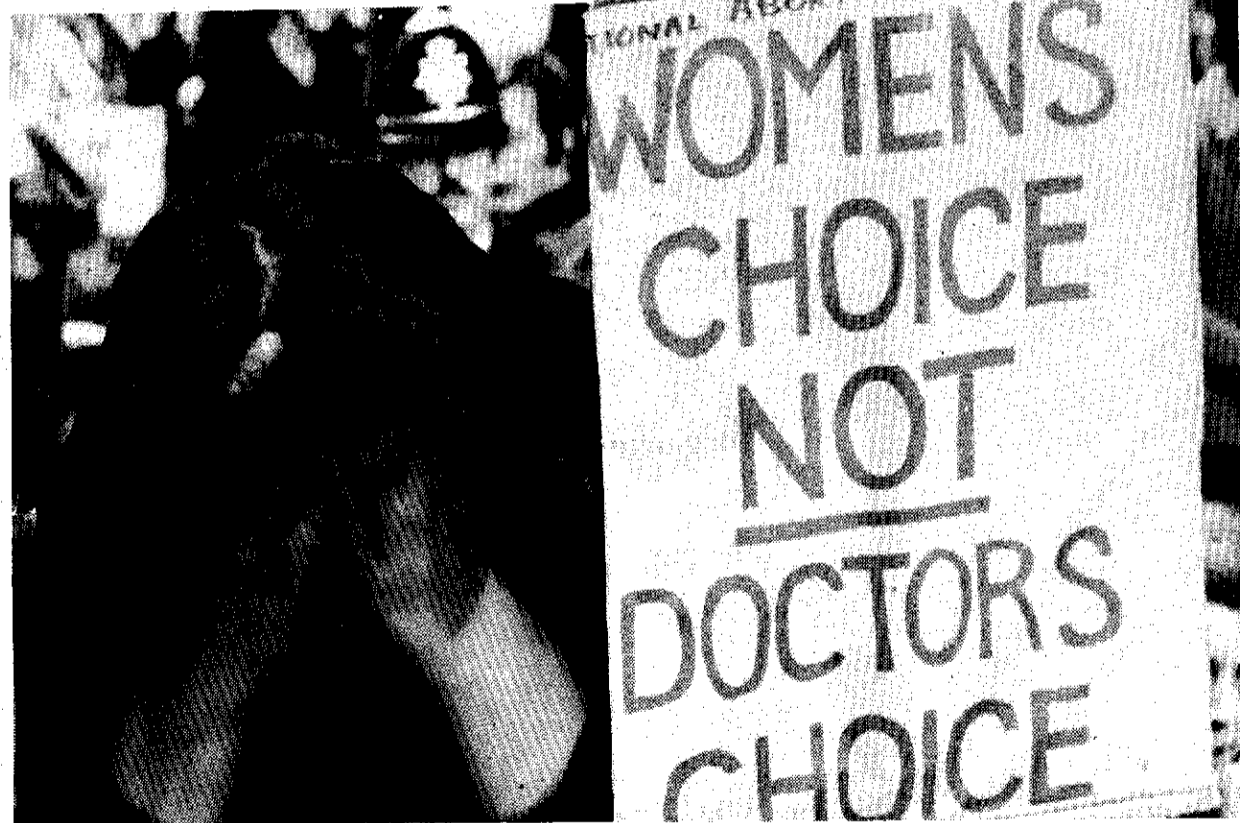
'Troops out now' specifies withdrawal, while at the same time giving meaningful solidarity with the anti-imperialists in Ireland. It helps to build on a principled basis what those forces want and need — a mass movement to help rid Ireland of the curse of Britain.

The United Troops Out Movement remains the only vehicle with a potential for developing that mass movement and for providing the political answers to the Irish question.

As we have said before, that movement deserves the support and active involvement of all sections of the revolutionary left.

We ask those who have equivocated: If now is not the time to build UTOM; if now is not the time to call more strongly than ever for troops out, then when is?

Abortion: going beyond the status quo



By Jude Watson, National Abortion Campaign

THE RECENT Royal Commission on the National Health Service exposes the desperate need for more abortion facilities throughout Britain.

Official statistics show that last year only 41.9 per cent of abortions were on the NHS. It is the only operation where more than half those who have it have to pay for it themselves.

The report suggests that 'lack of availability of NHS facilities, rather than real desire for private treatment, is the major factor in most cases'.

The report doubts that 100 per cent of abortions could be performed on the NHS without cuts in other sectors which 'will not normally be justified'.

But it does suggest that the number of health service abortions could be considerably increased if more day-care clinics were provided, which would also mean 'considerable savings in resources'.

The policy of the National Abortion Campaign, reaffirmed at its last conference, points out that the fight for abortion rights has to be linked to the fight against cuts in the NHS. Extended abortion facilities must be in addition not at the expense of other services.

The Royal Commission report recommends the aim of increasing the number of NHS abortions from 42 per cent to 75 per cent over the next four years, requiring an additional expenditure of £2.5m a year. This sum would be lower if the emphasis was put on developing day-care facilities.

However, the report poses this as a

re-allocation of funds within the health service.

Women, trades unionists, and health workers need to be brought together to fight for the facilities suggested in the report, and against the cuts. Otherwise, one sector will be played off against the other; abortion facilities versus kidney machines, and so on.

Our fight is to improve the whole of the health service for all working class people, and part of that is the provision of free abortions for all women who need them. The provision of day-care clinics would go a long way towards achieving this objective.

There are only 14 or so day-care clinics in the entire country, performing 13.8 per cent of NHS abortions. Yet over 80 per cent of abortions are before 12 weeks, so they could safely be done in day-care

clinics.

Recently the Director of Public Prosecutions recognised menstrual aspiration techniques as legal under the '67 Abortion Act.

This simple method is performed before it can be conclusively shown whether a woman is pregnant or not, and could be widely used in family planning, well-woman and day-care clinics.

Although the use of such techniques and the provision of day-care clinics would be an immense improvement on the present situation, these should not be seen as a cheap alternative to providing full health service facilities for all kinds of abortions.

In any case, none of these facilities will necessarily be provided unless it is made mandatory under law. At present there is no legal compulsion for area health authorities to provide any abortion facilities at all.

In certain areas, abortion provision is virtually non-existent. In Birmingham, for example, only 13 per cent of abortions are on the NHS. The area is renowned for its anti-abortion gynaecologists.

It only needs one leading consultant gynaecologist to be anti-abortion to affect the service of a whole area.

Until the provision of abortion facilities is made mandatory under the NHS Act, this situation will prevail.

Corrie's Bill seeks to limit the number of late abortions through reducing the statutory time limit, but he isn't looking for ways to eliminate the delays and inefficiencies within the health service which are the cause of a large number of late abortions.

Within the campaign against Corrie we have to continually take up the battle to ensure that the '67 Act is implemented and extended, as well as defeating this current attack.

A conference on positive legislation, planned for autumn of next year, will be directed towards the labour movement.

We should begin now to put through resolutions on abortion facilities so that the issue is raised at the next round of trade union conferences and at the TUC.

The fight against Corrie is not just a question of defending the status quo. It can lay the basis for a tremendous campaign to improve the law and the facilities for abortion, bringing us nearer to winning a women's right to choose.

VICTORY!

Oldham textile workers win all demands

STRIKING Asian workers at a textile mill in Oldham returned to work this week having won a resounding victory.

The textile workers at Maple Mill, owned by Courtaulds, had gone on strike against racist and exploitative policies both by management and within their own union.

The strike began when three workers were asked to do work previously done by five. When complaints were made to the union it simply told the workers to follow management instructions.

The workers continued to refuse to operate the speed-up and eventually a strike developed. Picket lines were set up, and although some white workers crossed, 140 workers were outside the gates.

Union

The union, the Oldham Provincial Textile and Allied Workers Union, has a long record of ignoring the concerns of Asian workers. It has done nothing to encourage their organisation on the factory floor. So it was clearly taken somewhat aback by the militant action at Maple Mill. The local bureaucrats had to be called back from their dinners and golf with management to deal with the workers.

A mass meeting called for Tuesday 7 August was attended by senior union officials. But the workers were vocal and not prepared to be fobbed off with sweet talk.

The bureaucrats had to admit that the workers had a case and agreed to make the strike official if management was not prepared to meet their demands. One representative was elected from each shift to represent the workers, laying the basis for shop steward organisation in the future. These representatives were recognised by the union.

Stewards

In a meeting the following day the bosses capitulated and agreed to meet all the workers' demands. Both union and management now recognise the twelve elected shop stewards and there will be no more 'agreements' over the heads of the workers. The stewards will also be given time off to attend trade union courses.

An industrial language unit will

now be brought in to teach people English in work time. And the union has promised to take seriously the need to provide translation services, especially of things like the union rule book.

Safety

Management has agreed that workers will not be forced to do overtime, that health and safety rules will be stuck to, that proper lunch breaks with machines off will be allowed, that heating and ventilation will be done properly, and that there will be no question of workers having to fill in for absentees.

However, all these things will have to be backed up by union organisation in the plant if management is not going to back down at the first opportunity. Only strong shop floor organisation can stop management from putting pressure on individual workers to increase their work-rate, do overtime, and so on.

This is particularly true since David Whitley, a notorious racist overseer whom the workers complained about, remains at his post. Courtaulds have said they will investigate the complaints, but have not said what action they intend to take.

Investments

But it is not just management that the workers have to worry about. Their own union still has big investments in Courtaulds, so they are materially compromised with management.

Doubtless the officials will still go to dinners with the bosses like privileged investors rather than representatives of the workforce. But the victory at Maple Mill is a step in the right direction.

There are many other Courtaulds mills in Oldham employing 5,000 workers, many of them Asian. Already moves are being made to extend the organisation in Maple Mill to other mills, with the aim of establishing a combined shop stewards committee for the whole area.

A conference of Asian women in Rochdale is also planned to help them overcome their isolation and begin to organise.

Donations and enquiries can be sent by phoning Sue on 061-652 7851.



BBSBFN, roughly translated as 'Bye, bye sanctions busters for now', should have been Jimmy Young's sign off for his broadcasts last Thursday and Friday from Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. The Campaign Against Racism in the Media held a picket of the BBC headquarters in London, pointing out that Young would have difficulty calling up blacks since most of them wouldn't be able to get to a phone. Martial law covers 90 per cent of the country.

PHOTO: Geoffrey Sheridan

Racist murder in Newham

By Ken Glanfield
Chairperson Newham ANL, personal capacity

RACIST THUGS have moved into the tube trains in carrying out attacks on blacks in this country.

Last Thursday, Kayumerz Anklesaria was brutally kicked to death by three white racist thugs in the compartment of an underground train at Bromley-by-Bow in East London.

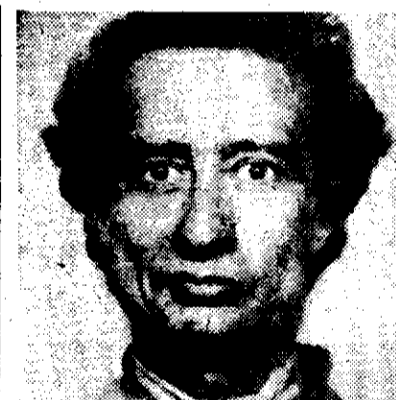
The police statement, quoted almost verbatim in the London evening papers, said it was not a racist attack, but a 'senseless attack'. This reaction has understandably enraged the Asian community.

Here we print the text of a statement issued jointly by the Newham Defence Committee and the Indian Workers Association (GB) central committee.

It is supported by thirty other organisations, all the local IWAs in Britain, the Pakistani Standing Conference and the Asian women's organisation AWAZ.

'The police claim that the wanton murder of the Pakistani by three white racist thugs last Thursday was not racial, and that it was just a senseless attack.

'How do they know this? Would a



KAYUMERZ ANKLESARIA
racist attack have been sensible?

'For the police to make such a prejudging statement is to deny the fact that in East London racist attacks on the black population are an everyday phenomenon and that they are intensifying.

'When such attacks are reported to the police they ignore them. In the past all racist murders have been called non-racist by the police, who seem more interested in covering up racism than in arresting the culprits.

'The black community is shocked that not only in the streets but in a tube compartment there is no security against racist attacks. And it has little

confidence in a police force that only tries to cover them up.

'On behalf of the black community we want to make it clear before the authority concerned that "enough is enough for us". We are no longer prepared to stand idly by when our brother is kicked to death in a train.

'Nor when it's on the pavement, like in Woolwich in June. Or when stabbed outside a tube station, which happened in Chalk Farm last Friday.

'We urge all black people to take the responsibility for self-protection into their own hands.'

A similar statement has been issued by the Steering Committee of Asian Organisations Against Racism last weekend.

The meeting at the weekend dismissed the police statement on the murder as unlikely given the prevailing situation in the East End and laid the responsibility at the door of both Labour and Tory politicians for pursuing racist policies on immigration controls and other issues.

A public protest meeting is planned in Newham, for a demonstration when the body is released or a picket of the police station in charge of the murder enquiry.

These should be supported by all anti-racists in the area.

£1500 donation to our Fund Drive

THIS money was given to me as an inheritance and therefore is not really mine. The money has been made off the backs of the working class both in this country and abroad.

It is therefore only right that it should now be used in the best interests of the international working class and used towards everyone's liberation from this system that makes the majority of people work to line the pockets of the few.

I believe that this money can best be used by the International Marxist Group as it is the only organisation with a good perspective for building a united revolutionary socialist party in this country, and internationally through the Fourth International.

We received this letter through the post accompanying an anonymous cheque paid through a local bank for fifteen hundred pounds for our development Fund Drive.

This was a big boost for the joint Socialist Challenge-IMG Fund Drive, bringing our cumulative total this week to over £13,000. The letter sums up pretty well the case for our Fund Drive.

The donor made a considerable sacrifice in sending us her or his inheritance. No doubt everyone who reads the paper has had fantasies of winning the pools or getting a big

inheritance.

But this comrade thought the question through. Where did the money come from? From the exploitation of working people. How would it best be used? To fight that exploitation, through our activity and our Fund Drive.

So if a windfall comes your way, or indeed if you have some spare cash, ask yourself a question: Where will it be best used? Not swelling the profits of the brewing or distilling industries, but in our Fund Drive.

If everyone who reads this column gave us a fiver, we'd be well away...

Our thanks this to:

	£
N Long	3
A Pettitt	5
DA Russell	5
T Thompson	5
The Red Drinker	5
Michael Paul Hughes	10
Hackney IMG	20
Leicester IMG	5
Anon	1,500
Anon	50
Week's total	£1,608
Cumulative total	£13,000

Fighting for jobs on Tyneside

Sir Keith's £5 won't go far among 42,000 unemployed

By Geoff Ryan

THE TORIES really care about the unemployed in the North-east. After 20 members of the Tyneside Right to Work campaign occupied the offices of local Tory MP Sir William Elliott, he agreed to meet us the following day.

Sir William told us he was 'very concerned' about our problems, which is no doubt why he votes for Tory policies creating even more unemployment. Still, he did tell us we could see him anytime if we really wanted a job.

Even if Sir Keith Joseph is trying to close down most of the industry in the North-east, he isn't totally heartless either. Newcastle Trades Council Centre for the Unemployed, together with Strong Words, a group of local worker-writers, were planning to produce a pamphlet giving the unemployed a chance to tell of their experiences on the dole.



This was shortly before the general election, and they wrote to Labour Industry Minister Eric Varley asking for a donation. Unfortunately, Varley got the boot, but shortly after the election a cheque arrived for £5 — from the personal account of Keith Joseph!

Sir Keith's concern is touching, but his £5 won't go far among the recent school leavers. And Sir William might have problems finding jobs for all the 42,000 out of work in Tyneside.

But the unemployed are fighting back. Last month a local Right to Work campaign was formed. Apart from occupying Sir William's offices, we have been leafleting virtually every dole office in the area and we're planning a march from Scotswood, where the Vickers factory will finally close in September, to Jarrow, the symbol of unemployment in the '30s.

Along the way we'll be calling at local factories to get support for the Right to Work march to the TUC in September. Already 35 young people have signed up for the march.

In March, Newcastle Trades Council's Centre for the Unemployed set up an Unemployed Workers Union (UWU) which has been able to win considerable support from both trade unions and the Labour Party. It has recruited about 150 members in Newcastle.

Its main successes have been in County Durham. In Spennymoor, for example, the UWU was set up by the former plant leadership of the recently closed Courtaulds factory. Interest has spread beyond the other small towns of County Durham; enquiries are now coming in from all over Britain.

But the existence of both the Right to Work campaign and the UWU has created problems.

The former was set up by the local Socialist Workers Party without any consultation with the UWU or the Centre for the Unemployed. Not surprisingly, this created friction as the centre has been actively involved in fighting unemployment for nearly two years, and has



PHOTO: Graham Smith

official support from Newcastle Trades Council.

Newcastle members of the International Marxist Group have worked with both the Right to Work campaign and the UWU. We don't see any need for rivalry. The UWU can help build the Right to Work march, and the campaign can encourage its supporters to join the UWU.

Unity in action is the best way to combat the dole queues. Despite formal agreement with this by both the union and the campaign, little has actually been done to achieve unity.

At times, unemployed workers at Swan House, the main dole office in Newcastle, have been met by two groups of people giving out leaflets calling for a fight against unemployment. Such sectarianism is ludicrous. All it does is confuse workers on how best to fight back against the Tories.

These divisions in Newcastle only mirror the national picture. We have the Right to Work campaign, the Campaign Against Youth Unemployment, the Youth Campaign Against Unemployment, as well as a number of local organisations.

What is needed is a single national organisation to bring together all those wanting to fight unemployment. We need a single national unemployed workers union, supported by the trade unions.

The best way to achieve this would be if the Right to Work campaign issued a call for a national conference after the Right to Work march. A national conference could bring together all those fighting Tory unemployment policies. It would at least be a first step towards the unity we need if we are to successfully fight Tory attacks on jobs.

Death on the Tube Demotion for exposing racism at work

By Sue Aspinall

THOMAS Howard and John Keys were caught in a thunderstorm at Cockfosters station, North London, one night last May. They sheltered in a London Transport toolroom, and there they died.

The two men, both maintenance workers employed by London Transport, were asphyxiated by carbon monoxide fumes from a gas fire in the toolroom. An inquest was held into the case at the end of last month, and as the evidence unfolded it became apparent that the fatal accident had resulted from incompetence and carelessness.

London Transport gas fitters had moved the heater from the ceiling onto the wall, despite the fact that it was a model designed to be suspended horizontally from the ceiling. A 'homemade' and badly fitted aluminium shield had then been stuck on top of it.

Ten months before the deaths, the heater had supposedly been serviced, yet on the day the men died old plaster from a ceiling repair done two years before was found in the airways of the fire.

A technical officer of the Gas Board gave some extremely damaging evidence. He said that the heater contravened building regulations, as there must be permanent ventilation in any room with a fuelless heater.

There was only one small window in the toolroom, which was found closed when the men's bodies were discovered.

There is no reason to believe that the ignorance and neglect which led to this fatal incident are anything but commonplace. LT management had

no record of the heater being moved, nor of the ceiling being repaired. They claimed that they didn't know about a similar incident in 1973, when another employee fell unconscious while sheltering in the same toolroom.

Although London Transport received a ticking off from the coroner about their inadequate servicing and inspection, and weakly replied 'I'll follow that up, Sir', it's abundantly clear that no worker can rely on the employers to look out for her or his health and safety.

Ironically, those who should have been protecting the men's interests, the trade unions representing workers at Oakwood and Cockfosters, were being played off one against the other by LT at the time of the men's deaths.

ASLEF members had appointed their own safety rep, but because none of their members did jobs which were likely to take them into the toolroom, management refused them the right to inspect it.

The NUR, to which Howard and Keys belonged, had not yet appointed any safety rep as it wanted a centralised body within the union to deal with the whole of London's health and safety problems, instead of having local safety reps elected by the members — and there was an internal dispute about this.

It's obvious from this case that only particular local knowledge and vigilance could safeguard the interests of workers themselves. It is apparent, too, that members of the NUR needed to be more aware of their own health and safety, and one of the roles a local safety rep can play is to constantly remind and educate other members of their rights and needs in this area.

By Bristol Voice

AN EMPLOYMENT officer at one of Bristol's largest Job Centres was victimised for exposing racial discrimination. This is what Steven Kirby told an industrial tribunal earlier this month.

Kirby said that when he tried to find out what action to take against discriminating employers who used the Job Centre, colleagues told him: 'It goes on all the time. Don't get yourself involved.'

While working as an interviewer for job applicants, Kirby found that many employers use colour as a criterion for job suitability.

When a young black student was refused a job behind the bar of Bristol's Somerville Club, the steward explained that a black bar person 'might upset some of the customers'.

Kirby informed the Commission for Racial Equality, and his evidence resulted in the first successful prosecution under the 1976 Race Relations Act in Bristol.

But Kirby was promptly transferred to a filing job, and when he asked why he was being demoted he was told by the manager of the Job Centre: 'I don't want you to drop the department in the shit again'.

The CRE supported Kirby's case at the tribunal, at which he claimed unfair treatment. The defence by the Manpower Services Commission was extremely confused.

At first, Kirby was accused of breaking the Official Secrets Act! When this excuse failed, they fell back on the accusation that Kirby had broken the unwritten rules of the department by taking independent action. Needless to say, the

Manpower Services Commission has never lodged a complaint against discriminatory employers.

The tribunal has reserved its judgement. The case is important, not only because it is against a government body, but because it is the first time that a case of indirect

discrimination has been brought in this country — Kirby is arguing that sections of the Race Relations Act have been contravened.

As the CRE's solicitor told the tribunal: 'If protection is not given to informants it will become impossible to prove cases of racial discrimination.'

Fight for the right to work



Stop the chat
and fight
back

Liverpool
to
Blackpool,
1-5
September

JOIN THE MARCH
I would like to join the march/have more information about the march
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Address

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Campaign, 285a Seven
Sisters Rd., London N4
Telephone 01-802 09781

Private medicine in practice

Introducing Dr Leech, who's banking on our ill-health

By Geoffrey Sheridan

IBM, the fiercely anti-union American computer firm, has become the latest company to boost private medicine in Britain by taking out block membership of BUPA for its 15,000 British employees.

The deal is thought to be worth £800,000 a year to BUPA, the leading pay-for-your-health outfit.

The private health organisations and those they enrich in the medical profession have made no secret of their glee at the Tories' plans to allow them free reign, while axing the National Health Service.

The government aims to:

*Allow decisions about private hospital development to be taken at local level, with disputes referred to Social Services Secretary, Patrick Jenkin, a private medicine enthusiast.

*Encourage regional and area health authorities to enter into contracts with private firms for joint provision of some services and expensive equipment.

This would extend the leeching principle whereby private hospitals use NHS facilities for diagnosis and blood transfusion services.

*Halt the withdrawal of pay beds, with a probable increase in selected areas.

Two thousand pay beds have been phased-out so far, but many of these were not fully used. The remaining 2,500 beds are dear to the hearts of the health leeches.

Private health insurers provide

cover for roughly 2.4m people, 25 per cent more than in 1971.

Certainly organisations like BUPA look forward to a rosy future. A record 61,000 subscribers were added to its total last year, and it predicts that the number of those covered by private schemes will double in five years.

Not least among those anxious to cash in are medical consultants, who are now demanding that those on full-time contracts to the NHS be allowed to take on private patients. The Tories, needless to say, are entirely sympathetic.

Boom time for the health leeches is based on a simple equation. As the NHS waiting lists lengthen, providing increased custom to morticians, so those who are rich enough will pay to jump the queue — a two-tier health system in the making.

Cause and effect interact. To take one example, the secretary of the National Heart and Chest Hospital in London says:

'There was regular restriction in the amount of open heart surgery during 1978 because of shortage of intensive care and/or operating staff. There is considerable evidence that there has been a loss of staff from our hospitals to the private sector.'

It is trade union militants who are causing the private sector heart ache. A fortnight ago BUPA issued a statement telling 'doctrinal' union leaders who are against private medicine that they are out of touch with their members.



INTENSIVE care unit at the private Wellington Hospital in London, where suites cost £115-£180 a day. The nearby National Heart and Chest Hospital has been forced to cut the number of its operations.

The occasion for this posturing was the knife in the back to the NHS delivered by the right-wing leadership of the electricians' union, which is proposing a deal which will contract

40,000 of its members to BUPA. The response of the health unions NUPE and COHSE is to put through a resolution to be taken at next month's Trade Union Congress, calling on unions not to negotiate any agreements providing private medical facilities.

But so far the NUPE leadership has made no plans as to how it will implement its own conference resolution to chuck out all pay beds remaining in the NHS on 1 January 1980.

The health union leaders have already shown how far they are prepared to compromise over this issue. They went along with the

Labour government two years ago when it set up the impotent Health Services Board, favoured by the recent Royal Commission.

If pay beds are finally to be handed over to NHS patients, it will be up to health union activists to set the pace, and it will depend on the rest of the workers' movement both to provide the necessary support and to strangle the growth of private medicine generally.

The action now being stepped up against the health cuts presents an opportunity to explain the need to axe the leeches, and begin to organise the boycotts of goods and services which will achieve it.

All cut up

Hounslow

By Andy Lilley

BRANCHES of major health unions in the Ealing, Hammersmith, and Hounslow area in West London have agreed to explain to the public the implications of the government's demand for a £3.7m cut in health spending in the area by next March, and to hold a conference on 22 September to launch a counter-attack.

The proposal comes in a statement to the area health authority on 8 August, issued by the joint shop stewards committee at West Middlesex Hospital, COHSE Ealing branch, GMWU Hounslow branch, NUPE nursing Hounslow branch, and the NALGO area branch.

Rejecting any NHS cuts, the unions say that the proposed amount 'would lead to wholesale closure of many small hospitals, clinics, wards and other vital services'.

They add: 'It would also involve redundancies, loss of jobs, and place an intolerable burden on over-stretched staff.'

When the AHA met the day after the statement was issued, it agreed to make immediate cuts of just over £1m, and to consider further cuts in October.

Carl Brecker, chair-

person of the stewards committee at West Middlesex Hospital and a leading member of Fight-back, described the AHA's decision as a 'disgraceful performance'.

Brent

By Richard Kramer

THERE is strong support among NALGO members and community workers in Brent for the anti-cuts campaign which was launched in the NW London borough last month with some 70 people at the inaugural meeting.

Brent's Labour council is now considering a rates increase of 30 to 35 per cent, and one of the activities of the new campaign has been to picket the Labour group on the council.

The campaign is calling for a united front against any attempt to make cuts in public spending, and is aiming to hold a conference together with Brent Trades Council.

The latter is organising an anti-cuts conference for public sector workers on 17 September.

Wandsworth

By Colin Talbot

CONTRACT labourers were turned away by

pickets when they arrived to work on Wandsworth council building sites in South London on Monday morning.

The Tory council's efforts to wind up direct labour in the borough is meeting determined opposition, despite the issuing of injunctions against leading militants.

The picket, supported by the building workers' union UCATT and the local trades council, announced that the picket would continue all day and every day until the council backed down.

Two sites are affected by the decision to stop using direct labour, and both will be picketed.

At a meeting of Wandsworth Trades Council on Monday evening it was decided to: build a meeting of all London trades councils to set up a picket rota; call on UCATT to organise pickets; produce a bulletin for direct works sites; and set up a fighting fund.

Lambeth

By Bob Pennington

SUPPORT for the campaign against health cuts in Lambeth, Southwark, and Lewisham — the area which has already seen its health authority suspended because of its

opposition to the Tories' axe — continues to grow.

After a meeting addressed by the campaign secretary, the St Giles ward Labour Party donated £25 and decided to sponsor the campaign's 10 November conference.

Speakers have also been invited to the Southwark branch of the electricians' union, Peckham LPYS, and Lewisham Trades Council.

Last Saturday campaign supporters leafleted shopping areas and obtained many signatures for its petition. All the main hospitals in the area have been leafleted.

Lewisham NALGO branch has ordered 2,000 leaflets, and Lambeth Communist Party has also taken a supply.

Socialist Challenge readers in South London are urged to assist the campaign. The next meeting is on 6 September, 7.30pm, at North Peckham Civic Centre, Old Kent Road, Information etc from: Janet Maguire, ECG Dept, Guys Hospital, London SE1. Tel 01-407 7600 ext 3164.

Talk to us

*What action is being taken against cuts in your area? Unless you send reports to Socialist Challenge, readers won't know.

THE BUPA HEALTH SERVICE

The country's leading independent health care organisation and what it does for you

Scottish abortion train

By Pauline Tierney

A FULL train-load of Scottish opponents of the Corrie anti-abortion Bill to join the TUC demonstration in London on 28 October. That was the proposal from a meeting held by the National Abortion Campaign in Edinburgh on 8 August.

Nearly a hundred people attended the meeting, which raised a collection of £185, including £100 from a single supporter.

Margaret Wilson, the only woman member of the Scottish TUC's General Council, spoke in a personal capacity, explaining that the social conditions in which many working class women live all conspire to deny

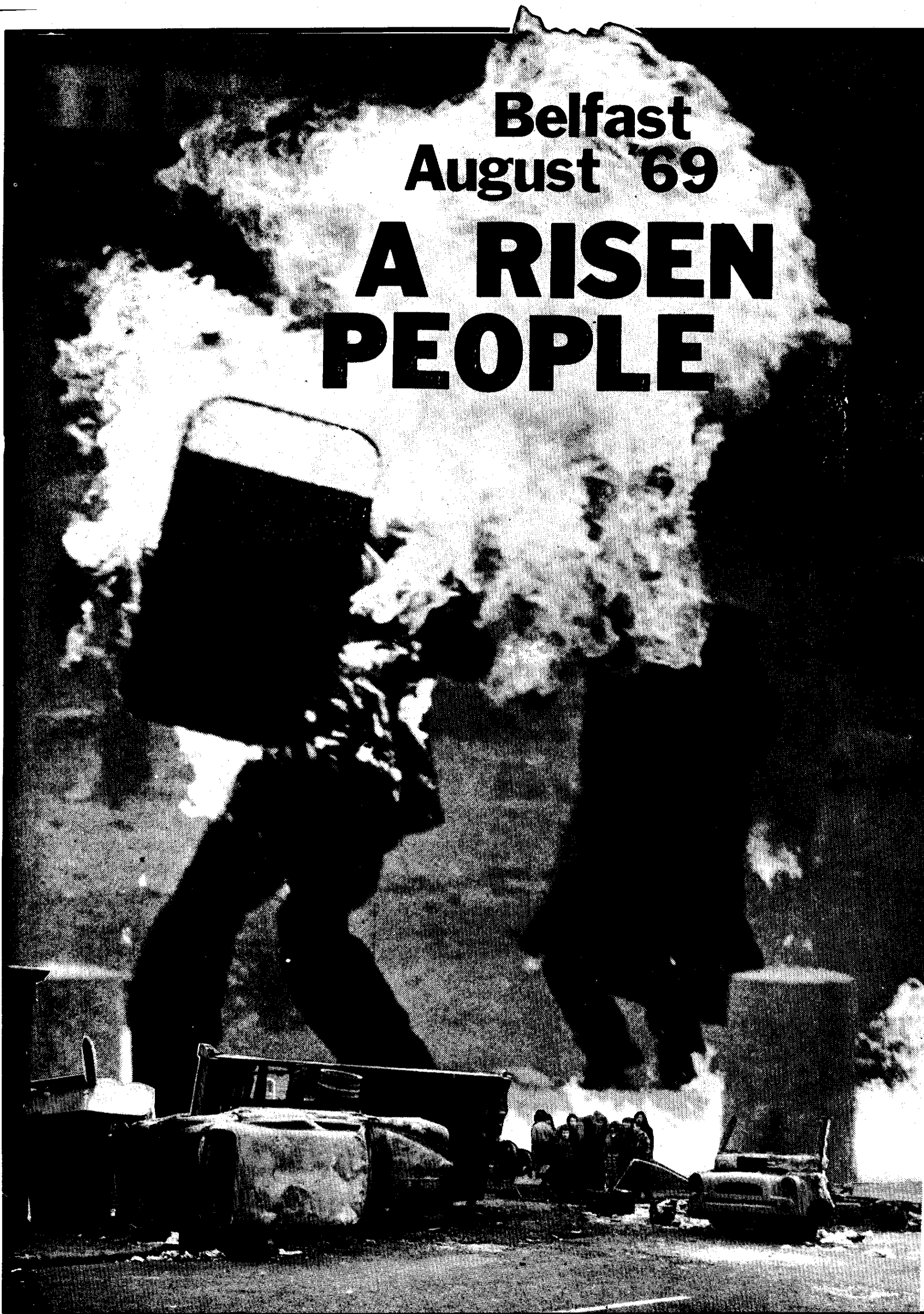
them the right to choose over childbirth.

Dr Nadine Harrison, a founder member of Doctors for a Woman's Right to Choose, said that Corrie's proposals would effectively make it impossible for working class women to obtain termination at any stage of pregnancy.

Two out of three of the anti-abortion amendments have come from Scottish MPs, so the STUC will hopefully publicise Edinburgh NAC's plan to book a train for the October demonstration.

*What the Royal Commission report on the NHS holds in store for abortion, page 2.

Belfast August '69 A RISEN PEOPLE



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MORE the barricades went up on the streets of Belfast and Derry last week. Once more thousands demonstrated the unquenchable spirit of resistance which ten years of military occupation has been unable to defeat.

Stones, burning buses — petrol bombs — were fired at the symbol of British imperialism which the British Army has used for the Catholic minority in the North of Ireland. It was ten years ago this week since those troops were sent to the streets, supposedly to bring peace to the North of Ireland and to 'protect' the Catholic minority.

HAEL FARRELL, a leading member of the Irish revolutionary organisation Peoples Democracy, here recalls what it was like in August 1969 and tells the inside story of how the Catholic ghettos of Belfast barricaded themselves off for weeks, keeping out both the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the British Army.

ON 12 AUGUST 1969, after a year of rioting and batoning Civil Rights demonstrations throughout the North of Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Apprentice Boys were celebrating 300 years of British tyranny through the centre of Belfast. The result was the Battle of the Bogside, with half the RUC trying to force their way into the Derry area to take their revenge on the people who had refused to lie down.

ON 13 August the two Peoples Democracy members on the executive of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association took the lead in getting together to call a series of mass demonstrations in solidarity with the people of Derry. The termination of the Bogside and then the other protests — were too much for the British. At that time it was only 8,000 strong (today it has 8,000).

THE RUC were beaten. Next day, 14 August, they were pulled out and the British troops were on the streets of Belfast. As far as the withdrawal of the RUC was concerned it was a victory for the people of Belfast which brought them much relief.

THE Unionist government at the time in Belfast took a bitter pill. Pressured by Paisley at a meeting, Chichester-Clark, the Minister, mobilised the military and exclusively Protestant specials and issued armoured cars to the RUC in Belfast. That night the cars roared up and down the Catholic Falls Road, gunning Divis Flats, while the specials and Loyalist mobs burned down the side streets from the Falls Road, burning out Catholic

people of the Falls were defenceless but the following morning on folk memory and the spirit of previous generations — the roads were blocked the way had been against the police in the 1920s and 1932. Free was born.

It was made that there would be another night like 14 August in the Falls. If the RUC and British tried to come in again they would have to fight every inch of the way. The result would have been civil war. There had been riots in the past with crowds demanding guns.

ON 15 August the RUC was driven from the Falls and the British Army. A day later they were in the Catholic district of Belfast. Few people at the time that as the British took up their positions on the streets bayonets were pointed at the Catholic ghettos, not at their

the barricades the leaders — the Church, the press, and the businessmen —



were discarded. The people turned to the Republicans and the militant wing of the Civil Rights movement. The Republicans set up a Defence Committee and on the afternoon of 15 August representatives of PD and the Defence Committee worked out a set of four demands to be met before the barricades came down. These were: disband the B Specials; disarm the RUC; abolish the Special Powers Act; suspend the Stormont government.

That night PD members set up a pirate radio as the voice of the Defence Committee and the people behind the barricades. The next day more PD members were running off the first copies of a bulletin outlining the demands.

Despite the bloodshed — eight people killed (two of them Protestants, six Catholics); not to mention 1,500 Catholic families driven out over a couple of months — morale behind the barricades was high. The RUC and the military kept out and the people knew instinctively that they'd struck a major blow at the Orange state. The barricades were strengthened and rotas organised to guard them in every area.

There was a high level of mass involvement. The pirate radio, now Radio Free Belfast, moved to a permanent base in Leeson Street on the heart of the Falls and got a new transmitter which could be heard all over the city. It broadcast requests and political comments all day long. The duplicated bulletins had become *Citizen Press*, a daily newsheet with a circulation of 10,000 inside the barricades.

The *Citizen Press* and above all the radio played a vital role behind the barricades. In the first few days they raised the morale of the beleaguered people. They answered the lying propaganda of the Unionist regime with none of the qualifications and euphemisms of the liberal bourgeois press.

The anti-Unionist people realised that at last they had tools of their own which would tell their side of the story and that they could give their answers direct and plain to Chichester-Clark, Paisley and Callaghan. And the world's press would hear it because they all listened to Radio Free Belfast.

After the first few days the radio and the paper served another function. They raised the consciousness of the people. The mass audience in the ghettos heard about the

connection between Unionism and big business, about the economic reasons for Britain's intervention in the North, and the real reason why Jack Lynch, Prime Minister of the South of Ireland, had stood idly by — the fact that the Southern economy was totally dominated by British economic imperialism.

However crudely explained (for we were not Marxists then), the political message of the radio and the paper for the months that the barricades lasted did a lot to lay the ideological foundation for the decade of struggle which was to come.

PD ran the radio and did most of the work on the *Citizen Press* until late September. We also produced a printed paper, *Barricades Bulletin*, which was circulated in the rest of the North, the South and even in Britain. We set up a poster workshop producing powerful propaganda posters like 'The Mad Major' (Chichester-Clark) and 'Malone Road Fiddles while Falls Road Burns' (Malone Road being the home of Belfast's upper class). And all the time we repeated the message, 'the barricades stay till our demands are met'.

It was an exciting time. The people of the ghettos were getting their first taste of political freedom since the yoke of the Northern state had been clamped on their necks in 1921.

No-one behind the barricades, not even PD, demanded the immediate withdrawal of the British troops — though we at least warned that when their masters ordered it their guns would be turned on the ghettos, as they were a year later in the Battle of the Falls, July 1970. But those were the days when women gave the soldiers tea and Jimmy Sullivan, a Republican leader, met the British commanders and escorted the new head of the RUC round the Falls.

That showed how low the level of political consciousness still was. There were other mistakes — of which one of the most serious concerned democracy. The (Republican) Defence Committee wouldn't hold elections for a council to run the free areas, or hold mass meetings to discuss policy.

They had no confidence in the people and were afraid that they would elect the old politicians or the nominees of the clergy. But the Defence Committee had no democratic mandate, and under pressure they co-opted precisely the people

they had wanted to keep out — the politicians, Father Padraig Murphy, and Tom Conaty, an ambitious and right-wing Catholic businessman.

Eventually such people controlled the Central Defence Committee. And because there were no mass meetings to discuss the demands, the CDC began to water them down and to negotiate deals with the British government.

Spontaneous outbursts of popular feeling, as when Bishop Philbin was chased out of Albert Street for trying to get the barricades down, delayed the sell-out. But they couldn't prevent it. By the end of September most of the barricades were down, although only the head of the RUC had been changed — the Special Powers Act was still there and, most important, so was the Stormont parliament. It was to take another two and a half years and a lot of bloodshed before Stormont was overturned.

The PD members were unhappy about the lack of democracy but we didn't fight it hard enough, partly because we were still a student-based group with few real roots in the area. Eventually our position in running the propaganda for the area became impossible.

This happened in two ways. Party whips arrived from the Sinn Fein headquarters in Dublin (this was before Sinn Fein split into its Provisional and Official wings) to enforce the party line. They explained to the local Republican leaders that they should never have agreed to the demand to suspend Stormont since — according to these people who were later to lead the Officials — it was a democratic Irish Assembly.

Then they complained about the politics of the radio and paper. Comparisons between the attack on the Falls and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia would have to stop; so would calls for democracy behind the barricades. Reluctantly the local Republicans toed the line. A censor was appointed to the radio and an entire issue of *Citizen Press* was recalled and burnt. There were no democratic structures to which we could appeal.

Secondly, while the radio and paper supposedly voiced the policies of the Defence Committee, these changed from day to day as the right wing strengthened their positions and continued their secret negotiations with the military and the British government. Again we didn't fight as hard as we should — but by then there was no structure through which we could have carried the struggle to the people.

At the end of September, we withdrew from running the *Citizen Press* and the radio, although the latter had been rendered ineffective anyway by high powered jamming equipment brought in by the British. On 3 October we produced the first issue of a new, uncensored paper of our own, *Free Citizen* (later to become *Unfree Citizen* after internment, and now *Socialist Republic*). By then the barricades were almost all down anyway.

Free Belfast ended with only a whimper, but its significance was great. It gave the people of the ghettos their first real experience of their power and of self-organisation. For a few weeks they had held the British Army and the RUC at bay, organised to defend their own streets and areas, and generated their own media to voice their aspirations and demands.

Free Belfast should have some of the significance for Ireland that the Paris Commune and the 1905 Soviet had for the Bolsheviks in Russia. The way forward was pointed, the type of organisation which was required for a successful revolution was shown. Free Belfast showed the remarkable power of the masses united and organising themselves.

The hope for the Irish revolution lies in developing that sort of mass mobilisation again, on a wider scale and in the factories as well as the streets. But it will only succeed if we learn the most important lesson of Free Belfast: to put our faith in the masses. Imperialism will never be defeated by self-appointed leaderships answerable to no-one or by secret negotiations, but only by the will of the people.

London march is biggest for 7 years

HARRY McSHANE summed up what must have been the feelings of many who marched on Sunday in London to mark the tenth anniversary of British troops being sent onto the streets of Northern Ireland. The veteran Scottish socialist proclaimed, 'the fight must be spread and intensified, this tremendous demonstration says so...the demand must be, troops out now!'

The march was the largest on Ireland in Britain since 1972. Estimates of the numbers who took part varied from 4,000 (BBC) to 10,000 (Guardian, Daily Mirror, Morning Star). Two separate Socialist Challenge counts put the crowd at 6,000.

But whatever the exact figure, it is a long time since a demonstration on Ireland in Britain attracted such wide support. Banners on display included those of trades councils, trade union branches, and constituency Labour parties.

A 'Women and Ireland' banner had over 300 marching behind it and a Gay Activists Alliance contingent was also well supported. The Sinn Fein and Connolly Association banners attracted the participation of a substantial number of Irish immigrants, while the revolutionary left and United Troops Out Movement contingents were the largest of all. Other participants ranged from the Young Liberals to the London District Committee of the Communist Party.

The variety of support was explained by the broad nature of the demand on which the demonstration was called — that Britain should commit itself to a policy of withdrawal. But it was noticeable that the overwhelming bulk of the march was in the 'troops out now' contingent. Socialist Challenge estimated that the 'now' part of the demonstration was approximately five times the size of the 'withdraw' section.

The march thoroughly vindicated the approach of the United Troops Out Movement — full participation in organising the march as a whole, while stressing the importance of 'troops out now'. The make-up of the march was proof that when it comes to mobilising action on the streets on Ireland, it is 'troops out now' which has the greatest appeal. The conclusion is almost too obvious to state — build the United Troops Out Movement.

IRISH LABOUR AND IRELAND
1969-79

Compiled by Geoff Bell with cartoons by which analyses the costs of the struggle over the last ten years. Available from: The Other Bookshop, 328 London N1, Cost 40p + 10p post. Available on request.

Eyewitness in Prague

The Castle and the Trial

H. Klein reports from Prague

IN THE HEYDAY of Stalinism, the geography of Prague perfectly matched its politics: both were dominated by the awesome power of Hradcany Castle, home of the head of state and meeting place of the party leadership.

Today, on the eve of Czechoslovakia's biggest political trial for more than two decades, the capital city looks from a distance completely unchanged. But close up, in the maze of ancient streets in Malostranske below the Castle, and across the river in the Old City, life has changed radically — even since the early 1970s.

The Castle is still ever present — it is difficult to escape for long from its blank, pitiless gaze. But the inhabitants of the wine bars and cafés of the Old City look back in a new way. The fear and awe of the 1950s and the great hopes of 1968 have been replaced by quite different attitudes.

Irritated

On my way from the airport, past Ruzyně prison where the ten Charter 77 campaigners arrested at the end of May are being held incommunicado, I unintentionally irritated a busy and efficient newsagent by asking her for a copy of *Party Life* which was prominently displayed in her window. She didn't know — and couldn't find — the price of this CP ideological rag and shrugged her shoulders.

I bought the party daily, *Rude Pravo*, instead and innocently sat down with my dictionary in a café to decipher it. Two minutes later, a young man two tables away loudly demanded why I was reading that paper. He crushed my feeble reply with, 'It's good only for the rubbish bin' — greatly amusing the café manager. My critic turned out to be a journalist who had left college two years ago. Not a veteran of 1968.

I stayed in a small pre-war hotel of some sentimental value — the Czech Trotskyists had held a public meeting there at the time of the second Moscow trial in the 1930s. It was not supposed to take Western tourists, but the desk clerk didn't give a damn and gave me a room.

A scientist who had gone to work in the West in 1968, he had come back after being told that his brother would

be refused entrance to university if he stayed in the West. His father was a worker who had been jailed in the late 1940s. He told me about Charter 77, said he thought they were right, and explained that some of the leaders had been arrested.

Cobbled

It would appear that the aim in life of much of the middle class is to enrich themselves by any means possible. Many regard some blackmarket deals to pay for a week's holiday in the West as a better cause than getting mixed up with the official politics.

But the young people who pack the wine bars of the Old City every evening are greedy for much more than next year's week-long holiday rip-off in the West. They want an entirely new world all the year round, and will not be bought off by the blackmarket.

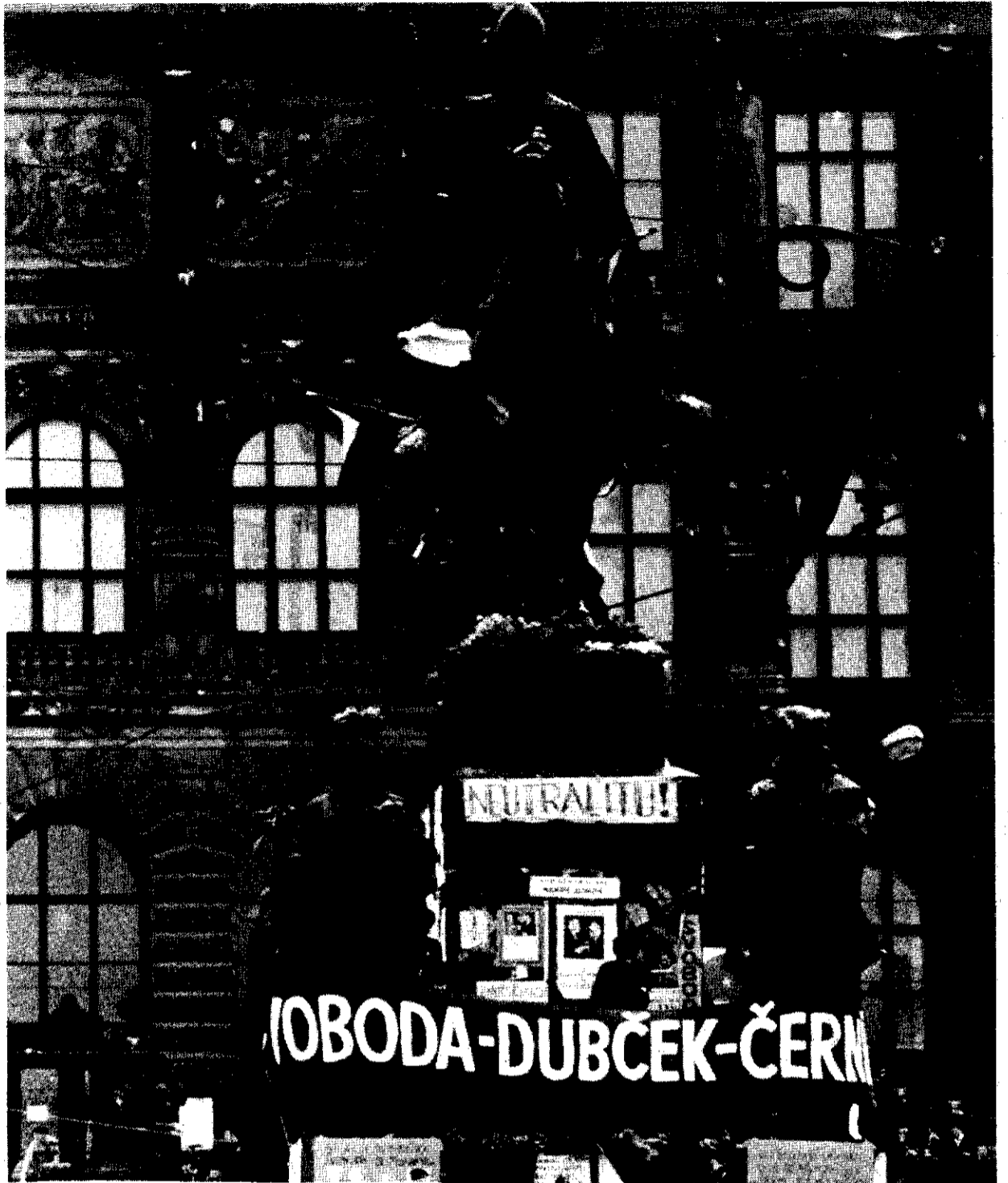
The small but strategically placed patchwork of cobbled streets between the summit of the bureaucracy in the Castle and the plush hotels of Wenceslas Square has been invaded during the last few years by these young, long-haired and totally indigestible enemies of Stalinism. They dress as they like, say what they like, and give the impression that they do what they like.

At first sight they seem familiar enough to a Western tourist. They look like students or drop-outs, but this is misleading — a great many of them earn their living as manual workers. Yet unlike young workers in the West, many don't seem to have a back-breaking eight-hour day to get through: as somebody explained to me, Husak-style 'socialism' has inspired people to achieve the two-hour working day!

Boisterous

These noisy, boisterous bars and cafés are part of a different universe from that of the party bosses up the hill in Hradcany. They are also light-years away from pompous editorials in the bourgeois press about the lonely and courageous struggle for human rights in Eastern Europe.

It is here, among these 'drop-out workers', that the Charter 77 movement lives and flourishes. Walking around the Old City with activists you



1968: statue of King Wenceslas in Prague

find Charter supporters in every bar. Minutes after you enter, a crowd of people will jostle around the table to say hello, exchange information, talk. New documents and statements are passed around, every conceivable subject is discussed and argued out quite openly.

And all this continues amidst one of the fiercest repressive drives seen in Eastern Europe for decades. The closest friends of people you meet are waiting, totally isolated in prison, to discover how many years over the minimum of three they are going to spend in jail.

The police are watching many people's houses, and leaders of the movement have been threatened and physically attacked. Yet these people seem anything but isolated and are totally lacking in political paranoia.

This is difficult for Western observers to grasp. But it reflects the fact that although the regime still possesses formidable political powers its capacity to inspire or convince with its ideas has suffered catastrophically. It penetrates deeply into everyday life, yet is unable to win any disinterested loyalty from significant sections of the population.

The Castle still stands, glaring down on the Old City below it. Only an earthquake will turn the geography of Prague upside down. And the same is true of its politics.

In my last discussion with one of the Chartists before leaving the country, he told me: 'You think there will be a big political crisis in this country. When that happens it will not be like 1968. It will be a bloodbath, a civil war. When it happens, I don't want to be around.'

The round-up of the 10 Chartists now in jail has brought the earthquake a step closer.

Election fraud in Iran

From our Tehran correspondent

THE IRANIAN government has put on a second show of 'democracy' with the election of an assembly of constitutional 'experts'.

But the show wasn't a hit with the masses. Many people have been turned away from the government's policies by its actions since the February revolution. The regime had to use all its power and influence to ensure a big turn-out — and the right result.

For example, it issued a call for Friday prayer at the same time as the elections, during which its representatives attacked the left; and Khomeini made a special appeal for people to take part in order to show their trust in the Islamic government. This anxiety reflected the regime's urgent need to consolidate a bourgeois state in the face of rising struggles — by the Kurdish, Arab and Turkoman nationalities, by workers in the factories and offices, and by soldiers in the barracks.

All sections of the ruling class have united to dismiss as 'impractical' a Constituent Assembly, which could provide the focus for an organised expression of this resistance. But to

push through the reactionary constitution meant turning the election into a caricature of democracy — so much so that even prominent bourgeois representatives withdrew or demanded its postponement.

Thuggery

Thuggery, cheating and ballot-rigging were its most significant features — directed particularly against progressive and workers' organisations.

In Anzaly, Gorgan, Amol and Babol, thugs attacked meetings of the People's Fedayeen. Fedayeen members in Abadeh were prevented from distributing leaflets, and a spokesperson for the organisation announced that 200 of its members had been arrested in election week — some of whom had been tortured.

Five members of the People's Mojahedeen were arrested while distributing posters, and a woman voting for its candidates was physically attacked. Members of the Socialist Workers Party (HKS) distributing election material were attacked in Tabriz, Tehran and Isfahan.

According to the Iranian People's Party, which also objected to the undemocratic nature of the election, members of the 'Imam' committees in the election centres intimidated and took in for questioning those who did not vote for the Islamic Republic Party. They also took over the filling in of election cards for illiterates.

Thus in election centre 657 the observers announced that all illiterates had voted for candidates from the Islamic Republic Party list. Another way of ensuring such a result was to make only these candidates' names available in the election centres — as happened at Sinz Hospital (Tehran), for instance.

But where the repression was strongest it also backfired most spectacularly. A massive boycott by the Kurdish people meant that only 80,000 voted out of a population of 1 million.

Rigged

This is a sign of things to come. The class struggle cannot be halted through a rigged election. On the contrary, the masses have now had a further experience of what the ruling class has in store for them. This can



lay the basis for a consistent struggle for the dissolution of the 'experts' assembly and the election of a democratic and revolutionary Constituent Assembly.

WHAT'S LEFT

ENTRIES in *What's Left* are 5p per word. Display ads are £2 a column inch. Deadline: 5pm Friday before publication. All payments in advance.

'LABOUR'S MISSENT YOUTH' by Jack Cleary and Neal Cobbett — an outline history of the LP youth movement from the 1930s to today. Contains a detailed account of the 1960-65 period which led to the 'Keep Left' (SL) breakaway and during which the YS was the seedbed of all the present day far-left groups — A Workers Action supplement, 25p post paid.

WORKERS ACTION No 148 contains the sixth instalment of the first English language publication of the 1910 debate in the German Social Democracy between Luxemburg and Kautsky on socialist strategy. Covers all the main issues now raised by the 'Eurocommunist' current.

JOURNALISTS Against Corrie. Cock pub, Diana Place (behind Capital Radio), 7.30 pm, Tuesday 21 August.

ROOM AVAILABLE in North-west London from 13 to 28 Aug (inclusive). Reply to Box 1866, Soc Chall.

BOOKS for Southern Africa comrades — money is desperately needed for this vital field of international activity. Or send any books you can spare. Books for Southern Africa, Box 102, c/o Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1.

HACKNEY Socialist Challenge group meeting: Stop the Corrie Bill. Speaker: Penny Robbins (NAC). Thurs 23 Aug, 7.30pm. The Britannia pub, Mare St, London E8.

HANDS off Ireland! Scotland presents the film the Patriot Game. Edinburgh Thurs 23 Aug. Trades Council, Picardy Place, 7.30pm. Glasgow Fri 24 Aug. McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall St, 7.30pm.

Turning point for Zimbabwe

By Richard Carver

THE ZIMBABWEAN liberation struggle has reached its most critical point with the Lusaka agreement between the Tory government and the 'front-line' states. A large part of the liberation movement — and the international solidarity movement — has been wedded to these regimes for so long that the new turn could deliver it bound and gagged into the hands of the Tories and their Rhodesian 'kith and kin'.

The Commonwealth conference agreed the following six stage British plan for Zimbabwe:

*Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington sends invitations to an all-party conference;

*all parties come to London in September for the conference;

*the conference's conclusions are drafted into a new independence constitution;

*financial aid is planned to

compensate white settlers who leave and to underwrite the emergence of a black middle class;

*the present Salisbury regime draws up an electoral roll;

*those same authorities prepare a referendum on the new proposals.

Timetable

Apart from the detailed timetable, the substance of these proposals is the same as in the Anglo-American plan formerly touted by Labour Foreign Secretary David Owen. And sure enough the present Shadow Foreign Secretary, Peter Shore, has given his grudging approval. The near unanimity on these proposals in imperialist circles and their endorsement by a number of black African states is what makes them so dangerous.

The aim of the plan is the swiftest possible transfer of power to a compliant black regime, with built-in

guarantees for the white population. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania cited an apt neo-colonial precedent: 'In Kenya white settlers were paid large sums of money by Britain to make possible racial harmony and peaceful transition to independence.'

There are only two significant differences between this plan and the status quo in Rhodesia. One is international recognition and the availability of imperialist funds. The other is the participation of the Patriotic Front, or at least part of it. The second factor may yet be the stumbling block.

What pressure and inducements were brought to bear in Lusaka we will not know for a while. Tanzania and Zambia, hosts to either wing of the Patriotic Front and sponsors of the plan, are among the most poverty-stricken African countries. We can only guess at the aid and credits offered in return for their cooperation.

There is little doubt that ZAPU and ZANU leaders can be persuaded to attend the London conference. But what they will then agree to is another matter. Imperialist strategy will rest on the time-honoured plan of splitting the two main parties within the Front.

Dismember

Although the Muzorewa regime in Salisbury has already agreed to attend the conference, the white Rhodesian settlers and their South African backers are both known to be hostile to the inclusion of Robert Mugabe's ZANU in a final settlement. Mugabe himself has already laid down conditions for an agreement — such as the total dismemberment of the present security forces — which will be unacceptable to other parties at the talks.

Joshua Nkomo of ZAPU, on the other hand, was even asking Carrington for private talks in Lusaka. When Lord Harlech, Thatcher's special envoy, visits



Margaret Thatcher with other Commonwealth leaders in Lusaka.

Salisbury and Pretoria later this month he will thus be able to tempt them with the prospect of a split in the nationalist ranks.

To ensure 'fairness', Britain, the colonial power, will supervise new elections, while foreign troops are drafted in to deal with 'recalcitrant' liberation fighters. It may be significant that Carrington had secret talks in Lusaka with Jamaican, Indian and Nigerian representatives. These were the countries originally scheduled to provide troops under the Anglo-American plan.

In this assumption of 'colonial responsibility' there is no contradiction between Labour government policy, the 'early' Thatcher ranting about lifting sanctions, and the 'mature' Thatcher presiding over an all-party conference. The main lines of imperialist policy remain identical.

Nevertheless the timetable has changed dramatically, because Thatcher is seeking a settlement before the renewal of sanctions in November in order to avoid a racist backbench rebellion.

It is highly improbable that the plan can succeed in that time; but everything possible must be done to assist its failure. Solidarity action can help to maintain the unity and intransigence of the nationalist movement in the face of attempts to split and undermine it.

The major threat is now transparently not a 'Tory sell out', but the array of international forces threatening the right of self-determination of the people of Zimbabwe. The solidarity movement in this country will have to strengthen its resolve to say: Hands off Zimbabwe!

ZIMBABWE: WHAT YOU CAN DO

TO STOP the Lusaka plan and help win self-determination for Zimbabwe:

*Organise local meetings to discuss the implications of the plan. Speakers can be got from ZANU and ZAPU, Anti-Apartheid and the Zimbabwe Information Group.

*Arrange a showing of the film *All we want is freedom* (colour, 70 mins.), which can be hired from *The Other Cinema*.

*Reach out to youth with a gig for the Zimbabwe struggle — ask *Rock Against Racism* for advice.

*Affiliate to the Zimbabwe Emergency Campaign Committee and set up local ad-hoc committees to mobilise for the mass demonstration on 11 November.

Useful addresses are:

ZANU, PO Box 150, London N1 (01-278 0105).

ZAPU, 39 Goodge Street, London W1 (01-636 2143).

Zimbabwe Emergency Campaign Committee, c/o Anti-Apartheid Movement, 39 Charlotte Street, London W1P 2DQ (01-580 5311).

Zimbabwe Information Group, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1.

The Other Cinema, 12 Little Newport Street, London WC2.

Rock Against Racism, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

Where illegal abortion is a way of life—and death

By Teresa Frances

CAN a campaign to legalise abortion succeed in a country that has no women's movement, where illegal abortion is a multi-million pound business, where the largest party of the left will not support the campaign, and where the right is trying to cut back on what rights women have already?

In Portugal, the national campaign for abortion and contraception (CNAC) is trying.

The need is clear, according to Margarida Sousa, a CNAC organiser and member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (the Fourth International's organisation in Portugal).

Impossible

'We say there are 180,000 illegal abortions a year, but it is impossible to know the real number. A lot of women die — 2,000 deaths a year are registered, but many more die at home because they don't dare go to a doctor or they think it is normal to have a bad infection.'

Contraception is legal, but only 137,000 women a year have consultations — fewer than the number of abortions!

CNAC only began early this year, and in a short time has established groups in Lisbon, Oporto, Coimbra, and Setubal. The trial of Maria Antonia Palla, the journalist recently acquitted of charges arising out of a TV film on abortion, has given the issue considerable publicity.

To build the campaign, CNAC has held many local meetings as well as demonstrations in Coimbra and Oporto, participated in May Day marches, and conducted a counter-trial in Lisbon. Most of the parties



Photo: JOSEPH HANLON

MARGARIDA SOUSA, an organiser of the Portuguese abortion campaign.

on the far left are represented on CNAC, as are unions of textile workers and domestic servants.

Although strong differences in methods of organisation still cause problems at meetings, CNAC has produced a common platform of demands: legal abortion with a woman's right to choose, and freely available contraception and information about contraception.

It has, however, proved very difficult to involve women in the building of a mass movement, despite the fact that most women are in constant fear of getting pregnant every month of their working lives, and have the threat of a terrible operation in poor conditions always hanging over their heads.

Unlike the National Abortion Campaign in Britain, nearly all of the women (and men) in CNAC represent political parties, which means that there is always a struggle between representing the party position on abortion and their own demands as women. This is a particular problem because all the party leaderships are dominated by men.

Machismo

For example, explained Sousa, 'We have been to meetings in two political parties where men refused to bring up CNAC because they said it was irrelevant, because the purpose of the meeting was imperialism. That attitude is imperialism against us.'

The problem is also shown by the fact that 'the Communist Party, which has the support of a large number of working people, does not consider abortion an important issue', said Sousa. And at a conference of women workers of the Intersindical (the CP-dominated union federation) last year, a discussion of abortion was blocked,

even though it was raised by the journalists' union.

But the existence of CNAC may be changing the nature of the debate, Sousa feels. 'Women who have never spoken in public before start now, and it provokes a change in their lives. Machismo is very strong in Portugal, and has never been questioned — even in the parties. But the involvement of women on this work is starting to change this.'

NICARAGUA NOTES

VARGAS, the president of the Communist Party, stated on 2 August that his party would not at this time base its policies on the class struggle. The CP would become part of the great new Sandinista party that is to be formed. 'We believe that the Sandinistas' victory has permitted the establishment of a pluralistic democratic government and that's all we want at the moment.'

THE Simon Bolivar brigade, started by the Colombian Trotskyists of the PST, lost three comrades in the fighting. Many brigade members hope to stay on in Nicaragua and join in the tasks of reconstruction — in the interests of the workers and poor people. They have opened an office and are publishing a paper called *Revolucion*.

THE third issue of the Nicaragua Coordinating Committee solidarity bulletin is now out and can be obtained, price 15p, from *The Other Bookshop* or from the committee, c/o 20 Compton Terrace, London N1.

By Hazel Downing

Women and the new technology 'Thoughtmaster'



will be watching you

A RECENT exhibition in London was concerned almost exclusively with the promotion of perhaps the most important wonder of the microprocessing revolution — the word processor. Forty two stands displayed word processing systems ranging in price from £3,000 to £70,000. There are already some 20,000 word processing systems installed in this country, leaving (according to the Radio 4 announcer) some two and a quarter million secretaries and typists 'behind the times'.

The manufacturers and other apologists for word processing argue that these automatic typewriters will free secretaries and typists from boring routine work for more interesting, fulfilling and creative work. In addition, one word processor can do the work of two and a half to five typists.

What the apologists don't make clear, however, is what will happen to those typists who will be replaced by the machinery. 'It's a question', they say, 'of how you use it'. The reality is somewhat different.

The word processor will mean a threat to the jobs of millions of office workers and increased boredom for those lucky enough still to have a job. It is important, therefore, to look at what the word processor is, why it is being introduced, and what its impact will be, or could be...

While typewriters with memories have been around since the '60s, their output was limited and the cost prohibitive. Advances in chip technology have enabled the development of the much cheaper and more efficient word processor.

Briefly, the equipment consists of a keyboard, a memory, a mini-computer, a visual display unit (VDU) and a printing out machine. Instead of typing onto paper, the typist now 'keyboards' in information which is displayed on the screen.

These elements can be arranged either together in one 'stand-alone' system or as part of a 'shared-logic' system where each work station (keyboard and VDU) is connected to a memory computer and the printer.

The advantages of the word processor (for employers of course) is that it can hold standard letters, paragraphs and sentences as well as address lists in the memory, all of which can be recalled at the press of a button, displayed on the screen, added to and fitted together in different combinations and then, when ready for printing, printed out at around 500 words per minute (compare the average typist's speed of 60 wpm).

Siemens have even perfected a laser printer which can print 2,000 lines per minute.

The memory and storage facility eliminates the need for constant re-typing of standard letters. It also eliminates the constant re-typing of drafts, which is the bug-bear of many typists faced with incompetent bosses.

It can also perform many tasks previously considered part of the typist's skill. For instance, centring headings, justifying margins and tabulation work can be done automatically. There is an automatic carriage return and corrections can be done simply by 'typing' over the error.

According to one executive responsible for the introduction of a WP system 'the cost case was based on saving people' — but behind this is the need to increase productivity.

Historically, increased productivity has been achieved by managements taking control over the work process out of the hands of workers by stripping them of their skills, fragmenting their jobs into smaller tasks and subordinating them to machinery.

Although office work has been subject to different forms of reorganisation, complete rationalisation has been hindered in two important ways.

On the one hand, because of the particular methods of control and discipline which exist in offices. It is no accident that the majority of lower grade office and secretarial workers are women — not only can they be paid less, but as women they can be controlled in ways which reflect the relations of male domination and female subordination which permeate the whole of society.

This method of control works in two ways. For instance, the provision of secretaries has consistently been used as a means of securing the loyalty of lower and middle managements by according them status — an 'office wife'. And even in typing pools, it is quite usual for a typist to attach herself to one boss or department and vice versa.

In turn, the highly personalised nature of office work enables managements to control women themselves by other than purely economic means. Many women in offices find themselves unable to ask for a rise because discussing something as basic as money reduces the job to a pure economic transaction, while the whole ethic of the office is based on a sense of professionalism and gentlemanly behaviour.

Few women office workers in the private sector are represented by trade unions which can negotiate wage rises for them and going individually to a boss reinforces their subordination both in class terms and as women and is

thus experienced as something highly embarrassing.

The problem for managements concerned with productivity is that, by performing caring and servicing tasks for the boss/bosses such as making tea/coffee, going on errands, watering his plants, secretarial workers do not spend the whole day typing — being 'productive'.

The second hindrance to rationalisation is that control over the typewriter, despite the existence of typing pools, has remained firmly in the hands of the typist. For complete rationalisation control would have to be transferred onto the machine which is only possible now with the development of word processing.

With a conventional typewriter, the typist determines such things as when she starts work, when she puts the paper into the machine, how the work is to be set out, etc. This control enables her to cease working, or delay working, in order to engage in more human activities such as contact with workmates.

The additional auxiliary tasks allotted to the typist in traditional office organisation — filing, taking shorthand, collecting stationery — and even those which reinforce her status as 'office wife', such as organising leaving presents and servicing the boss, have all allowed her a certain amount of space and time away from the actual task of typing.

The whole culture of the office, then, has contributed to the loss in 'productive' time — productive, that is, for managements. On the other hand, it provides women faced with typing boring incomprehensible documents with some sort of 'job satisfaction'.

The immediate impact of the introduction of word processors is loss of jobs. The most widely known example is that of Bradford Metropolitan Council which reduced its staff in one department from 44 to 22. Other equally

high reductions have been achieved by the National Coal Board, the Central Electricity Generating Board, and the Gas and Electricity Boards.

Faced with massive expenditure cuts, the public sector is finding that in addition to cutting vital services, a useful way of saving money is by cutting the payroll.

Those mainly affected by office automation are women and despite the fact that few women, if any, work for 'pin money', it becomes all too easy with high unemployment levels to resurrect those old arguments about women's rightful place being in the home.

In the private sector, also, there is a concern to cut down on staffing levels. In relation to those engaged in manufacturing, the costs of administrative staffs have grown astronomically since the war.

At this point, however, it is relevant to emphasise that office automation will not just affect typists and secretaries. Especially in the private sector there is growing concern about the inefficiency of lower and middle managements which itself reflects the culture of the office described above.

At this stage the cost of securing their loyalty is becoming prohibitive and so, while not traditionally subject to controls over how they spend their time, they will increasingly be expected to improve their productivity and many of them will face the prospect of redundancy.

As described above, the word processor can perform most of the functions traditionally seen as part of the typist's skill. Increasingly, also the skill of shorthand is being replaced by audio-typing which saves the time used in taking dictation.

Some word processing systems work in conjunction with dictation systems (three such

go under the thought-provoking titles of Dictaphone Thoughtmaster, Timemaster and Mastermind). On the basis of a time and motion study which is carried out prior to installation, managements have an exact record of how fast the operators can type. On the basis of this, the dictation system can allocate audio-work automatically to each operator.

Only the supervisor has control over the system, so the operators are continuously fed new work which they do not necessarily see once they have keyboarded it in. The printing out can be done in another room.

The typing process has been broken down into its smallest fragments and the typist now simply spends her time keyboarding the information into the machine.

Even without the dictation system, the word processor has built into it the ability to supervise and monitor the operator's work. Initially, some operators feel that they gain greater control, since they are engaged in working a complicated piece of 'new technology'.

Getting used to the various functions of the machine, however, takes very little time and the operator soon finds that she can perform her job 'automatically' — the effect then is not freedom from boring work, but de-skilling and an increase in boredom. With the office routine tied to the pace of the machines, personal contacts between workers are minimal closing off the last possibility of job satisfaction.

Research carried out in the US, where word processors and visual display units are much more common than in Britain, has pointed to several major health problems resulting from continuous work with VDUs.

Most important is 'visual fatigue' or eye-strain which results from 'flicker' and glare on the screens themselves. It has been estimated that one third of the workforce have uncorrected visual defects and for these people and those over 45, eye problems could be exacerbated.

Even, for instance, in those rare offices where the typists are on a rota which allows them to go back onto ordinary typewriters every six weeks or so, problems associated with eyestrain are reported.

The increased use of audio-typing means that operators will spend a large amount of time staring at the screen. The flicker and glare, reflection onto the screen from spectacles and the green lettering itself are found by many operators to be irritating.

It is important to recognise that the kind of technology which has produced word processors is not inevitable. There is no such thing as natural technological progress.

Technological advances have been made in areas which could actually benefit people but have not been sponsored by big business because they are not profitable — for instance, the light bulb which can last a lifetime. The introduction of word processing and other automatic processes must be seen as part of management's attempts to increase productivity and therefore profits and not as part of a great philanthropic gesture to eliminate the boredom from office routine.

Office workers should, therefore, seriously consider saying no to the introduction of word processing on the grounds that it will close off employment opportunities for millions of women in this country.

While we may be criticised for defending what is a boring job anyway, it makes sound economic sense to defend even a boring job against no job at all. And in addition, it is important to defend the gains that women have achieved over the past 30 years — the most important being the right to financial independence.

Many women office workers however are either non-unionised or in unions which are male-dominated and which do not consider it important to fight for women's rights. Trade unions which do represent women office workers should develop sound policies for protecting their members.

If faced with the introduction of word processors the minimum agreement must be no job loss which should include the provision of no voluntary redundancy (these jobs are not ours to sell), no natural wastage and no compulsion for women to work word processors.

The question of health and safety is crucial here. The TUC for instance recommends a break every 2 hours for those operating VDUs and the CPSA has negotiated an agreement that no operator should work more than 50 minutes without a break.

Regular eye checks are important and anyone suffering eye problems as a result of VDUs should be redeployed with no loss of skills and pay. Those in trade unions are legally entitled under the Health and Safety at Work Act to elect Safety Representatives who have the right to demand full details of health and safety factors connected with any new developments and changes in the work process.

Jobs massacre at the office — Women's Voice pamphlet on word processing, 25p. Available from the Other Bookshop, 328 Upper St, London N1. 10p p&p.

Once more on NALGO

THE letter 'Dissent on NALGO' (26 July) contained a number of inaccuracies and grossly misrepresented the position of NALGO Left supporters in Liverpool. In the first place, the action programme referred to by John Strauther and put forward by NALGO Action Group supporters called only for a one-day national strike plus indefinite selective action.

The alternative put forward by NALGO Left supporters included a programme of escalating action. Not only was this carried unanimously at the meeting John refers to, but also at a subsequent general meeting of over 1,000 members (the NAG proposals received seven votes). To say that NALGO Left's policy was the same as that of Jack Meek (president of NALGO) is a gross slander. For John Strauther's information, the National Local Government Committee recommended that we accept the offer of 9.4 per cent.

Also, John is wrong when he says that NAG's proposals were to win NALGO's 15 per cent claim. In fact, NAG argued that the claim should be increased by 10 per cent (later changed to £10) to take comparability into account. This was rightly opposed because it showed illusions in the 'comparability exercise' offered by the employers, and to try to resubmit the pay claim at that late stage only introduced unnecessary divisions. The main fight was whether NALGO would accept 9.4 per cent or take action to win the full claim, which included demands for a £60 minimum wage and a 35-hour week, as well as comparability. This hardly illustrates the need to join the NALGO Action Group.

What John Strauther leaves out is any explanation of why, when large sections of rank and file begin mobilising to defend their living standards, NAG as a national force finds itself more and more on the sidelines compared with a few years

ago. This reinforces a point made in a previous letter by several NALGO Left supporters — that all many NAG supporters have to offer is invective against the Broad Left rather than fighting for unity in action with all militants around class struggle policies. Something John Strauther agreed with up to a few weeks ago.
AL WALKER (Liverpool NALGO)

Are looks relevant?

IT might be said that the editor of *Socialist Challenge*, Tariq Ali, has greying temples and a suave manner. The allegation is not new, but is it relevant? I ask this because your article on the shennannigans of Islington council (28 June) included precisely this description of the council's Labour leader.

It struck me because I can't recall any previous instance of *Socialist Challenge* employing this form of description, and I think it is best left out. The popular press, so-called, has institutionalised this particular device. Almost everyone who flits across its pages has a physical description pinned to them, and it rarely tells us anything relevant to the story.

More to the point, as socialists we shouldn't judge people by their appearance or manner. These can have a political connection, but if so the point should be made explicitly. 'The managing director brusquely dismissed the workers' 250,000-word letter listing their grievances' or some such thing.

ALEXANDER MUSGRAVE
(London SW4)

RCG and 'democracy'

SOCIALIST Challenge (5 July), it seems, only ever comments on the activities of the Revolutionary Communist Group when it involves

some rumour or gossip — and then it gets most of its facts wrong. For the record the Revolutionary Communist Tendency founding members were expelled from the RCG in November 1976 for national chauvinism. This was two and a half years after the formation of the RCG in March 1974. Secondly, I did not, nor did any member of the Revolutionary Opposition in the International Socialist, ever disrupt an IS meeting.

Until recent events, the RCT have attended all our public meetings in London and have intervened in the discussion period, usually making tedious and repetitive speeches attacking the RCG for its 'moralistic' support for liberation movements. However, suddenly they stepped up their campaign against us with disruptions of a provocative and, in a number of cases, of a physically threatening character.

This we were not prepared to tolerate. They were warned that if such behaviour occurred again they would be thrown out of our meetings. It did on two consecutive evenings at two different meetings. On both occasions RCT members were thrown out of the meeting when they disrupted it just as the meeting began. On the second occasion one of their members had to be restrained — yes, physically and forcefully — in order to throw him out.

This leads me to a fundamental political disagreement we have with *Socialist Challenge*. Our concept of democracy is not a bourgeois one — it is a democracy which serves the interests of the working class. *Socialist Challenge*, however, puts democracy above the interests of the working class, and this reflects its essentially petit-bourgeois standpoint. This is quite consistent with *Socialist Challenge*'s 'pluralist' conception of democracy under socialism. This is why *Socialist Challenge* rules out physical force to prevent other left groups from disrupting meetings — and we mean disrupting meetings and not simply making critical interventions.

DAVID YAFFE (London)

21-23 September 1979

MARXIST SYMPOSIUM

DAY ONE

10.30-1.30pm
CURRENT ISSUES OF MARXISM
Perry Anderson

2.30-5.00pm
Workshops
The Debate on English History, Alternative Economic Strategy, Bahro's Marxism
Speakers include: Perry Anderson, John Ross, Alan Freeman, Gunther Minnerup

7.30-10.00pm
RALLY
100th ANNIVERSARY OF TROTSKY'S BIRTH
Speakers include: Pierre Frank, Tariq Ali, the Voice of Leon Trotsky

DAY TWO

10.00-1.00pm
IS LENINISM OBSOLETE?
Dodie Wepler and two of the authors of *Beyond the Fragments*

Workshops
Class Analysis and Political Strategy, Kautsky and Eurocommunism, The Communist International
Speakers include: Robin Blackburn, Pierre Frank

2.00-5.00pm
CULTURE AND POLITICS
Francis Mulhern
THE TRADE UNIONS TODAY
Richard Hyman, Steve Jefferys SWP, IMG speaker
Workshops include youth and revolution

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DAY THREE

10.00-1.00pm
TWO TRADITIONS OF MARXISM IN BRITAIN
John Ross

Workshops
Workers Plans and Workers Control, Women in Eastern Europe.
Speakers include: Hilary Wainwright, Dave Bailey

2.00-5.00pm
THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT IN EUROPE
Chris Harman (SWP), Tariq Ali (IMG)

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£5.50 six sessions excluding the rally
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UNDER REVIEW

The China Syndrome: could it happen here?

By Geoff Bell

WITH a sense of timing of which only the US film industry is capable, James Bridges' *The China Syndrome* was released to its American audience just before the 'accident' at the Harrisburg nuclear plant.

Or maybe Harrisburg was no accident but a carefully contrived publicity stunt to promote *The China Syndrome*?

Still, that seems unlikely and so the movie — which is now on general release — tells a most topical tale of near disaster at a nuclear station.

That is scary enough, but when the plot thickens through an attempted cover-up of the accident, it becomes most difficult not to grip the cinema seat in fear and apprehension.

With Jane Fonda and Jack Lemmon playing it with conviction, it is obvious why the movie needs no recommendation from *Socialist Challenge* to ensure success at the box office. Nevertheless, such a recommendation it will receive.

Warning

The *China Syndrome* is the best thriller to hit the silver screen since *Coma*, which also related a story of corruption and irresponsibility by those who make the decisions in the US political industrial complex.

If further reasons are needed for spending two hours watching this film, specifically if political reasons are required, then it is only fair to offer a warning that there are

problems on that front.

True enough, the film berates and exposes the American system for the nasty piece of work it undoubtedly is; the trouble is that in one way the plot is a testament to the ultimate ability of that system to correct itself.

The story line is that despite a combined conspiracy by the nuclear and television industries to keep the truth of the dangers of nuclear reactors from the American public, three people — a scientist with a conscience, a camera operator, and an Anna Ford type — ensure that the truth does come out and the human and scientific baddies are exposed.

In other words, the system might be rotten but it throws up individuals who can expose it, so it ain't so bad after all.

Still, there are some nice moments of leftie invective. Especially amusing are the scenes on the making of television news programmes.

Less amusing but equally telling is the way the Fonda character struggles against her own careerism and her allocated sex role.

So *The China Syndrome* is well worth watching. The implied question, 'Could it really happen?', has already been answered by Harrisburg, but a further question — 'Would a cover-up be exposed?' — has yet to receive a reply outside of fiction.

Certainly, as far as Britain is concerned, the odds are that you can bet a thousand D Notices to one that the first you will hear of a nuclear disaster will be when the sirens go off.



JANE FONDA as the tough TV newscaster in 'The China Syndrome'. She works on LA TV, where 'hard' news is tigers' birthdays

Socialist Challenge

2 MILLION JOIN ENGINEERS' STRIKE

By Alan Turner

TO THE mutual surprise of union leaders and the employers, over two million engineering workers joined a one-day strike on Monday in pursuit of their wages and hours claim.

The claim is for an £80 minimum time rate, two days extra holidays, one hour off the working week with a commitment to a 35-hour week by 1982, and an April 1979 date of settlement. The demands have been correctly described as 'moderate' by Terry Duffy, the right-wing president of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers.

The surprise is that the one-day stoppages — Monday's was the second — have received such widespread support. They have not been promoted with any great enthusiasm by the union executive, which had previously urged the AUEW national committee to accept the employers' offer of £70. Nor is the claim of any substantial benefit to the majority of engineering workers; the only real difference it would make would be to overtime rates.



Economy

What the stoppages show is the militant mood of engineering workers. The demand for a 35-hour week is especially popular with the rank and file, which shows just how out of step was the decision of the union leadership to water down the original claim for a shorter working week by putting off the 35-hour

demand until 1982.

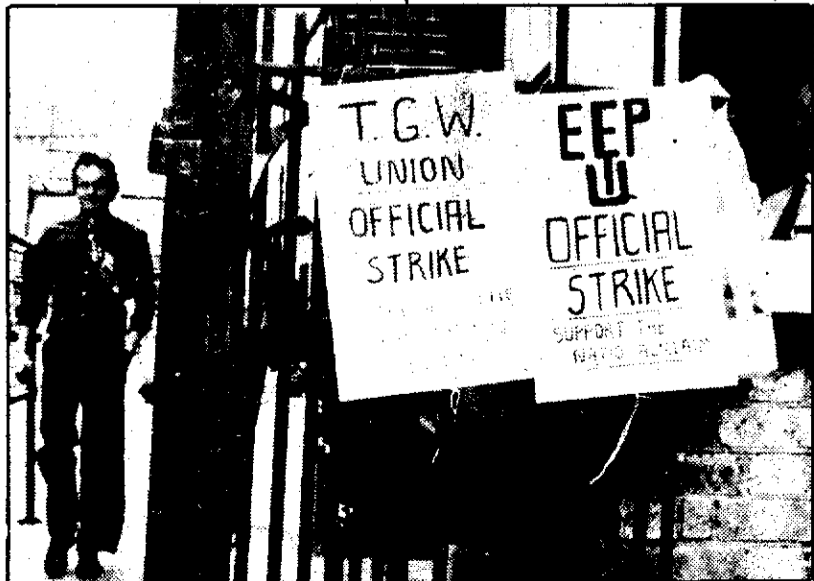
For its part the Engineering Employers' Federation is maintaining that its last offer is 'final', although an increasing number of individual companies are reportedly agreeing to settle on the union's terms. An all-out strike would be the surest way to test the EEF's bluster, but as yet the AUEW executive is only talking of extending the strike on an unlimited

basis to individual companies or geographical areas.

The engineers' dispute has an importance beyond the claim itself. In the AUEW it shows that the recent successes of the right wing in the union have not destroyed the potential for rank and file militancy. What is lacking is an alternative leadership, since the official 'left' in the union — the Communist Party

and its Broad Left allies — has gone along with the executive's decision to drop the demand for an immediate 35-hour week.

But the support for the strikes is also an indication that the working class as a whole is in a mood to give the Tories and the bosses a hard time when negotiations for next year's pay round get under way in a couple of weeks' time.



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Left HQs wrecked in Tehran

THE TEHRAN offices of the Iranian Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Party [HKS] were among those wrecked on Monday by reactionary thugs. The headquarters of the Fedayeen guerrillas were also smashed up, and an unsuccessful attempt was made to storm the offices of the Tudeh [Communist] Party.

The thugs — thought to include former members of the Shah's secret police, SAVAK — went on the rampage after failing to break up a massive march the previous day against government restrictions on press freedom. This in itself shows how evenly poised is the struggle between those fighting to defend and extend the gains of the February revolution and those seeking to bring that revolution to an end by installing a strong pro-capitalist regime.

Readers are urged to send letters and telegrams protesting at the government's complicity in these attacks to: Mehdi Bazargan, Prime Minister, Tehran, Iran; and to the Islamic Revolutionary Council, Tehran, Iran.

*Election fraud in Iran, see page 8.

NF and RAR gigs to coincide

THE National Front are intending to hold their first ever 'Rock against Communism' gig this weekend. They are hoping to gain some political clout by using a Central London venue, so NF youth organiser Joe Pierce has booked Conway Hall in Red Lion Square.

Coincidentally, Rock against Racism will be staging its own gig outside Conway Hall at the same time. Assemble at Russell Square tube, 7pm, Saturday 18 August.

No jail for Piers



PIERS Corbyn, well-known housing militant convicted for resisting the eviction of squatters from London's Huntley Street last August, will not be going to prison. His original 28-day sentence was reduced on appeal this week to 200 hours community service and £50 [as against a claim of £190] to cover damage caused by a bucket of water to the Sheriff's suit.

Piers told Socialist Challenge that he regarded the decision as a clear victory — 'it recognised that my actions were part of a political campaign rather than an individual breach of the law'.