

# Socialist Challenge

# DISGUSTING!

**THE 13th week of the steel strike brought good news for the bosses of the British Steel Corporation.**

This Monday it was confirmed that Sir Charles Villiers, BSC's chief, will see his salary jump from £41,695 a year to £58,700 — a rise of £330 a week. That's Villiers' reward for demanding that nearly 60,000 jobs will be chopped in the steel industry.

Other members of the BSC board will receive similar rises.

The same day the results of the inquiry into the steel strike headed by Lord Lever were announced. It called for a cut in the real wages of steelworkers.

**£330**  
a week for  
steel boss

**£10**  
a week for  
steelworkers

### Rise

The recommended rise of just over 15 per cent does not even keep up with inflation. It amounts to an increase in guaranteed earnings of £10 a week.

It was no surprise that the Lever inquiry came up with such a pittance.

While serving in the last Labour government, Lever made clear what his priorities were. 'The government's job is to help create the conditions which produce more opportunity for profitable investment,' he wrote in June 1976.

Neither is it a surprise that the steel union general secretary, Bill Sirs, recommended acceptance of the inquiry judgement.

Way back in January, all Sirs was demanding was an increase of 13 per cent. He found he couldn't sell that, but ever since Sirs has made clear that his priority was to end the strike in any way he could.

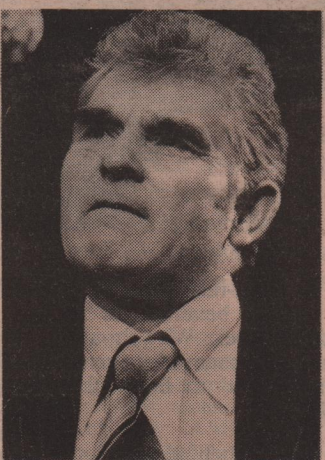
Certainly the steelworkers have won more than the original two per cent offer made to them last December.

But compared to what Villiers will be getting it is just one more example of the number one principle of Tory Britain — those who have will have more, those who have not will have less.

## BUT BILL SIRS DOESN'T FACE THE DOLE

ONE of the results of the steel inquiry is that BSC plans to cut an extra 12,000 jobs. This is in addition to more than 50,000 jobs which already face the axe.

Throughout the steel



strike, ISTC leader Bill Sirs has resisted the demands of his union's rank and file for job losses to be made an issue in the dispute.

After all, whether they win lose

or draw strikes, union leaders always seem to keep their job and their fat salary.

But for those in the threatened steel plants — and those in South Wales in particular — the ducking of the jobs issues by Sirs offers nothing but a bleak future.

Despite Sirs, the struggle for jobs — both in steel and the related industries — is not yet lost.

For instance, over this Easter a youth march over jobs will be taking place in South Wales. The marchers will be demanding that the Wales TUC takes action to preserve the communities threatened by unemployment.

Bob Scholey, BSC's chief executive, said earlier this week of the Lever judgement: 'Although it is more than our offer, we felt it is within the margin whereby we can live.'

Now the fight must be to ensure that the jobs and communities threatened by Lord Lever, and by Bill Sirs' surrender to Lever, must live as well.

**ALL OUT ON 14 MAY DAY OF ACTION**



## 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.

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## EDITORIAL

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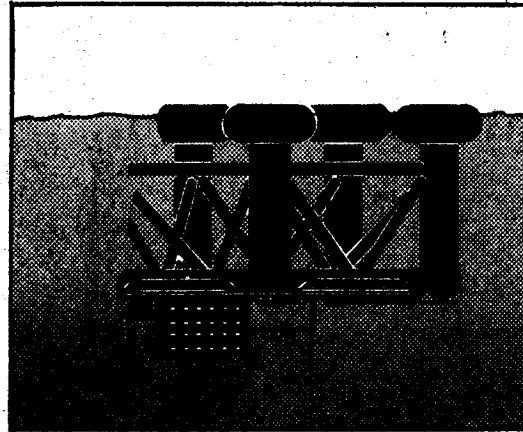
# A capitalist disaster

JUST why did the 123 oil rig workers die when the Alexander L Kielland collapsed last Thursday night? For the moment leave aside the technical arguments. The short answer is \$891m. That staggering figure was the after-tax profit made by Phillips Petroleum last year. Phillips were the owners and operators of the doomed rig.

Like all the other oil companies operating in the North Sea, they have made a fortune out of their operations. Where have those fortunes gone? One thing is certain, they have not gone to ensuring the safety of those who work on the rigs so that the giant profits can be amassed.

Perhaps it is unfair to single out Phillips. They just happened to be the ones who were found out; it just happened that it was a rig owned by them where disaster struck first. But sooner or later, on one rig or another, such a disaster was almost bound to occur. This has become clear through the investigations, partial though they are, which have taken place since the 123 died.

It has been established that the Alexander L Kielland was of a design which had not been fully tested for metal fatigue — one of the possible reasons for the collapse of the rig. Such tests have only been conducted since 1977 and the Kielland was designed before that date — as were virtually



all the rigs operating in the North Sea.

It has now been admitted that what safety checks do take place on North Sea rigs are, in the words of the Sunday Times 'intrinsically fallible'. So 'fallible' are these checks that they would be unlikely to detect a simple welding failure — the other main candidate as the immediate cause of the disaster.

But there is nothing 'natural' or 'unavoidable' about the collapse of the Kielland. An engineering lecturer said on BBC-TV's Nationwide last Friday night that greater safety checks could have taken place. 'But they would be very expensive,' he added.

If trade unions were allowed to openly organise on the rigs then the killings might have been avoided. Unions do tend to be more concerned with safety at work than management. But attempts to organise the rigs have been met not only with hostility but gangster-like tactics from the owners of the rigs. Socialist Challenge has in the past reported physical attacks on union militants who have tried to establish a degree of unionisation on the North Sea.

All of which ties in with the philosophy of the oil companies. Praised by Western governments they may be; politicians may scramble after each other to sit on their boards; their vast profits may be allowed to go largely untaxed, but these companies are the pirates of the 20th century. Nothing must stand in the way of their profits. And for them the cost of 123 dead is little more than a drop in the ocean.

## Squeezing the poor until the pips squeak

By Chris Guthrie

AFTER Howe's Budget, Len Murray pleaded on TV for the government to radically change its policies and recognise that Britain is 'one big family'.

According to Murray, the government should sit down with the TUC and the CBI, and like any other family, work out its problems.

Yet Howe in his Budget proposals made it plain that Britain is a divided country, with a huge rift between the rich and the poor.

The problem is that the system which the rich own and run is in deep trouble. Therefore, say the Tories, the poor have to pay the price for pulling it out of the mire.

### Profits

At the root of Howe's proposals is a stark fact: for years the profits of British companies have been falling.

This is nothing to do with workers being lazy or any other such nonsense, but because British capitalism is paying the price for being one of the first industrialised countries, and for the past 80 years it has declined relative to its rivals.

Last year, with the exception of the fabulously wealthy oil companies, profits were down by 7 per cent. It is certain that they will fall even further.

During the 1974-5 recession the ruling class boosted the economy through government spending. But this time the Tories are choosing to 'solve' the problem by rigidly controlling the money supply.

They hope that by the threat of bankruptcies and unemployment, wages will be forced down. But to keep the money supply under control, every aspect of government spending has to be slashed.

### Tory cuts

Total cuts of £900m in public spending over the next year were announced in the Budget. A further £700m will be cut from the spending of local authorities. The victims will be education, health, and every aspect of social welfare.

Education will be cut by £300m over the next year and £820m over the next five years, ensuring large class sizes, school closures, and teacher redundancy.

Health spending is increasing by 2 per cent this year — at a time when inflation is around 20 per cent. The cost of the extra 2 per cent is in any case being shifted to the sick by the increase of prescription charges to £1.



Spending on housing is to be cut back by even more than was announced last year, a further £378m.

Combined with the sale of council houses and the Tories' plan to end all council house building, it will mean that the situation for the homeless will get worse for years to come.

The Budget attacks children and the unemployed in other ways, too. Child benefits have been increased by less than inflation, as have short-term social security benefits.

By 1982, not only will the latter be

taxed, but earnings-related benefit will go and strikers' benefits will be reduced by £12 a week. Why should the Tories hand out money to strikers, when it can be used to boost the bosses' profits?

Unions will fall behind inflation because increases will not be paid until November.

By raising the rate of direct taxation on the first £250 of income after the personal allowance, the lower paid are hit hardest, as they are

by the increases in indirect taxation on tobacco, drink, and petrol.

The CBI has welcomed the Budget because it recognises there is no other way out for the capitalist class as a whole, except many small business people get to the wall.

That will be nothing compared to the fate of hundreds of thousands of the poor, the sick, and the unemployed if the trade union movement does not organise to throw this government out.

# STRIKE NEWS

By Pat Hickey, deputy senior steward, SD1, Rover Solihull

**AFTER** more than six months of so-called negotiations, the Leyland Combine Joint Negotiating Committee has asked the union executives to call a strike of the BL workforce.

In doing so, they will be joining steelworkers in confronting the Tories' plans for the nationalised industries.

Before they came to office, the Tories drew up a plan for dealing with the trade union movement. They identified steel and BL as two workforces they could confront and defeat.

There is no doubt that this policy lies behind the refusal of BL management to budge from its offer of 5 per cent for non-craft workers and 10 per cent for craft workers. The offer is tied to a package of conditions which would render shopfloor organisation in BL entirely ineffective.

It would introduce full mobility of labour, and mutuality on

industrial engineering, supercede all existing local agreements, and tie it all together with a comprehensive 'no strike' clause.

If brought in, these clauses would end the role of shop stewards.

## Sacking

The union leaderships have desperately tried to avoid a confrontation, but after his success in the ballot on the Edwardes' plan, and in sacking Derek Robinson, Michael Edwardes is in no mood for compromise.

He believes that the workers in BL are not ready for a fightback and that the threat of permanent closure will frighten people back to work.

# Strike call at Leyland



But the feeling on the shopfloor is that this time they have to fight — with a correct lead BL workers can reverse the effects of recent defeats and set an example to the rest of the working class on how to fight the Tories.

Very early on in the dispute, the government will threaten BL workers with closure. It will therefore be necessary to raise the demand of 'scrap the Edwardes' plan', and to oppose the closures of the Castle Bromwich and Canley plants which have already been announced.

## Plants

This demand will be essential if we are to bring these plants out on

strike. They will see no point in becoming involved in a long struggle if their factories will be closed by the end of the year.

## Resurrect

The gradual decline of the car industry is having a serious effect on the whole engineering industry in the West Midlands, and this is a further reason to counter redundancies and closures, as the steelworkers are doing in South Wales.

Lucas, Wilmott Breeden, and Triplex, among others, are announcing redundancies. We need to link up with these workers to fight job loss.

The other demand which has to be brought up is to resurrect the full wage claim. This was for £24 across

the board and the 35-hour week. The latter needs to be part of our fight against job loss, and £24 is a minimum if living standards are to be preserved. This fight in BL will be a struggle to preserve trade union organisation in Britain's largest engineering combine.

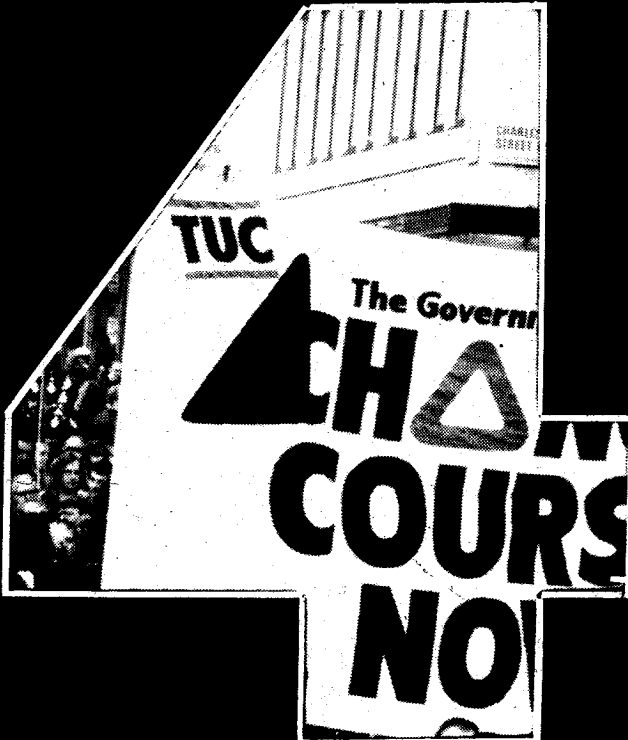
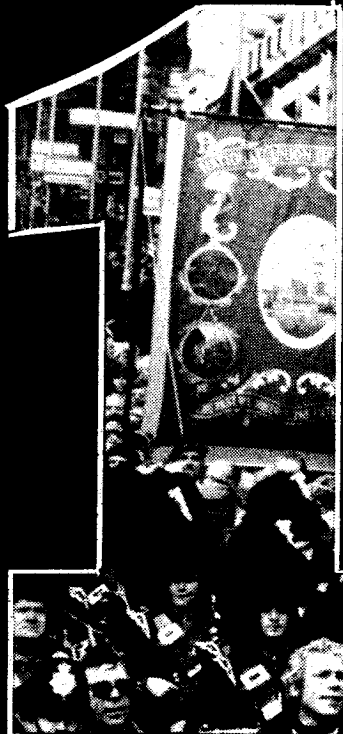
The government wants to use it to win its first big victory against the working class. A victory for British Leyland workers would be a major blow to Tory strategy.

But it we are to win we must fight to put the control of the dispute in the hands of the rank and file. The result of leaving it to the bureaucracy was seen during the battle to reinstate Derek Robinson.

## Lessons

A first step in the fight for democratic control of the strike would be a national delegate conference of all BL stewards. We will also press for an elected strike committee and regular mass meetings.

# ALL OUT ON



# DAY OF ACTION



# All-out on the day!

**THE** media campaign against general strike action on 14 May is having its effects on the trade union leaders.

Len Murray has been attempting to back-track ever since the call went out.

While the National Union of Railwaymen, the print union SOGAT, and the seamen's union are calling on their members to take strike action, the position of the National Union of Public Employees has fluctuated.

RAY VARNES, a member of NUPE's London divisional council, explains who is pushing whom in the union in the run-up to 14 May.

Alan Fisher, the NUPE general secretary, has variously claimed to have called for all-out action by the union, for the TUC to call a general strike, and simply recommending that NUPE members take the day off work.

At the London divisional

council of NUPE, representing a hundred thousand manual workers, I successfully moved a three-point resolution on what we should do on 14 May.

The resolution called for all-out strike action by London NUPE, for the national executive to call an official one-day strike, and for the national executive to demand that

the TUC General Council should call for a general strike on 14 May.

At the union's London divisional conference the three members of the national executive who were present explained the executive's response to our call.

It had refused to make our London action official and had also refused to call official action nationally.

## Division

The executive members reported that they could not make a call on the TUC. Instead the executive would, echoing Len Murray's words, 'advise our membership to take the day off'.

Nevertheless the London conference overwhelmingly endorsed the divisional council's resolution for official strike action by NUPE in London and

nationally on 14 May, and for the TUC to call a general strike.

Our members are sick of one-off protests without any clear perspective. They know Margaret Thatcher can hold her breath for one day. They want a clear lead in the fight to get rid of the Tories and all-out action on 14 May would be an enormous step in the right direction.

The latest chapter in the story came at the Tower Hamlets general branch meeting following the London conference where another member of the national executive made a sharp about-turn, saying:

'They were wrong about the executive decision at the London conference. We are coming out on strike on 14 May and we will be supporting the National Union of Railwaymen's call on the TUC

General Council for all-out action.'

With that type of campaign for action in NUPE it's quite obvious that the campaign for all-out action won't be led by the executive.

It will require action from militants in the branches all over the country to ensure that the executive doesn't back down... again.

## WHERE'S THE ACTION?

LET Socialist Challenge know what plans are being made in your union or area for 14 May.

## Edinburgh prepares for one-day strike

**FORTY** representatives of trade union branches who attended a conference called by Edinburgh Trades Council last week voted overwhelmingly for all-out strike action on 14 May.

The conference, held to consider what response should be made to the TUC's call for a 'day of action', heard that in the Lothian region, bus drivers, the NUR, SOGAT, NUPE, and the seamen's union will be taking strike action on 14 May.

A special meeting of the Edinburgh busworkers' branch of the Transport Union voted for strike action. TGWU officer Terry Weir said that it was his union's policy for as many members as possible to stop work on 14 May.

The National Union of Mineworkers is running a pithead campaign in the Lothian region for strike action.

Hugh D'Arcy, a member of the General Council of the Scottish TUC, told those at the trades council conference to put pressure on the STUC to ensure an all-out stoppage.

## 14 May strike is aim of NUT left

By Bernard Regan

**THE** National Union of Teachers conference in Blackpool this Easter will be the first union conference since the Tory Budget, which proposed cutting 9 per cent of £820m from education over the next five years.

Despite widespread protests from NUT branches, the right-wing executive has refused to withdraw the invitation to Mark Carlisle, Tory Education Secretary, to address the conference.

The executive is opposed to any attempt to organise a national fightback against the cuts, counterposing its own strategy of fighting individual local authorities.

The left inside the NUT, especially the Socialist Teachers Alliance and Rank and File, will be calling for a national one-day strike on 14 May.

This is seen as the first step towards national strike action in unity with other workers against the government's offensive.

## NUT CONFERENCE DIARY

Friday: STA-RAF joint meeting — Dick Marshall (exec) Dave Fiston (ILTA). Chair: Tony Dickens (E. Herts)  
 Saturday: 'Stop the Tory cuts' — Eric Roberts MP, Bernard Connolly (S. Yorkshire) and Strike Committee, Martin Gould (Gillingham, NUT). Chair: Carole Regan (E. Leamington)  
 Monday: Women in the NUT meeting — Vanessa Whisman (Leamington). Chair: Carole Regan (E. Leamington). Blackpool Trades Club.  
 Tuesday: Gay Teachers Group meeting, 7.30pm. Friends of Blair Peach meeting, 8.45pm.  
 Wednesday: Nicaragua — Recruitment and Library Campaign, Nicaragua Ambassadors.  
 George Black (Newcastle) Solidarity Campaign, Chair: Sheila Koss (Newcastle).  
 NUT Blackpool Central Library, 5.30-8.00pm joint social.  
 All meetings are at the Campaign for Blair Peach, Blackpool, or open unless otherwise indicated.



Steelworkers have only one answer to inquiry:

# NO SURRENDER



**'RUBBISH' — that was the first reaction to results of the Lever steel strike inquiry from Bernard Connolly, South Yorkshire steel crafts leader and a member of the unofficial national strike committee.**

It is a comment which is likely to be repeated by thousands of steelworkers across the country. The 15.5 per cent offer was just another way of demanding that the steelworkers surrender to the dictates of the bosses and the Tory government.

That was always likely to be the result of the inquiry headed by Lord Lever. While in the Wilson and Callaghan governments — but then plain Harold Lever — this specimen was known as 'the City's man' in the Labour cabinet.

The right-wing *Sunday Telegraph* once praised him as 'having comparably the astutest financial brain in the cabinet'. Lever once wrote: 'The government's job is to help to create the conditions which produce more opportunities for profitable investment.'

## Renegade

Backing up Lever was Richard Marsh, a renegade from the Labour Party. Once he found he was unlikely to become Prime Minister, Marsh quit his MP's job to take a series of highly-paid posts in industry.

The third member of the Lever team was Bill Keys. As general secretary of the print union SOGAT, Keys was meant to be the 'workers' representative. But anyone with any knowledge of the history and views of Keys would have known that he was always likely to come down on the side of the bosses.

It is hardly surprising that he accepted BSC's opinion

In the same interview Keys also voiced his support for the House of Lords — no doubt he hopes to end up there — and said: 'I don't want a Labour government all the time ... I'm very sad there isn't a stronger Liberal Party so that I could vote for that sometimes.'

With such a membership, it was always odds on that the inquiry would come out against the strikers. The scandal is that Bill Sirs and others in the ISTC leadership must surely have known this.

But not content with agreeing to the inquiry in the first place, and then agreeing that it don't cover the issue of jobs, Sirs went along with leading his members into the trap even after the prejudiced make-up of the inquiry team was announced.

And now he is even supporting the inquiry's findings.

Which is why it would be useless to blame Lever, Marsh, or Keys for what the inquiry has produced — they were only pursuing their pro-

ruling class, 'profits at all costs' philosophy which they have always followed.

It is the union leaders who are responsible for the mess in which the inquiry has dumped the steelworkers. The need to ignore that inquiry and step up the strike is obvious. Other articles on this page show that the militancy of many steelworkers remains.

The slogan to be shouted — at Lever, Marsh, Keys and Bill Sirs — must be: **No Surrender.**

## 'We must restate our demands'

By Colin Herd, convenor, ISTC, Warrington, Cheshire

**WE HAVE been on strike for 14 weeks. We have lost over £1,400 each. Even if we go back for 20 per cent it will take us a hell of a long time to catch up.**

In the interests of our families, our children, and our grandchildren we must ensure that the weeks of hardship, discomfort, and suffering must not be wasted.

There is no time like the present for steelworkers to draw together our common strength and ensure that the planned Tory attack on our industry, wages, and conditions is defeated.

We should refuse to return to work unless all steelworkers in all the unions are agreed. This is not just a fight over money, but over jobs and over the future of whole communities.

Steelworkers have been left to battle on our own by the TUC. Despite this, some trade unionists, such as the Liverpool dockers, have

shown tremendous solidarity. But we have been put in the position of fighting not just BSC management and the Tory government, but our own union leadership.

This is a situation we can tolerate no longer. We must restate our demands — 20 per cent now, with no strings, no closures, and no redundancies.

We must fight as a precondition for settlement for a back-payment from BSC of £1,000 per worker for money lost during the strike.

And we must demand that instead of our union officials running round after farcical negotiations and phoney inquiries, that they get down to the job they are meant to do — winning this strike.

## 'We will lose our self-respect'

**LLANWERN steel strikers were meeting at the beginning of this week to consider the next steps in their fight for jobs.**

In an article for *Steel Sheet*, a bulletin produced by Llanwern steelworkers, **RAY DAVIES**, an ISTC member on the Llanwern strike committee, argues why the strike has to continue.

In Wales, we have not been on strike for pay but for jobs. If we go back to work now it will be a total defeat. We will lose our self-respect.

It looks like the national executive of ISTC is running down the strike until the final betrayal. Money has been cut-back for flying pickets to go to places like the docks.

Locally, the strike committee is cutting down on pickets, food, and transport. This assumes the strike will be over, even though the executive agreed to wait for the inquiry results before making any recommendation. This is bloody ridiculous. Dockers are prepared to strike in solidarity with us. How can we expect them to support us when they see us withdrawing pickets from the docks?

## Action

The dockers' action shows that we are not fighting the jobs issue alone.

We shouldn't misunderstand what happened when the miners voted against strike action on jobs. In the first fortnight of our strike the miners couldn't wait to come out with us.

Then the Wales TUC kept

miners were balloted they had given up in frustration.

Now is the time to change this by showing that we are prepared to take action on jobs.

Steelworkers in Wales have support from other parts of the country. I was at the national multi-union strike co-ordinating committee last week in Manchester. What impressed me was that all the

delegates who spoke said that the most important thing we have to reject is job loss.

## Tragedies

They see jobs in Wales as the first to go, with theirs following close behind. At this meeting they voted to instruct the executive that there should be no return to work until the job issue is sorted out.

They have said to the executive you will never get re-elected if you sell us short in the strike.

From Monday's meeting we should set up a committee to carry on the fight for jobs. This should have representatives from all the steel unions and from other unions affected by closures, such as the NUM, transport, and the docks.

We must also make links with Port Talbot. If we are divided among ourselves, the jobs fight will collapse on us. We must learn from the tragedies of Cardiff and Ebbw Vale.



RAY DAVIES

# Steel women strike out

By Andy Miller

**FIVE women of steel from Stocksbridge, Yorkshire, joined the picket of BL in Cowley last week. Later they spoke of how, as women, they were involved in fighting for their wage claim and their jobs.**

**Explained ENID: 'We have 60 women on our picket list in Stocksbridge. I can call on them any time I want and just ask them to be at the Welfare Hall at a certain time in the morning.'**

'They don't ask questions. They're just there. We've had a vast response, really. We're trying to show that women will do what men will.'

'We decided that women should be organised separately from the men because the men weren't letting us play our full part. So we got our own picket office; I've got a room with a telephone and a typewriter. I got somebody in to type because I can't.'

## Pickets

'We got the list of pickets who had been involved since the strike start. We took the women's names off and started a list of our own. We

not in steel.

'What I've usually been doing during the strike is to go to work in the morning, then I go down to the Labour Hall and help out with the picketing or with anything else I can do to keep me interested, to make me feel part of the struggle and not isolated back at home.'

## Cooking

Summing up, **JACKIE** said that the attitudes of some of the men on strike had changed during the dispute:

'The men aren't saying any more "make sandwiches for us". They're making them. While we've been down at Cowley, it's the men who have been doing all the cooking.'

## Change

'Not one of them has turned round and said: "Can you make the sausages for us". The change has come about through us all working together on the strike.'



Women steel workers on 9 March TUC demonstration against the Tory government. Despite the sell out by the ISTC bureaucrats, let's hope they're out on 14 May.



# BLACK AND BLUE



## Women Fightback against Tory threats



*'Quite frankly, I don't think mothers have the same right to go out to work as fathers. If the Good Lord had intended us to have equal rights to go out to work, he wouldn't have created man and woman.'*

**Patrick Jenkin, Social Services Secretary**

*'When you've got male unemployment, how much better that women, who more naturally incline to a community-based life, do this sort of thing (looking after house bound old people for £15 per week).'*

**Nicholas Stacey, Director, Kent Social Services**

By Valerie Coultas

ON 22 March five hundred women attended a conference in London called by *Women Fightback*, a new campaign launched by the *Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory*, a grouping of activists in the Labour Party.

Women came from their Labour Party and trade union branches, cuts campaigns and women's groups. They were eager to confront not only the ideas of Patrick Jenkin and Nicholas Stacey, who want to wipe out at a stroke all the steps women have made towards equality over the last couple of decades, but also to discuss how to take up sexist attitudes within the labour movement itself.

Unfortunately, mainly due to general disorganisation at the conference, many women left feeling that the potential of the conference had not been fully tapped — no conclusive decisions were made.

In opening the conference, Jo Richardson, Labour MP for Barking, pointed out that the whole economic philosophy of the Tory Party — cutting back on government expenditure and relying on market forces to 'solve' the economic crisis — is a direct threat to women.

Women as wives, mothers, cooks, and domestic servants call on the services of the welfare state more than any other section of the population.

The Employment Bill will make it more difficult for women who work in small firms, as many do, to return to work after pregnancy.

Changes in social security legislation and the meagre increases in child benefits proposed in the Budget will make it more difficult for single mothers, the long-term unemployed and the sick, to manage.

Tighter immigration controls mean an attack on black women's freedom to marry the husband of their choice as well as encouraging the white population to view black communities as a threat to 'British' culture.

Pointing to the success of the campaign against John Corrie's anti-abortion Bill, Jo raised a big cheer.

Workshops took place around five themes: the spending cuts; maternity rights; legal attacks; fertility control; and organising inside the labour movement.

Although there were ideas from the floor that women needed to take their own initiatives and organise a rally or demonstration against the Tories, time eventually ran out. The organisers of the conference urged women to return to a *delegate* conference in six weeks time!

Women who had made their way to London from Teesside, Yorkshire and Scotland seemed rather perplexed as to the reasons for having another meeting so quickly, particularly a *delegate* conference which would exclude women who were not members of trade unions or local Labour Parties.

Rights of Women and the Campaign Against Corrie are planning a festival for women against the Tories in June. If the *Fightback* conference is anything to go by, such a festival will win broad support among women who seem eager to fight back.

## Black self-organisation—the target of Brum police

By Raghieb Ahsan

**THE Communist Party in Birmingham is helping the police to contain black militancy by setting up community-based liaison committees.**

**Under the guise of community politics, the purpose of these committees is to create informers in the black community and to present the police with an opening into this closed community.**

The turn to community policing can be traced back several years. In 1976 the bitter confrontations which took place between West Indian youth and the police first at Winson Green, Birmingham, and later at the Notting Hill Carnival, shook the establishment.

Asian youth in Southall also protested in the streets against police inaction over a racist murder.

This radicalisation continued in 1977, with the events at Lewisham in South London and Ladywood in Birmingham. By the summer of 1978, when the Asian youth in London's East End were organising independently against racist attacks, the police were ready with their new strategy.

The police are unwilling to

openly discuss their strategy, but in Birmingham it is apparent that there are two approaches, one for the West Indian community and one for the Asian.

In areas with a largely Afro-Caribbean population, such as Lozells, Aston and Handsworth, the police control a large proportion of the Inner City Development Project funds, and are using them to involve black youth in various projects.

For example, as well as teaching in some of the schools, the police are planning campaign holidays with school students. They are trying to start a community centre which they will run, and they are active in organising football teams. On television last year John Brown, the author of *Shades*



**RAGHIEB AHSAN on the campaign trail in 1977 when he stood as a Socialist Unity candidate in the Ladywood by-election.**

of Grey, boasted about the changing image of the bobby in Handsworth.

In areas of Birmingham with a largely Asian population, like Small Heath, Sparkhill, Sparkbrook, and Salfley, the second approach is to build liaison committees between the police and the community. The first of these was set up in April 1978 in Salfley.

Anger had spread through the black community when an Asian house was attacked by white thugs inspired by the National Front. The following day a meeting of local Asians expressed no faith in the police and decided to set up their own vigilante groups.

To build support for the group, a meeting of ethnic minority organisations was arranged by the Kashmiri Workers Association, whose national secretary, Nazir-ul-Huq, is a member of the Birmingham Communist Party.

On the platform at the meeting were the local Labour MP, Dennis Howell, and the chief superintendent of police for the area. It turned into a public relations exercise for the police and at the end of the meeting a liaison committee was set up.

This committee met

regularly until its presence forced the vigilante groups to collapse and the blacks' anger cooled.

In summer 1978 Sudagar Khan, a Pakistani, was murdered in Small Heath. The black community was convinced that racists were responsible, and some five hundred people took part in a protest demonstration.

No one was arrested or charged with the murder. Dennis Howell again set up a liaison committee to cool the situation, and the police used it effectively by spreading various rumours about the motives for the murder.

About three months ago, at a meeting in Sparkhill, allegations were made of harassment and threats of violence by a local gangster, Sabir Mirza. There was evidence of a connection between him and the police.

The Sparkhill Committee for Civil Liberties was set up and has since compiled a number of statements concerning fraud, cheating and harassment on the part of this individual. Every statement mentions a connection between Sabir Mirza and the police.

A few weeks ago the committee held a successful meeting attended by some 250 people. But then shortly

afterwards, with the backing of the CP, the committee decided to hand over some of the statements to the police.

On top of this, on 16 March, a meeting was called in Sparkhill under the banner of the CP-controlled Blackford Road Residents Association. It was chaired by Roger Murray, a prominent local CP member, and the main speakers were Nazir-ul-Huq and two police chief inspectors.

The intention of the meeting was clearly to set up another liaison committee. Its purpose will again be to put a stop to independent black activity in the area — in this case the Sparkhill committee which is specifically concerned with police malpractice.

The liaison committee will also feed back to the police information about local activity. The two chief inspectors are no doubt grateful for the invaluable assistance of the Communist Party.

The tactics of the CP will in no way help black people in their struggle to expose the corruption and racism of the police. Collaboration will play straight into the hands of the state.

Only independent activity can in the long run protect the interests of blacks.

## NATIONAL BLACK CONFERENCE

The Bradford Asian Youth Movement is calling on all black organisations to attend a national meeting on

**Sunday 13 April**

**1pm at Queens Hall, Morley St., Bradford**

The conference will discuss both the aims and the organisation of the Black Freedom March taking place from Bradford to London from 28 June to 19 July.

National organisations can send five delegates £5  
Local organisations can send three delegates £3  
Individuals £1

For further details contact:  
Bradford Asian Youth Movement, 226 Lumb Lane, Bradford 8, West Yorkshire or Tel 0274 499310.



## No Tory cuts!

**By Craig Hunter**  
A THOUSAND people marched against the Tories and their cuts in Bathgate, Mid-Lothian, on Saturday — the biggest demonstration in the area since the '30s.

The rally which followed this massive display of anger was an anti-climax. No lead was given by local Labour MPs or the STUC secretary, Jimmy Milne, although the latter did make a fleeting reference to 14 May.

The best received speech was from John Lambie, a local NUPE official, who called for strike action against the Secretary of State for Scotland if he tries to block the non-implementation of the cuts by the Lothian regional council.

He also called for national strike action on 14 May.

## Massey Ferguson workers lay-off bosses

**By John Kirby**  
A NATIONAL delegate conference of Massey Ferguson workers met earlier this week to discuss the fight against redundancy within the construction machinery company.

The 550 workers in Massey's plant in Knowsley, Liverpool, who have been in occupation for over a month, were expecting the conference to back their action.

Hayden Burns, chairperson of the Knowsley shop stewards committee, says: 'Management called us in on 11 February and told us that the future of Knowsley was under review. Our response was to continue production, but with nothing to be allowed out.'

The digger-loaders assembled at the plant stayed put until 3 March.

'They called us in again,' says Hayden, 'to tell us that there would have to be lay-offs because nothing was getting out. We had no alternative but to layoff the management.'

'They turn up here every morning asking for their factory back.'

Support and donations to: c/o Hayden Burns, 46 Kempton Park Rd, Aintree, Liverpool 10.

## Arthur Seed: Labour councillor, steel striker, scab

**By a Teeside NALGO member**

ARTHUR SEED is one of 20,000 steelworkers on strike on Teeside. But he doesn't do much picketing — he's too busy collecting his expenses as leader of the notoriously right-wing Labour group on Langbaugh council.

When NALGO members in Langbaugh imposed sanctions as part of the pay battle by local government white-collar workers, they considered that with 14 steel strikers among the Labour councillors the response would be sympathetic.

Not so. The NALGO members taking action were suspended, and the branch responded with a one-day strike.

Their bitterness was increased by the fact that they had been giving financial support to the steel strike, and that NALGO members in Cleveland county had been given dispensation to work overtime on free schoolmeal applications for strikers' children.

The ISTC divisional strike committee offered to initiate disciplinary proceedings against Seed, both in his union branch and constituency Labour Party.

The threat proved sufficient. Seed and his pals withdrew their threatening letter to NALGO members and agreed to take no action against those who had implemented union policy.

## Nuclear power: it'll cost the earth

**By Jenny Flintoft, North London Anti-Nuclear Group**

THE biggest anti-nuclear demonstration yet was held on Saturday when at least 20,000 people gathered in Hyde Park for Harrisburg Day, the first anniversary of the near-disaster at Three Mile Island.

The march moved off to music from various bands, and shouts of 'No more Harrisburgs, Nukes out now', 'One, two, three, four, We

don't want a nuclear war'.

Banners included those of Friends of the Earth, the Ecology Party, anti-nuclear groups, Women Against Nuclear Power, the Liberal Party, CND and NALGO — from places as far apart as the East Midlands and Devon.

Mike Cooley, of the Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards Committee, said at the rally in Trafalgar Square that uniting the environmental movement with the trade unions to oppose nuclear

power represented a development of tremendous importance.

Petra Kelly linked the struggle against nuclear power with feminism. Other speakers included John Carroll, vice-president of the Irish TGWU, Labour MP David Ennals, and Liberal leader David Steel.

The general mood was one of great optimism, demonstrators feeling that the anti-nuclear movement has now shown that in Britain, as elsewhere in West Europe and in the United States, it is a force to be reckoned with.



WORKERS at Stone-Platt, accompanied by Terry Duffy. Will the AUEW do anything effective to stop the closure?

## Lack of support divides Stone-Platt occupiers

**By Pete Clifford**

A MASS meeting at the Stone-Platt plant in Oldham last Friday voted by a slim majority to continue the occupation against closure.

This came after management had offered to delay final discussions on the closure — scheduled for 31 December — for six months. A majority of those at the meeting saw this as a worthless manoeuvre.

The failure to win solidarity action from other Stone-Platt plants is causing divisions among the strikers.

At the Scraggs division in Oldham, works convenor Frank Sidlock and a few other stewards have refused

to cross the picket line for the past fortnight. But Engineering Union members at the plant are ignoring instructions from their district committee and are continuing to work.

Pickets from Oldham tell a similar story about the reaction at plants in Crawley, Bolton, and Accrington, although short-time working at these plants suggests the axe may fall on them.

The official support given to the occupation by the

AUEW executive needs to be translated into a fight at divisional and national level for solidarity action.

The AUEW should not accept any job loss in the Stone-Platt group. To win this position, the Oldham strikers need to step up their action from small-scale picketing to mass pickets involving the whole workforce.

To achieve this, they need greater support from other engineering workers.

Support and donations to: Eddie Holland, Works Convenor, 70 Lord St, Oldham.

## All-out, say building workers

**By Tony Young**

AN all-out national strike in the building industry would be necessary to win a decent wage increase, it was agreed at the Building Worker Group's national conference last weekend.

The unions are claiming £3 an hour for a 35-hour week, which has already been achieved on many sites in the

London region, but is way above the union rate of £1.10 an hour for labourers and £1.29 for trades, which is paid to 400,000 building workers.

The employers' offer is 17.3 per cent, which amounts to an extra £3 a week. Big deal.

The biggest ever wage increase was won after the 1972 strike, which began at site level, spread rapidly throughout the country under the control of rank-and-file militants, and forced the union leaderships to declare it official.

Ironically, the full-officials who are now trying to stop a rank-and-file led strike are the Communist Party members who led the 1972 strike.

Among the other subjects discussed at the conference was how to get more women into the building industry — a woman bricklayer was among the 42 militants who attended; the lump, health and safety, the official elections, and how to build the Building Worker Group.

Full details, the latest issue of Building Worker, and how to organise a group in your area, from: 30 Houghton House, Meadow Rd, South Lambeth Estate, London SW8.

## Criticism of AUEW leadership brings dismissals

TWO research officers at the Engineering Union's headquarters have been dismissed because they prepared material for Bob Wright, the AUEW assistant general secretary.

Wright will be standing as the Broad Left candidate in the forthcoming presidential election, and the two researchers, Alan Hughes and Trevor Esward, drafted documents critical of the union's right-wing leadership.

Although they did this in their own time, they were instantly sacked by general secretary John Boyd. Both are appealing the dismissal, and will appear at a union tribunal on 18 April.

Among those demanding their reinstatement are Bob Wright and Derek Robinson. Petition forms are available from: Alan Hughes, 444b Green Lanes, London N13.

## Edinburgh nurses march to demand 30%

**By Kevin Holmes**

'THIRTY per cent — nothing less. Fight the cuts in the NHS.' This was the most popular slogan on a demonstration in Edinburgh last Friday in support of the nurses' pay claim.

Over two hundred nurses, hospital ancillary workers, and engineering workers marched through the city centre in what seems to be the only action in Britain in support of the nurses' demand for a 30 per cent pay rise.

Leah Sheridan, an organiser of the march and shop steward at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, pointed out at the rally:

'Although our march is small it is a first step to organising nurses alongside the trade union movement to defend the Health Service.'

Nurses in NUPE will be

**THE deadline for short news articles for this page is 10.30am Monday. Articles up to 200 words can be rung through on Sundays on 01-359 8189.**

## Axing women's health

'THE CUTS — a War on Women' is the title of Fightback's latest action sheet.

It details how the cuts affect the one million women who work in the NHS, the shrinking health services available to women, and the result of having to care for the sick at home.

Twenty copies of the action sheet cost £1 (plus 26p p&p) or 5p each (plus 10p p&p). From Fightback, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1. Tel. 01-485 8610.

## NUT leaders abandon Avon campaign

THE executive of the National Union of Teachers has decided to end its support for the action being taken against the cuts by its members in Avon, where teachers at several schools have been on strike against the policies of the Tory-controlled county council.

News of this about-face came last Thursday evening, after two thousand teachers had marched in Bristol during the day and then attended a rally where NUT president Fred Jarvis was among the speakers.

There was puzzlement

## Management demands, Tory style

**By Steve McGiffin**

HOPKINSONS Engineering in Leeds, where 1,600 workers have been on strike for the past five weeks, is attempting to apply Tory policies on the unions with a vengeance.

Management of the firm, which is part of a multi-national, is demanding the break-up of the joint trade union committee; a drastic reduction in the number of shop stewards; withdrawal of facilities from the full-time convenor; compulsory overtime; abolition of the negotiated grading scheme, and a good deal more besides.

These are management's conditions for ending a lock-out of a thousand workers which began in mid-February, and which immediately resulted in the all-out strike.

A proposal by management to cut its contribution to the pension fund, so that workers would either have to pay more or accept reduced retirement benefit, was met with an overtime ban. Management retaliated with the lock-out.

The workers are calling for a boycott of all Hopkinsons products and services. Support to: M J Jessop, Hopkinsons JTUC Fund, 2 The Bungalow, Church Avenue, Linthwaite, Huddersfield. Tel. Huddersfield 21154 (day).

## Corrie admits defeat, but don't sit back!

**By Penny Duggan**

JOHN Corrie has finally admitted defeat and withdrawn his anti-abortion Bill. Unfortunately the abortion movement cannot afford to sit back and relax despite this tremendous victory.

The Department of Health has suddenly noticed the posters by the Pregnancy Advisory Service in London underground stations advertising 'Abortion Help'. PAS has been told to remove the posters, although they fall within the government

guidelines for such advertising.

When the advisory service protested, it was informed that if the posters were not taken down the Secretary of State would have to consider if PAS still had the Department's confidence.

This was a veiled threat that PAS's licence might not be renewed.

David Alton, Liberal MP for Edge Hill, Liverpool, has already put up a Bill to impose a 24-week time limit on abortions. This Bill, which has its first reading on 22 April, is under the 10-minute rule, so it has little chance of success.

But there is a strong possibility of the government introducing its own Bill to restrict the 1967 Abortion Act, by reducing the time-limit to 24 weeks and by extending the conscience clause which allows medical staff to refuse to perform abortions for reasons of conscience.

\*The National Abortion Campaign is to hold a conference in Leeds on 17-18 May. The agenda will include: What do we do now after the defeat of the Corrie Bill? Positive legislation; Women's Autonomy facilities; Schools campaign; Working with the labour movement.

Details from NAC, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Tel. 01-278 0153. The next NAC national planning meeting is on 26 April in London.



# LABOUR PARTY

By Hugh Richards,  
Battersea South CLP

IN THE wake of the 'Debate of the Decade', the Labour Co-ordinating Committee met in Birmingham two weeks ago to discuss its future activities.

The meeting was small, with 50 members of the LCC attending, but two positive decisions were taken. The LCC plans to hold two conferences over the next year — one on cuts, to be held in June, and a conference for trade unionists on 'de-industrialisation' and the Employment Bill, scheduled for September.

A discussion was held on what economic strategy the LCC should adopt and argue for within and outside the Labour Party.

## Trade union conference planned by Labour Co-ordinating Committee

There was agreement on the need for a radical alternative to the policies of unemployment being pursued by the Thatcher administration, but participants differed on exactly what that alternative should be.

Audrey Wise, the former Labour MP, defended the Alternative Economic Strategy. She considered that planning agreements — between employers, employees, and the government — were vital to democratic control. Import controls, argued for as part of the AES

package, were hotly contested.

Audrey Wise pointed out that the Alternative Economic Strategy was not a fully worked out formula, and the fact that it was a bit 'fuzzy' round the edges would aid a dialogue.

### Precision

The LCC did not want to follow those people in the Labour Party who repetitively requested the 'nationalisation of the 250 monopolies'.

Precision would be needed on such issues for the debate on the Labour Party manifesto, some members pointed out.

Audrey Wise seemed to be even more confused about how a Labour government which tried to implement planning agreements would deal with the inevitable disruption by capitalists.

Blurring the distinction between a state controlled by workers and one that capitalists were still in control



Audrey Wise

of, she said: 'We've got to use the state against the multi-nationals and for that we need a strong state. But a strong state will be used against ordinary workers.'

The AES strategy, for all its leftist phraseology, is essentially reformist. It is based on the idea of the state planning with employers and employees, rather than a strategy of workers taking power themselves, forming their own government and implementing workers' control.

No decisions were taken concerning strategy, however. This discussion was deferred until the LCC's annual general meeting in November.

The LCC, as a campaigning ginger group within Labour Party, can help in 'fostering rank and file action within the labour movement,' as Nigel Stanley, the secretary of the LCC, explained in his document to the conference.

The decision to organise activists' conferences — open, hopefully, to everyone in the labour movement — is a refreshing step forward.

It means that the Labour Co-ordinating Committee will be able to play a useful role in mobilising working people in active opposition to the policies of the Thatcher government.

Other groupings, such as the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions and the Defend Our Unions campaign, should be encouraged to become involved.

## Jehovah's Witnesses of the socialist revolution?

# Tribune VERSUS TROTSKYISM

By Phil Hearse

IN THE 1960s, Tribune used to specialise in gossip stories and snide quips about Trotskyism through its columnist 'Francis Flavius'. Today this newspaper of the Labour left is forced to attempt a more serious analysis of Trotskyism, entrusting this task to Walter Kendall, a well-known Labour historian and supporter of the Institute for Workers Control.

Kendall argues that the Trotskyists are quasi-religious groups which have a vacuous theory and no political influence. Strange, then, that Tribune devoted a full page to Trotskyism in preparation for the 'Debate of the Decade', at which the Labour left chose to debate the irrelevant, vacuous, know-nothing Trotskyists.

Strange, too, that Kendall and the Labour left should be initiating this critique when the Trotskyist organisations are becoming stronger.

'The Trotskyists of all varieties,' Kendall considers, 'believe in "The Revolution" in much the same way as the early Christians believed in the imminent expectation of "The Apocalypse" and "The Second Coming of Christ".'

'The expectation is as likely to be fulfilled in the one case as it is in the other. We are dealing here with the Jehovah's Witnesses of the Socialist Revolution.'

Kendall's opposition to arguments for revolution is two-fold. He believes that revolution is impossible, and in any case, on the evidence of Russia, it is undesirable. What does this amount to?

### Revolution

Kendall rightly points out that Marx, in his well-known Preface to the Critique of Political Economy, premised the possibility of socialist revolution on the crisis-ridden nature of capitalism; its inability to solve humanity's problems by developing the means of production.

'At a certain stage of their development,' Marx wrote, 'the material productive forces in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production... From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution.'

Kendall is not at all happy about that. 'Everyone knows from their own experience' that capitalism in the twentieth century has fantastically developed the productive forces, he observes. Capitalism delivers the goods. What basis, then, for revolution?

Kendall's argument is based on a sleight of hand. Marx's Preface is a notoriously abbreviated account of historical materialism. The question to be answered is not whether capitalism can periodically develop production, but whether the productive relations regularly collide with the development of the productive forces.



Is capitalism a system of periodic economic crisis? And do revolutionary and pre-revolutionary situations regularly develop out of the periodic interruptions of 'normal' capitalist development?

In 1980, with the West entering an even deeper economic recession, and with 18m unemployed in the advanced capitalist countries, it is difficult for even the most hardened apologist to pretend that capitalism is not a system of crisis.

On a global scale, for the millions of impoverished around the world, it obviously fails to deliver the goods.

Does revolution automatically develop from capitalist crisis? Obviously not. A successful revolution depends on the coincidence of a number of factors, not least whether the spontaneous mass struggles of the working class interact with the construction of a revolutionary party which can give their struggle leadership and direction.

But what has happened in the Twentieth century, in even the most developed capitalist countries, is the regular occurrence of revolutionary and pre-revolutionary crises — mass upsurges of a semi-insurrectionary character. Portugal in 1974-5 was the last example.

For Kendall, these developments are totally inexplicable. Against the 'myth' and 'utopia' of revolution, he

counterposes an even bigger and more outrageous myth — that capitalism can be reformed and gradually transformed into its opposite.

### Russia

Kendall regards the Trotskyist analysis of Russia as damning evidence of the bankruptcy of revolution. He ridicules the idea that the Russian revolution was a success. '... Trotskyists regard the Russian revolution as a great success. God save us from their version of failure!'

He vigorously defends his own view that Russia became a new form of class oppression; bureaucratic collectivism.

Through the creation of a nationalised economy, Trotskyists regard the Russian revolution as having achieved the basis for decisive economic and social advance, irrespective of the subsequent social and political regression.

The great bourgeois revolutions in France and Britain were both followed by political reaction — the Restoration in Britain and the Bonaparte dictatorship in France. Yet historically they represented an immense advance in setting the seal on decisive economic progress.

Even if, as Kendall would have it, the Russian revolution was totally lost, its world-historic impact was no 'failure'. Its impact in demonstrating to thousands of millions of working people the possibility of overthrowing oppression, of breaking with all the old rubbish of capitalism, of inspiring them to struggle for a future free from tyranny, has reverberated down the century.

Trotsky, according to Tribune's critic, was 'much more intelligent than his followers', but there was 'nothing markedly original' in his ideas.

Apparently the theory of permanent revolution, which explains the socialist dynamic of the struggle in the 'third world', was taken over wholesale from Parvus, and Trotsky's organisational principles were just a re-hash of Lenin. Thus he contributed nothing. This view amounts to no more than philistine abuse.

For Kendall, Trotsky as the theorist of socialist revolution, the author of the History of the Russian Revolution; Trotsky the analyst of Hitler's rise to power and the theorist of the united front; Trotsky the analyst of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, whose theories were the starting point for those who developed the theory of bureaucratic

collectivism that Kendall adheres to; Trotsky who, against all the calumnies of the Stalinists, almost alone defended the perspective of socialist revolution and socialist democracy — none of this gets a mention from Kendall.

And it's here we come to the alleged 'religious veneration' that Trotskyists have for Trotsky. In the real world, as opposed to Kendall's social democratic dreamland, virtually all Trotskyists recognise that Trotsky's work suffers from many errors and limitations; that his thought was underdeveloped or wrong on many questions.

For us, Marxism is a science to be developed and applied, with new findings, new experiences constantly up-dating our theories. But Trotsky's unique role derives precisely from the fact that at the time when the old leadership of the Communist International was being systematically liquidated, Trotsky working alone continued to develop the theories of revolutionary Marxism.

If Trotsky was such an irrelevant and marginal thinker, it is difficult to explain the continued role of this thought as a key reference point in socialist debate. Kendall makes no attempt to do so.

### A Socialist Future?

When all is said and done, Kendall's point that the World Revolution has still to arrive has an element of truth. We have seen events such as the Chinese and Cuban revolutions and mass struggles in virtually every country of the world, but socialist revolution has not triumphed in the advanced capitalist countries.

Is it realistic to stick to the belief that revolution can take place? Isn't the Trotskyist view so unrealistic as to be semi-religious, owing more to faith than reason? Shouldn't we opt for the more down-to-earth task of fighting for reform within the system?

Here, Walter Kendall demonstrates his total lack of historical perspective. He is oblivious to the fact that even in the advanced capitalist countries the working masses in their millions have fought against capitalism. From the Belgian general strike of 1961, France in May 1968, the 'Hot Autumn' in Italy in 1969, to the Portuguese revolution in 1974-5, the working masses in post-war West Europe have fought against the exploitation of capitalism.

That none of these movements has resulted in a victorious socialist revolution is not because these struggles have only existed in the religious minds of Trotskyists.

It is the result of the social democratic and Stalinist bureaucracy's role in either diverting or repressing the elemental struggles of the class. This is an historical problem to be solved by the building of revolutionary parties.

The problem is not insoluble. Neither the bureaucracy nor the capitalist system is endless. Just as every other social system has ended, so will capitalism.

If the cynical wisecracks of Tribune can't see it, then Marxists can, because they base their perspective and organisation on struggles and movements in the real world — not like Jehovah's Witnesses, on voluntarist mysticism.



## INTERNATIONAL

# 'THE LEGITIMATE RIGHT TO INSURRECTION'

## Interview with Archbishop Romero

LAST week Archbishop Oscar Romero was shot by an outraged right-winger in San Salvador. Two days before the killing, the Archbishop had made a speech from his pulpit calling on the army to refuse to fire if ordered to gun down civilians. For several years Romero has used the pulpit in San Salvador to plead for justice, democratic rights and equality for the poverty-stricken people of the country. He had denounced the despotic oligarchy and its army which rules the country, advertising its violence from his church when opposition journalists feared to speak.

Romero won the respect of huge numbers of people in El Salvador. His murder has incited anger across the country. Peasants and agricultural workers flooded to the capital city to pay their last respects. Shortly before the murder Romero was interviewed by *Prensa Latina*. The excerpts we publish here shed light on the situation in El Salvador and on the outlook of the man whose death has forced El Salvador's bloody dictatorship upon the attention of the world.

**In your opinion, what is the cause of the violence in El Salvador?**

The cause of all our problems is the oligarchy — that small nucleus of families who do not concern themselves with the plight of the people, except as a source of cheap and plentiful labour. The industrial companies, both national and multinational, owe their competitiveness in the international market to starvation wages in El Salvador. This explains the vehement opposition to any type of reform or union organisation which seeks to improve the conditions of the people.

Thus the concentration of wealth and property brings with it a concentration of political, social and economic power, without which it would be impossible to maintain those privileges.

This is the cause of the violence in our country and its long-term economic, political and social underdevelopment...

The armed forces are protecting the interests of the oligarchy, the economic and political order, under the pretext of defending the interests of national security... The noble function of the armed forces is distorted: instead of serving the true and authentic national interests, it guards the interests of the oligarchy.

**What is your opinion of the Bloque Popular Revolucionario, The Popular Leagues '28 February', FAPU, The Democratic Nationalist Union and the other oppositional organisations.**

It is precisely when the repression has been hardest against these organisations that I have defended and continue to defend them... In my third pastoral letter I defended the right of organisation, and, in the name of the Gospel, I committed myself to support all that is just in their demands and to denounce any attempt to destroy them.

Given the present situation within the country, I believe more than ever in the popular organisations. I believe that the Salvadorean people must organise themselves; they are the forces of progress, the forces who will build a genuinely free and just society. Organisation is necessary in order to fight effectively....

But I have also been frank with the popular organisations. That is a service which the Church offers: to indicate possible errors and injustices.

**What path is left open when people are being assassinated for using peaceful means to achieve social justice?**

Christians have no fear of combat, they know how to fight, but they prefer to speak the language of peace. Nevertheless, when a dictatorship threatens human rights and the common good of the nation, when it becomes intolerable and closes all channels of dialogue, understanding and rationality — when this occurs, then the Church speaks of the legitimate right to insurrectional violence...

To determine the moment of insurrection, to indicate the moment when all the channels of dialogue are closed, this is not the task of the Church. To the oligarchy I shout a warning: open your hands, give up the reins of power, because the moment will arrive in which your hands will be severed....

**Christmas Eve and New Year were tragic in El Salvador: hundreds of people were assassinated by the repressive forces. The press and radio, with**



**some exceptions, lied about the events. What in your opinion should be the role of the press?**

The corruption of the press is part of our sad reality and reveals its complicity with the oligarchy... the press must act as a channel of information; its mission is to disseminate the truth....

Lamentably, as you have pointed out, exactly the opposite occurs here: news is manipulated, facts which expose the oligarchy are suppressed, victims are presented as criminals, photographs are falsified and doctored in order to deceive the reader....

I have denounced this many times... I have stressed that the press must be an instrument at the service of the people for the transformation of society. What a great power is lost and is put at the service of oppression and repression!

**Do you see any future for the present government?**

Before giving my opinion, I prefer to hear the language of results... the government speaks of change only because the people will wait no longer; the people are frustrated, disillusioned and no longer believe in promises or in hopes... the changes, consequently, would have to be spectacular....

**Travelling throughout the country, I get the impression that El Salvador is in a state of civil war, progressively more widespread and unrestrained. What is your opinion?**

The situation alarms me. But the struggle of the oligarchy to defend the indefensible has no future — even, less so if you take into account the fighting spirit of our people. Furthermore, even should the army triumph temporarily, the voice of justice will return, will be heard, will win.

**And in this war, will you, as a pastor, continue at the side of the people?**

That is what I propose to do and I ask God to help me to be sufficiently strong, because I fear the weaknesses of the flesh... in difficult moments we all suffer fear, the instinct for self-preservation is very strong, and for that I ask for help....

Help not only for me, but for all those who are carrying out this pastoral work, that we might remain at our posts because we have much to do; even if it only be to collect the corpses and to administer absolution to the dead... the flame of social justice must always remain alight in the hearts of the Salvadorean people.

# EL SALVADOR 'THE PEACE 100,000 CORPSES

THE assassination last week of Archbishop Oscar Romero has highlighted the massive wave of struggle launched by the workers and peasants of El Salvador in Central America, and the murderous repression with which it has been met.

El Salvador is run by an 'oligarchy' of 14 families, while the mass of the people live in poverty. The regime remains in power by the use of savage repression — it is responsible for more than 4,000 deaths in the past 15 months alone. The oligarchy is backed and financed by the United States. Millions of dollars worth of military aid has been flowing in over the past few months. The US is anxious to prevent the powder keg of El Salvador taking the same revolutionary path as Nicaragua.

Romero's assassination follows the murder of more than sixty people during the general strike on 17 March. On 15 October last year a military junta overthrew the previous military regime of General Romero (no relation to the Archbishop), and incorporated the Christian Democrats as a

## The most shocking thing seen — Eyewitness

INSIDE the factory the walls and floors were covered with blood. In one of the rooms five dead workers were lying on the floor. The right-wing terror squads had struck against the general strike movement in El Salvador.

LORS PALMGREN, reporter for *Internationales*, paper of the Swedish section of the Fourth International, was one of the few journalists still in El Salvador on Monday 17 March, a day of general strike action against the Junta. He saw what Colonel Majano's regime now tries to suppress. He wrote this report the day after the events he describes:

I WAS probably one of the last foreign journalists left in El Salvador. They have mostly been expelled. One of the last things I heard was from some workers who told me: 'You must write about this. You must let the world know about it.'

The general strike was almost total. No one in El Salvador believes in this government's demagogic promises. The repression and bloody terror have been stepped up tremendously, yet the masses continue to resist heroically.

The general strike yesterday was another example of this process. It showed that revolutionary opposition is

growing and getting more and more support. Today the question has become more clear, shall El Salvador become a new Chile or another Nicaragua?

### Strike

The general strike had been called by the National Revolutionary Coordination. The demands of the strike were:

For an end to the repression and the state of emergency that had been in force since 6 March;

Against US intervention in the internal affairs of El Salvador. As they say in El Salvador: 'The strike was a protest against US preparation for military intervention'

'civilian component' of the

This move, which is limited reforms, was su hope of heading off the reforms are too little an attempt to defend the murderous repression.

Military circles, rem attempted to stay in pow working population, ar would involve 'the peac

The intentions of the demonstrators at C dozens of deaths. Here the situation by Swedis interview with Archbish his assassination.

Against the Christ Democratic Party (which is p of the government) for responsibility for the repressi which is growing all the time.

I travelled around the fact zones and the popular areas day. The strike was almost to There were only a few sh which remained open. In factory areas the workers h put up banners everywh These areas were also satura with units of the military wh continually carried out cont and searches of the people.

### Guns

Myself and two of journalists were the only nesses to one of the big repressive actions that took p that day.

It was in the 'free z outside San Salvador. When got there, we were met by Red Cross personnel who been stopped from entering area by the military — despite fact that everybody knew th were wounded people down street at the factory.

While we stood there military convoy arrived from factory. There were two s



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government.  
and an attempt to make some  
ed by the United States in the  
of the masses. But the so-called  
late. The new regime can only  
archy by continued use of  
ing how Somoza in Nicaragua  
a genocidal attack on the whole  
ly talking of a solution which  
hundred thousand dead'.

They were shown by their attack on  
Romero's funeral, which led to  
ublish an eyewitness account of  
talyist Lars Palmgren, and an  
omero, conducted shortly before

# 've ever

anks, two or three trucks full of  
oldiers and a few small pick-up  
trucks full of armed men in plain  
clothes who were obviously  
police.

When I tried to take a picture  
of them they pointed their guns  
at us, cocked them and started to  
scream hysterically. Afterwards  
50 soldiers came and tried to  
disperse the people who had  
gathered around the Red Cross  
car.

At a factory called Aplar we were  
met by people crying hysterically.  
This US-owned factory had been  
closed since the middle of December  
last year. The workers had been  
asked to come to the factory that  
Monday to discuss with the  
management about restarting  
production.

When we walked into the factory  
we saw about 1500 people, mostly  
women. The floors and the walls  
were covered with blood. The fur-  
niture and the doors were all smashed  
to pieces. People were in a grief-  
stricken state and fainting around us.  
In one of the rooms four men and a  
woman — all workers — were lying  
shot dead on the floor. Outside in the  
house, near the perimeter of the  
factory there was another man lying  
dead.

It was a terrible sight, the most  
shocking thing I have ever seen in my  
life. The terror had gone on for  
approximately two hours. Those



who hadn't been killed or wounded  
had been badly beaten.

This act of terror against the  
workers wasn't mentioned in the  
papers of El Salvador. It just didn't  
happen. But I saw it with my own  
eyes.

After that we saw the police and  
the military surround the other four  
factory sites occupied by the  
workers. There was a lot of shooting  
but they still didn't let the Red Cross  
or any journalists get in.

One trade unionist later told me  
that in one factory, Sacos  
Cusplaplan, ten workers had been  
killed during an attack. In the  
censored newspapers, the official  
version is that the violence was  
provoked by extremists who started  
shooting at the police. One paper  
said only one worker was killed;  
another said four.

We can't know how many were  
killed in other factories — there is no  
official information. However,  
certain sources claim that 35 people  
were killed yesterday. No one knows  
how many were wounded.

The night before the general  
strike, the military put an iron ring  
around the University area, which  
had been functioning more or less as  
a liberated zone where the mass  
organisations could openly hold  
meetings. This cordon was made up  
of thousands of soldiers.

## Fascists

Gunfire continued throughout  
the night. I spoke to people who said  
that bombs had been dropped on the  
University area. I tried to get into the  
area but it was impossible. We heard  
the sound of shooting when we got  
closer to the area. Bullets even passed  
quite close over our heads. They were  
fired by army snipers from  
surrounding buildings.

Men in plain clothes were given  
guns by the police and they went into  
town to spread the terror. It was clear  
that these were groups of police and  
right-wing fascists.

According to reports which  
couldn't be verified, there had been a  
massacre in the University area.  
When I asked the officer whether  
anything special had happened they  
just gave me a scornful smile and  
said: 'No, nothing in particular,  
nothing special has happened'. At  
the same time I saw the soldiers who  
sat locked in their cars. Their eyes  
were shining with fear and their  
fingers were shaking nervously on  
the triggers.

## Civil War

It was a frightening atmosphere.  
An atmosphere of civil war. I felt we  
could be shot at any moment in spite  
of the fact that our car had 'press'  
marked on it in big letters. We didn't  
fear the left groups, as the official  
versions try to claim, but the soldiers  
and the plain clothes police goons.  
We were threatened with guns several  
times when we tried to take photos.

Government officials tried to  
argue that the general strike had been  
a total failure. On the contrary, the  
strike was a big success. The support  
was solid. We saw the response from  
the government — unparalleled  
right-wing terror.

They claimed that the bus drivers  
had been forced to take part in the  
strike — that the left groups would  
have set the buses on fire if they  
didn't join the strike.

But when I spoke to several bus  
drivers they told me they fully  
supported the strike and that right-  
wing groups had made telephone  
threats saying that they would shoot  
at the buses if they didn't start  
driving again.

The 17 March strike was very  
important, because it was the first  
real challenge from the revolutionary  
opposition to the government junta  
since the military occupation of the  
big estates to supposedly carry out  
the 'land reform' and the declaration  
of the new state of emergency on 6  
March.

## Revolutionary

It showed that the revolutionary  
coordination committee had massive  
support from the people, especially  
the workers. The strike means that  
the polarisation has deepened and  
today there is no possibility of  
negotiation.

It is extremely important that the  
working class movement everywhere  
wholeheartedly supports the  
revolution in El Salvador. The  
imperialists must be stopped from  
intervening. With this type of  
support we could see another  
Nicaragua.

## New El Salvador Solidarity Campaign formed

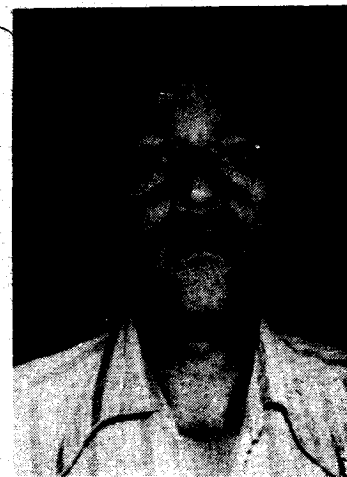
The next meeting of the  
Campaign will be 6.30pm 10 April at  
1 Cambridge Terr, London W2. For  
further information or to send  
donations write to: El Salvador  
Solidarity Campaign, c/o NSC, 20  
Compton Terr, London SE1. Or  
telephone 01-47 487.

## Interview with Jose Leonicio Pichinte, General Secretary, Popular Leagues of 28 February (LP 28)

ONE OF the major revolutionary opposition groups in El  
Salvador is the Popular Leagues of 28 February (LP28). Its  
general secretary, José Leonicio Pichinte, recently outlined  
its positions in an interview published by *Bandera  
Socialista*, a paper of the Mexican section of the Fourth  
International.

'The majority of the  
subjective and objective  
conditions for a revolutionary  
outcome to the crisis now exist',  
says Pichinte, 'but they still have  
to be nurtured. We are currently  
very close to an insurrectional  
movement.' The situation favours  
'a regroupment of forces,  
on the right as well as the left;  
everyone is choosing sides.'

'The fact that the Christian  
Democrats decided to join the  
new government, after the coup  
last October, made their right-  
wing character much clearer',  
explains Pichinte; the present  
crisis is 'forcing everyone to line  
up'.



## Deaths

Certain steps towards unity  
of those willing to fight the  
Junta were achieved in the  
'Revolutionary Mass Co-ordi-  
nation' set up on 10 January this  
year. This coalition included the  
three main groups and the  
Communist Party. The coalition  
organised a huge demonstration  
in San Salvador on 22 January  
— the anniversary of a peasant  
insurrection in 1932 — when  
over 200,000 people marched  
against the Junta. The police  
opened fire and about 60 people  
were killed.

The insurrection of 1932 was  
led by the Salvadorian  
Communist Party, founded a  
year before by Farabundo  
Marti. Marti had been a  
lieutenant of General Sandino,  
the inspiration of the FSLN in  
neighbouring Nicaragua. The  
insurrection was based on the  
workers of the big coffee  
plantations — coffee is still the  
staple basis of the economy of El  
Salvador. Despite the large  
mobilisations, the insurrection  
was crushed by the army, with  
30,000 deaths and the  
liquidation of the entire  
leadership of the Communist  
Party and the nascent trade  
unions.

Pichinte's main concern lies  
in the threat from imperialism,  
which is growing even more  
clear. His analysis, shared by  
many others in El Salvador, is  
that US imperialism has  
'sustained and prepared the  
reactionary forces for a  
confrontation' and that it is  
preparing to intervene even more  
forcibly into the affairs of the  
country.

## Arms

A direct military intervention  
by US imperialism is not ruled  
out. American marines were  
openly used to smash a strike at  
the El Porvenir commercial farm  
last December, Pichinte  
explains. 'In the last few months  
more than 60 tons of arms have  
come into the country through  
the port of Acajutla.' The arms  
consignments included tanks  
now used by the National Guard  
(police) and by the army.

Marines are training the  
Salvador army in tactics and  
methods of repression.

'We know that when they've  
exhausted all the political  
methods of controlling El  
Salvador, then all that is left to  
them is a savage military  
intervention.'

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<b>PAKISTAN GENERAL ZIA A SHAKY U.S. ALLY</b>		<b>CANADA LABOR PARTY MAKES BIG ELECTION GAINS</b>	
United Secretariat Declaration on Afghanistan			
<b>Intercontinental Press/Inprecor</b> Latest copy of IP/I volume 18 no 11 includes eyewitness reports of the repression in El Salvador, the development of workers mobilisations in Nicaragua and the setting up of factory committees in Iran. Also available: IP/I Volume 18 no 8 containing USSR declaration on Afghanistan. Single copies 30p + 20p p&p. Subs £11 for one year. Send to: IP-I, PO Box 51, London W2.			



# IRELAND

By Tom Marlowe

THE TUC General Council disaffiliated Tameside from its list of recognised trades councils at a meeting on Tuesday of last week.

This follows TUC anger at the trades council's plans to hold a conference on Ireland at which speakers were to include representatives of the Relatives Action Campaign — who campaign on behalf of Irish political prisoners — Women Against Imperialism, and the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

'The conference was not in line with the policies of the TUC', a spokesperson at Congress House told Socialist Challenge. He went on to say that any other trades council that held such conferences on Ireland would also face expulsion.

In attacking Tameside, the TUC is following a lead given first by the National Front and then by the Communist Party.

It was the NF which first drew attention to Tameside's plans to hold the conference. The

## How the NF, the CP and the TUC combined to witchhunt Tameside Trades Council

fascists threatened to hold a demonstration, alleging that the IRSP speaker was associated with 'the murderers of Airey Neave'.

The IRSP has consistently denied that it is the political wing of the Irish National Liberation Army, which assassinated Neave, but this slander was taken up and repeated in the *Morning Star*.

On 4 March, the *Morning Star* lied when it alleged that the idea for the conference had 'come from the ultra-left Irish Republican Socialist Party'. Two days later, in its report of the trades council meeting, the same newspaper alleged that the IRSP was 'said to be the political wing of the Irish National Liberation Army'.

Apparently these slanders were reported to the *Morning Star* by Frank Cooper, a

Communist Party member of Tameside Trades Council.

Cooper was backed in his witchhunt attempts by Frances Dean, who is the secretary of Manchester Trades Council, together with the chairperson of the North-west County Association of Trades Councils, and another CP member.

It was through Dean that further allegations were made against Tameside. She complained to the TUC that the trades council had not been playing its full part in the county association, and this excuse was another reason stated by the TUC for the expulsion.

In fact, this was just one more slander. For example, the recent treasurer of the county association was a delegate from Tameside.

A further part of what Tameside secretary Dave Hallsworth told Socialist Challenge was 'a campaign of malicious lies and slanders used first by the NF and then by the CP' concerned the publicity for the conference.

One sentence in this publicity had the phrase 'bring the war to Britain'. This, says Hallsworth, 'was taken completely out of context by the *Morning Star* and twisted to suggest we were advocating bombings in Britain.

'In fact we were referring to the propaganda war and to how the Irish war has already been brought to Britain by the Special Branch and SPG using methods first developed by the British Army in the North of Ireland.'

Despite the disaffiliation, Tameside plans to carry on with organising its conference. It has written to trades councils throughout Britain asking for support for its right to discuss Ireland.

Already several trades councils, including Tower Hamlets in London, have given their support. The IRSP is taking the slanders in the *Morning Star* to the Press Council.

This disgraceful conspiracy to stop free speech on Ireland should be forcefully resisted.

# WHEN BOOKS ON IRELAND ARE NOT ENOUGH

By Geoff Bell

THE last few months have seen the production of a plethora of books on Ireland.

This reflects something that is happening in British society generally; that Ireland will not go away so perhaps it is time to start taking seriously the 'Damnable Question', as one of the books is called.

A good few of the books are aimed at the British left. That, too, is indicative; there is no doubt Ireland has become more of an 'issue' on the British left than it has been for a long, long time. So it should be.

Best at explaining why are Michael Farrell in the second edition of *Northern Ireland: the Orange State*, Eamonn McCann in a revised edition of *War and an Irish Town*, and George Dangerfield in the paperback edition of *The Damnable Question*.

Each in their own and rather different ways relate and give evidence for the colonial and imperialist bestiality of the Brits, and how there will be neither a solution nor a long-term peace outside of a British withdrawal.

## Derry

McCann tells his story in his usual, jocular and racy style. It is in part a personal tale; relating his experience in growing up and politically organising in Derry, but mixing this with political analysis and some sharp polemic.

Michael Farrell has a different approach. His book is, as it was four years ago when it was first published, the most factual, best researched and most Marxist history of the North of Ireland state to have been published.

If that sounds a bit dull, only the most apolitical philistine would pass that judgement.

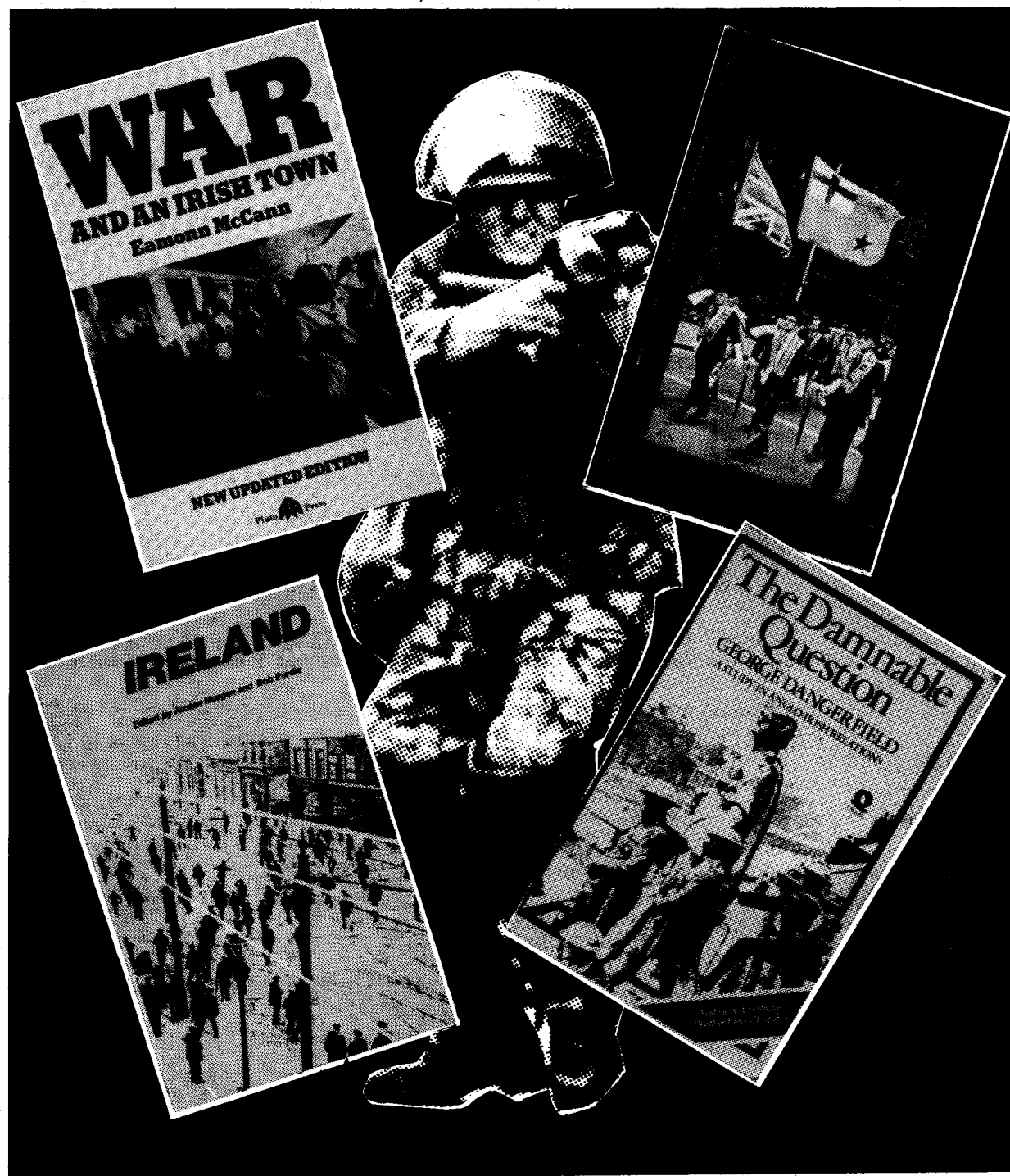
George Dangerfield's 'study in Anglo-Irish relations' is different again. His book is nearly 400 pages long and concentrates on the years which led to the birth of the North of Ireland state, 1906-19.

## Republican

That could appear somewhat specialised to sustain interest, but this period was a crucial one in establishing the progress of Ireland's British problem in the years that have followed, and Dangerfield tells his history in a powerful, engrossing way so that the book is almost like a thriller.

As with all good thrillers, it's very hard to put down. *The Damnable Question* — besides being a very good read — is, at £2.95, excellent value.

Two other, smaller publications fall into this general pro-Republican, pro-socialist category. *Irish Voices from English Jails* is produced by the Prisoners Aid Committee and is made up of writings, mostly in the form of letters, of Irish Republican prisoners



who have been incarcerated in British prisons in the period since the Second World War.

While at times the compilation makes sad reading, the book is ultimately a testimony to the courage, humanity and steadfastness of the prisoners.

D R O'Connor Lysaght's pamphlet *Limerick Soviet* tells of courage of a different kind — the 1919 general strike in the Southern Irish town of Limerick against British militarism.

The advanced, communistic

nature of this chapter from Irish history is something of which few socialists in Britain are aware. If for no other reason, that is why the pamphlet is worth reading.

All these publications tell of struggle, from second hand, and at times first hand experience. This is generally not the case with *Ireland — Divided Nation, Divided Class*, a collection of essays edited by Austen Morgan and Bob Purdie.

The book is described in its back

cover as 'a critical balance sheet of the Irish left's positions', a statement which brings to mind one made by McCann in his book:

*'The Irish left has not figured prominently in recent events. It has spent much time and energy — not to mention densely typed "discussion documents", in some of which even the footnotes have footnotes — agonising over the Provos: whether and how far particular Provo actions could be supported; which bombings, if any should be welcomed and which*

denounced.

*'As if it were the function of the left to act uninvited as advisors on tactics to a guerilla organisation.'*

This is the problem with *Divided Nation, Divided Class*. Certainly for those not acquainted with the debates on the Irish and British left, this book is a useful introduction.

Most of the familiar topics are touched on — whether Ireland is one nation or two, or one and a half; the nature of the Protestant working class; whether Leninism is compatible with Irish Republicanism.

## Lenin

But at times some of the contributions have a hint of a self-justifying, 'Why I am not involved in the Irish struggle'. References to Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Althusser are made to explain why the Irish question is 'problematic' and full of 'theoretical confrontations'.

Which may all be very true, but as Lenin himself said, those who expect to see a pure revolution will never see one.

The simple truth is that for the past ten years a real, actual, street-by-street confrontation has been going on in the North of Ireland. It is a bit frustrating to read polemics dressed up, and at times unconvincingly, as 'theory', which in the final analysis argue abstention from that struggle.

If this criticism sounds like anti-intellectualism it is not meant to. It is perhaps no coincidence that the two most informative, original and best researched essays in the collection come from Michael Farrell and Margaret Ward; both of whom are involved on a day-to-day basis with what is happening in the North.

## Academic

Theory is necessary to inform both the Irish struggle and the attempts to build solidarity with it in this country. But at best theory is a guide to action, or the provider of arguments for that action.

On occasion, *Divided Nation, Divided Class* falls short of that criteria, or it proposes a 'way forward' which is so far removed from reality that is not worth even attempting.

Thus it becomes, so to speak, academic.

**Northern Ireland: The Orange State**, by Michael Farrell. Pluto, £5.95.

**War and an Irish Town**, by Eamonn McCann. Pluto, £1.95.

**The Damnable Question**, by George Dangerfield. Quartet, £2.95.

**Irish Voices from English Jails** (Prisoners Aid Committee). £1.95.

**Limerick Soviet**, by D R O'Connor Lysaght. Plough Books, 40p.

**Ireland: Divided Nation, Divided Class**, by Austen Morgan and Bob Purdie. Ink Links, £3.75.

All available from: The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper St, London N1.



# END THE URANIUM CONTRACT

By John Parkinson, secretary, Preston Trades Council

**PRESTON Trades Council is stepping up its efforts to stop the illegal shipment of uranium from Namibia.**

The British Nuclear Fuels plant at Springfields near Preston is the destination of large amounts of uranium from the Rio Tinto Zinc mine in Rossing, Namibia.

Formerly called 'South West Africa', Namibia is formally under the jurisdiction of the United Nations, but it has been illegally occupied by South Africa for many years.

Since 1966 the UN has passed resolutions

calling on member states to boycott trade with firms exploiting the natural resources of Namibia. This is also the position of SWAPO, South West Africa Peoples Organisation.

The British government is one of the main culprits in breaking the boycott. Large quantities of uranium, which could just as easily be obtained from Canada, are purchased by British Nuclear Fuels from RTZ at Rossing.

It is transported by South African Airways from Namibia to Paris, and is then brought to Britain by lorries belonging to the Morcambe transport firm, Edmundsen's. Further shipment is by British Nuclear Fuels' own transport.

The campaign against the use of uranium

from the Rossing mine was launched in 1978 at an Anti-Apartheid conference in Manchester called by the North-west TUC. Since then the campaign has been developed by Preston Trades Council and the Lancashire Association of Trades Councils.

The campaign has been strengthened by the revelations in a recent *World in Action* TV programme, including its exposure of the role of Tony Benn in confirming the RTZ contract.

Last week Preston Trades Council organised a meeting attended by many labour movement organisations together with a representative of SWAPO, at which the following proposals were adopted:

\* to expand the campaign by aiming to organise a one-day conference in Preston against the Rossing contract;

\* to organise mass leafletting of workers at British Nuclear Fuels and other trade unionists explaining the conditions of Namibian workers and the significance of the Rossing contract;

\* to organise a campaign to boycott Edmundsen's, the firm which transports the uranium;

\* to take the campaign into the Labour Party.

The Rossing contract is a major economic boost to South Africa's grip on Namibia. The labour movement has to ensure that the contract is terminated.

## The reporter's 45-second mission in Namibia

COLIN WINTER is the bishop of Namibia in Exile, expelled from that country by the South African forces which occupy it because he supported a strike.

His speech at a rally held by the Campaign for Press Freedom last month received enthusiastic applause. Extracts are published here.

BRITAIN gave away a country, Namibia, into the hands of South Africa. Lloyd-George did it. We stripped blacks in that country of the right to vote. Therefore we have a responsibility for what happens in Namibia.

Two-thirds of the product of Namibia is robbed. Diamonds, copper, and uranium are brought to this country by Anglo-American. Workers are paid as little as £12 and £14 a month.

### Press

These are issues which workers in Britain can relate to. When I told the miners in Kent that some of the workers in Namibia were being paid 75p a week, and that miners were earning as little as £8 per month in an American-owned mine which makes a profit of £1m a year, they took an immediate collection and raised £250.

The cynicism of the British press is destructive — it's got to go. We had a press reporter on our mission. Our schools and hospitals have been burned down; missionaries have been deported by the South African forces.

This man came and spent 45 seconds on our mission. He asked two questions and then climbed into a South African helicopter and was flown out again.

His report in the British press was appalling. He accused my Church of being wanton killers, flagrantly accepting the Marxist SWAPO who go around plundering, raping and committing acts of violence.

This is believed. I had to threaten the particular newspaper with a complaint to the Press Council in order to get the right of reply.



Look for the money interest. When you have £7,000m invested in South Africa, is it any wonder that the press takes the attitude it does?

The Times and other newspapers take £15,000-worth of

advertising from South Africa. On one occasion three errors occurred in an advert. I wrote to *The Times* and they refused to publish my letter. The press is in collusion with killers.

South Africa itself, in the Muldergate situation, showed that the power to control and to distort is infinite. When you have the funds that South Africa has from its gold, then you can control newspapers in the United States and you can bribe editors and other people in various countries, and this has happened.

So the oppressed have got not only the prejudice of British people to contend with, but the corruption also of South Africa.

Worst of all, what happened about the thousand young Namibians who were slaughtered at Kassingu — the equivalent would be 55,000 English children cut down by bombs, by napalm and then finally by bayonets. That received two-inch references in three British newspapers.

### Benn

Let's have an alternative press, with a close solidarity which unites journalists with workers, students, intellectuals, and with the oppressed themselves.

The Labour Party has only just started an appeal for the Patriotic Front. God help us, how long will it take us to get into the 20th century? I want to know why the Labour government signed a contract with Rio Tinto Zinc, robbing Namibia of its uranium. (At this point the Bishop turned towards Tony Benn, with whom he was sharing the platform.)

The oppressed challenge us to make our actions strong and to make them now. Let the oppressed speak for themselves. Let's have dialogue with SWAPO — with those forces who are fighting the likes of Mrs Thatcher in other parts of the world.

### Struggle

In Namibia, when I took part in a workers' strike and was flung out, I brought over a black judge from New York. I wanted to put the magistrate and South African so-called justice on trial.

When the judge came out of the trial on the last day a black Namibian worker walked up to him. The man was in rags. He handed the judge 20p. The judge said: 'I don't want it. I'm a rich man.'

The Namibian said: 'Take it. It's for the struggle.' The judge from New York asked: 'What struggle?' The Namibian said: 'It's for the struggle of the black people in America.'

In short, it's one struggle.



## African National Congress suspends oppositionists

By John Hunt

**'FACTIONALISM' and circulating a document 'attacking the movement' were the reasons given by the UK regional committee of the South African underground liberation organisation, the African National Congress, when four ANC members in exile in Britain were suspended earlier this year.**

This incident was a turning point in a brave and bitter struggle for revolutionary politics waged by the four militants — Paula Ensor, David Hemson, Martin Legasick and Robert Petersen — and others within the South African Congress of Trades Unions, which is affiliated to the ANC.

In the course of that battle they have made the most important contribution to the development of a strategy for socialist revolution in South Africa to have come from any quarter in many years.

Their pamphlet *The Workers' Movement, the ANC and SACTU* explains their ideas, and how they fought for them in the face of overwhelming opposition from people who are widely regarded as leaders of the fight against apartheid.

The uprising of the South African workers and youth in 1976 caused a ferment of ideas

and discussion within the traditional organisations of the South African masses, such as the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress, which had been driven into hiding and exile by the attacks of the Verwoed government in the early '60s.

It was apparent that these organisations had not been able to play a role in leading the upsurge, and examining the implications of the new wave of struggle meant a reassessment of their politics. The current around the authors of the pamphlet were the most successful at doing this.

From 1977, their revolutionary politics were put forward in *Workers' Unity*, the official paper of SACTU, with Robert Petersen as editor. But the leaders of the ANC soon showed themselves to be utterly opposed to the line of *Workers' Unity*.

In April last year, Petersen was bureaucratically removed as editor. A campaign of haras-

sment was then launched by the ANC leaders against the militants involved, culminating in the suspension of the four.

The lead in this campaign was taken by the South African Communist Party, which is dominant within the ANC leadership. Why?

First, the ideas which the comrades argued in *Workers' Unity* were opposed to the SACP's notion that the struggle in South Africa is a 'national democratic revolution' and therefore that the question of fighting for socialism is not raised.

The authors of the pamphlet write: 'We have argued that apartheid in South Africa is rooted in the system of capitalist exploitation. National liberation for the black majority can only be secured through the overthrow of capitalism — through the seizure of state power by the organised working class, drawing all layers of the oppressed behind them.'

'Only on this basis, on the basis of a democratic workers' state, can our country be freed from poverty, homelessness, unemployment and tyranny.'

They point out that the ANC leadership's belief that it is possible to attain 'national

liberation without breaking with capitalism has led it into a dangerous attempt to forge links with the pro-capitalist, collaborationist Bantustan leader, Gatsha Buthelezi.

The pamphlet also argues against the idea, promoted by the ANC leaders, that guerilla warfare is in itself a strategy for the South African revolution.

'We have stood for the need to arm the mass movement of the oppressed led by the organised workers, against the apartheid regime of the employers. Every black worker knows that the struggle in South Africa cannot achieve victory without arms.'

'But the working class must be organised and mobilised in their hundreds of thousands, under a clear revolutionary programme and leadership, before the task of armed insurrection is placed on the order of the day.'

### Unions

The authors outline a practical strategy towards these objectives for revolutionary workers inside South Africa. They explain the need to build a fight against the South African government's plan to contain the workers' upsurge by imposing new state controls on unions, and by dividing migrant from urban-based workers.

They point out the tremendously positive impact of the growth of semi-legal independent black unions and the need to build these, while at the same time constructing underground networks of worker activists.

A correct emphasis is placed on the need for definite demands around which workers can organise, demands which can 'build bridges from the economic to the political, from the desire for reforms to a realisation for the necessity for revolution'.

### Party

There is one question which the pamphlet does not take up — whether the ANC, which as Petersen says is 'a broad combination of oppressed people with different class interests', the SACP and SACTU can be transformed into an adequate instrument for implementing the strategy outlined by the authors.

The fact is that they can't. The working class has to construct a revolutionary proletarian party.

This is not counterposed to fighting for a united front of all the organisations of the masses, including the ANC, against the apartheid state. But the workers require their own party to achieve final victory.

Socialists need to identify first of all with those fighting for revolutionary working class politics, and therefore with the gain which this pamphlet represents. It should be widely read.



**“I'm the fifth generation of miners in my family. I worked in the anthracite around Neath and Swansea. Swansea was more or less the headquarters of the anthracite. It was a strong non-conformist area — that's where I come from.**

Now the unemployment was not so bad in the anthracite. The other valleys of South Wales suffered tremendous unemployment — most of the miners were out of work. But in the anthracite the picture was somewhat different, in other words, it was an oasis in the desert of depression.

We had just emerged from the lock-out of 1926 and from then to 1939 there was a struggle going on to restart the union in places where it had been completely destroyed.

The scab union, the non-political union that the coal-owners permitted, was a consequence of the lock-out of 1926. In large parts of South Wales the South Wales Miners' Federation, the real miners' union, was not allowed to function. In Taff Merthyr, Parkandare, Fern Hill, in the Rhondda, Emllyn Colliery down in West Wales — they banned the union and there were largescale victimisations.

## Poverty

There was war on two fronts, you see. A war against poverty and a war for reestablishing the South Wales Miners' Federation in the pits.

And it was a struggle! You had men staying down in the pits by the hundreds to stop the scab union and to demand that they reestablish the South Wales Miners' Federation in the pits. Nine Mile Point, where hundreds stopped down, and in Parkandare, Taff Merthyr, Bedwas.

No one would go underground while some of the men were staying down, except that food would be taken down to them. In many instances the coal owners threatened to prevent food going down — to starve the men into submission.

Of course eventually they won out. They destroyed the scab union and they were able to establish themselves as the union representing the men in the South Wales coalpits. But they were trying days, difficult days, days of struggle in every direction. And the struggle was centred on the fight against the Means Test, the fight against unemployment, and for the reestablishing of the union.

The 'Means Test' meant that the income into the house was assessed and allocated to meet the number in the family. Where the son was working and the father was unemployed he was deprived entirely of his unemployment benefit. You should be kept on the wages of the son — that was the Means Test.

## Bankers

The Means Test was introduced by the government led by Ramsay MacDonald in 1931, the man that turned traitor — Ramsay MacDonald the blue eyed boy of the Labour Party. He went over to the Tories in 1931 during the so-called financial crisis — it was a crisis of the system, the crisis of capitalism.

The bankers demanded that they cut the unemployment pay or they wouldn't give any money. So they introduced the Means Test and cut the pay from 21s to 18s. The same thing is happening today, the same kind of policies are being adopted by this government cutting the social security.

In the Rhondda particularly, during that period, and in the other valleys of South Wales there were largescale demonstrations against the Means Test. It wasn't difficult for you to have thousands in a demonstration by just going around the streets making the announcement with a bell calling the people out.

The unemployed and the other people would come out. They were united demonstrations, by people who went to Chapel and people who didn't go to Chapel. There was unity against the Means Test.

It was very adequately described by Lewis Jones, a famous Communist

# 'Days of struggle in every direction'

# A South Wales miner remembers the '30s

**THIS weekend will see many young people from South Wales marching to the Wales TUC to demand action in defence of jobs. As they march many will be shouting: 'No return to the '30s'. DAI FRANCIS, a sponsor of the youth march, is former secretary of the South Wales Union of Mineworkers. He was a young man just starting life as a miner during the dreaded '30s.**

For Dai Francis the 1930s do not just mean poverty and depression, but a period of struggle on every front. The prime task was to rebuild strong union organisations, which had been smashed in the defeat of the General Strike in 1926.

Of course, it also meant a fight against the hated 'Means Test' which effectively cut unemployment pay. And it meant a struggle to keep up morale among the unemployed as they tried to become organised.

Later on Dai Francis joined the Communist Party, of which he is still a member, because of the struggle against fascism in Spain. JUDE WOODWARD talked to Dai Francis at his home in Cardiff about life in the '30s and its lessons for us today.

and novelist from the Rhondda valley: 'They were coming,' he said, 'over the mountains with bibles under their arms and beer in their bellies.' That's how he described the unity. Because Welsh people you know they go for extremes, don't they? You got the non-drinkers from the Chapels and the drinkers.

And they came together. That was the meeting point. The Means Test. They united against the Means Test. That was the '30s.

Now there was poverty, abject poverty in the '30s. It's a totally different standard of life today.

They couldn't afford to pay their rents and rates out of that money. We saw — in places like Aberdare and Rhondda — houses were left derelict, good, well-built houses. People couldn't give them away because no one could pay the rates. That's the kind of poverty there was in South Wales in the '30s.

People who owned houses left them vacant when they moved away. They couldn't find anyone to buy who could afford the rates.

## Food

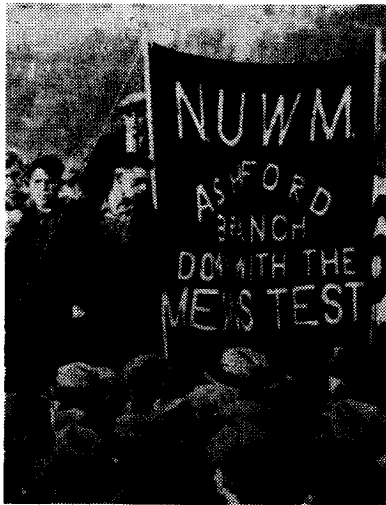
You'd see people by the market place in Aberdare, waiting for it to close, to see if they could get something to take away for nothing. Rather than take food or vegetables from the stall back with them, the stall holders would sometimes give it away. It was commonplace, in Aberdare and Merthyr, even in places like Neath that weren't so badly hit.

Mining was and is still a very difficult and hazardous industry. With all the improvements they have brought into the mines the miner is still engaged in an entirely different occupation to anybody else. He's fighting nature every day, isn't he?

He's trying to wrest from nature something that it's not prepared to yield.

That's not a very pleasant job is it, in the bowels of the earth in darkness for seven hours every day?

But people weren't frightened — they got accustomed to it. It's familiar, you're a product of that environment. I was only frightened

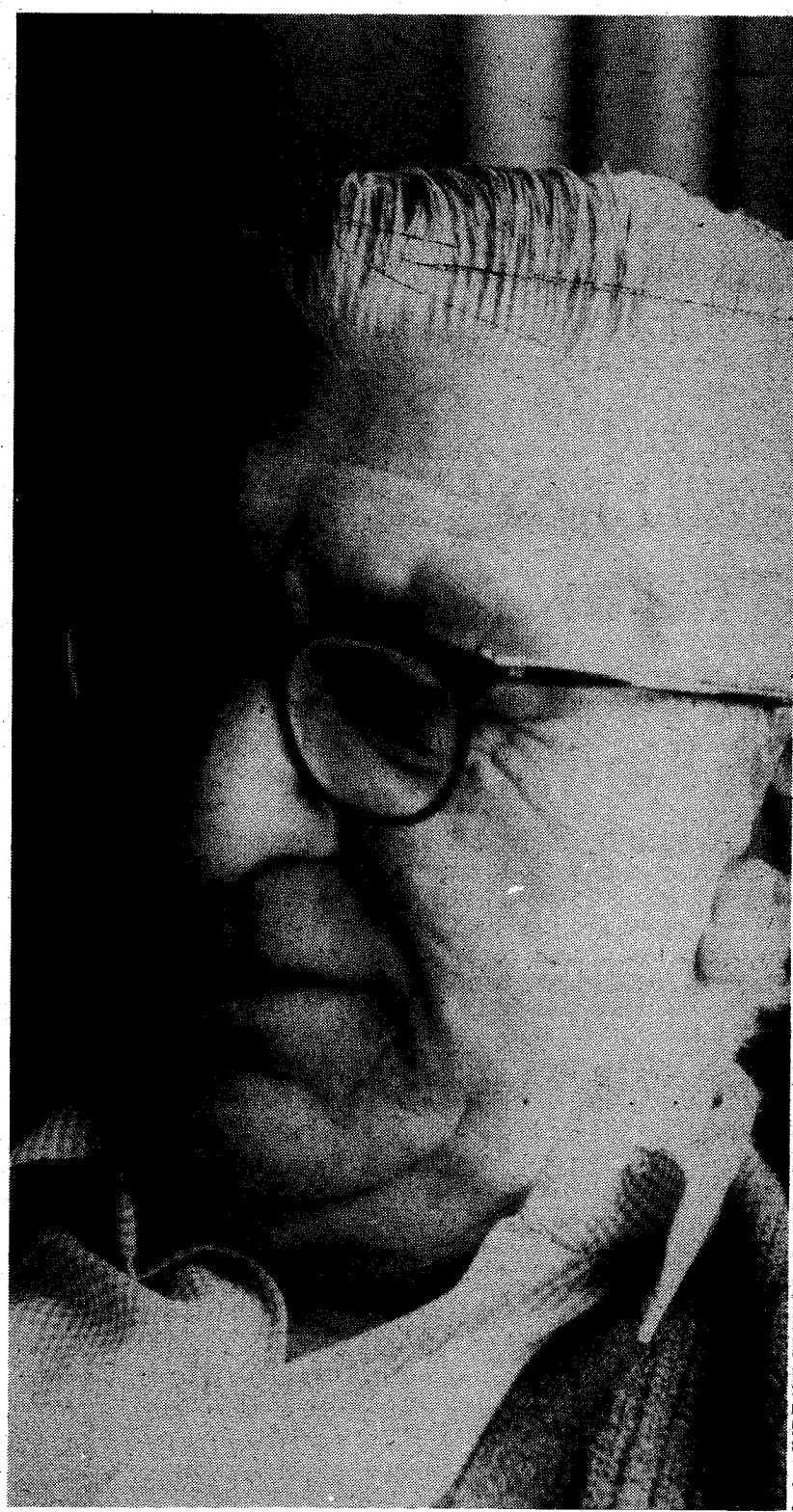


**THE 'Means Test' was introduced by Ramsay MacDonald in 1931. It effectively cut unemployment pay and broke up families.**

once, when my lamp went out and I was in darkness. I was a bit frightened then, but I was only a boy then, 14 years old.

That was the usual age to start down the mine then, 14. At that age you'd leave school on the Friday and start work on the Monday, in the pit. And you were proud to wear the moleskin trousers with the terrible stench to it.

We all wore moleskin because it was a tough garment, you had to have



**DAI FRANCIS: 'The future of Wales depends on its youth'**

tough strong clothes to work in the mining industry. The clothes were as tough as them that worked there.

Nowadays the young miners go on apprenticeships and they don't go down the mines until they are 20 or so. This is because the needs of the situation have changed — they've got to have the skilled electrician, and the trained miner to look after the machines.

## Love

It's not that they love us, the Coal Board. It's not that they love these young people that they're giving them apprenticeships. It's in the interests of the industry, not because of the interests of the youngster.

In those days mining depended much more on muscle power. It was pick and shovel work. It was driving the road forward, and the old fashioned method of the curling box — filling the coal into a box and carrying it from the face into a tram. All that has been done away with now.

It's all mechanised now. But that has its hazards, with all the noise and the dust underground. There's perhaps more danger today than there was in the '30s.

In those days you worked 8 hours underground each day. Now it's 7½. Other things have changed too. You've got longer holidays, you've got rest days. We used to work a 6 day week, we worked Saturdays. Not even able to go out to play football.

## Death

The coal wasn't nationalised in the '30s. By the time nationalisation came about you only had about four or five private owners left. The dominant force as far as ownership was concerned was the Powell

Duffryn. PD for short is what they called it in the '30s. And they said that it stood for Poverty and Death.

And they were ruthless in every respect. It was the scramble for profits. Profits came first, the same as it is today. The safety of the men was of secondary importance. Many people lost their lives in the mines, and the owners tried to cover it up.

I think these young people who are going on the march have got a good programme. In the '30s Lewis Jones could go out from his home in the Rhondda with a bell and in a matter of half an hour he could get hundreds of people round him, and speak to them about why unemployment happened in the capitalist system. Through lack of planning and so on.

## Youth

These young people can do something of the same thing by going about and having their meetings.

And unless the young people do it, well the older people won't do it for them. The future of Wales and every other country depends on its youth. The old people can help. But it's the youth who've got to take the initiative. They've got to awaken the conscience of the Welsh people about what is going to happen in the future.

After all, when all is said and done, it's 40 years since the '30s... 50 years now. That's half a century ago. There's not many of those people alive now; the people that led the hunger marches, that led the fight against unemployment and to rebuild the unions after 1926.

The ones who are alive may have the enthusiasm but they are old and the body just won't do it. That's why we need the youth. It's up to them now. They are the dynamic force in society.



# BUILD THE PARTY TOGETHER

## Letter from the International Marxist Group to the Socialist Workers Party

**'The political basis exists for us to construct a joint organisation...'**

**THE International Marxist Group conference, held six weeks ago, decided to redouble the efforts of the organisation towards overcoming the fragmentation of the far left.**

**In particular it decided to step up the fight for unity with the SWP. Below we print the letter sent to the SWP leadership by the IMG.**

Dear Comrades,

We are writing to inform you of the decisions of our national conference and the recent meeting of our Central Committee in relation to the SWP.

First, our conference voted to withdraw the resolution sent to you in July 1978 as the basis of relations between our organisations. Our conference passed a new resolution **'Why Fighting for a Joint Revolutionary Organisation with the SWP(UK) is a central task**

for the IMG', which has recently been published in Socialist Challenge.

Second, our conference affirmed our characterisation of the SWP as a revolutionary organisation, and on the basis of this decided to propose to you that the political basis exists for us to construct a joint organisation. We believe that such a political basis for a common organisation exists; and that such an organisation could act as a powerful pole of attraction to workers breaking from reformism, as well as challenging the CP as the main organisation to the left of the Labour Party. Such an organisation could have an impact far greater than the sum of its two parts.

On the basis of these conference decisions, our Central Committee decided to propose to you a joint meeting of our two leaderships to discuss this question.

We further make the following proposals for joint activity:

- \* That the IMG and SWP launch a joint campaign to build a recall Defend Our Unions Conference.

- \* That we organise a joint march to the TUC between the South Wales Youth March Committee and the Right to Work campaign.

- \* That we discuss the possibility of fighting for the fusion of the trade union tendencies that our organisations support.

- \* That our organisations fight for the fusion of Rebel and Revolution.

We are sure that many areas of joint work could be established within the framework of a fight to build a joint organisation.

We are well aware of the fact that there are many differences between us of both a tactical and programmatic character; those which we regard as central are outlined in the document passed at our conference. In particular we think the SWP should be part of the Fourth International. Nonetheless we feel that these should be debated out in a common organisation based on democratic centralism.

We remain convinced that the irresponsible splitting of the revolutionary left is an obstacle to the building of a serious alternative to reformism, and thus to winning workers to revolutionary socialism and building a revolutionary party. We therefore urge you to seriously consider the proposals that we make, and to suggest an early date for a meeting between our respective leaderships.

We look forward to a speedy reply.

Revolutionary greetings  
International Marxist Group Political Committee

# Youth march against unemployment 'THE TORIES ARE ASKING FOR BLOODY REVOLUTION'

By John Roberts, Cardiff

**ON Wednesday 9 April, the final leg of the South Wales Youth March against Unemployment will set out from Pontypridd, following the River Taff down through the Taff Vale until it passes Transport House, the headquarters of the Welsh TUC in Cardiff.**

In the build up to the march, thousands of leaflets have been distributed to young people along the route of the march.

In no uncertain terms, it explains why young people should be there:

'School students are going to get the hot end of the poker when they leave school. Redundancies in the steel industry will mean less mining jobs as demand for coal drops; shop employment will disappear as there will be less money to buy luxury commodities; eventually, much industry in South Wales will go...'

Lots of school students that we spoke to read the front of the leaflet and shrugged their shoulders. 'I'm not bothered', said one, 'I'll just stay on at school and then go to college.' But the leaflet, produced by Cardiff Revolution Group, points out the hitch in this argument:

'Less jobs means that more people stay on at school into sixth form and more try to go to university and college; this means more competition and fewer successful applications.

'And as education spending is being cut, the future isn't very bright for anyone.'

In Pontypridd itself, people nodded their support when we told them that the march was coming through their town. Cafe owners and record shop assistants agreed to advertise the march to their customers, young and old.

### Leaflets

The girl in the town's main newsagent's said that she would put leaflets inside all the music press! Even the local YMCA warden said that she'd give some out at the Friday night dance.

Of course, we went to the schools as well. It's a steep climb up to the grammar school, under the railway and across the bus station. The retired miner who had offered

to show us the way walked slowly, his laboured breathing telling of years spent in the pits.

'The Tories,' he said, 'are pushing us too far. They're going to have a bloody revolution on their hands if they're not careful.'

The driver of the school bus which ferries students back up into the valleys was just as enthusiastic. He let us on the bus to leave leaflets on the seats for after school.

When school came out, everyone wanted to know what was going on, when the march was coming, what the film *Harlan County* was about. They were interested to find out that the South Wales NUM Executive and the Port Talbot strike committee were supporting the march, but were more impressed when we told them that it was youth groups doing most of the work for it.

Lots of people said that they'd tell their friends about it. No one said anything against the march.

### Easter

The connection between youth unemployment and the steel strike was most clearly expressed when we went to leaflet schools in Splottland.

The local school was just opposite the GKN factory, where strikers from Llanwern were down picketing the factory. They were fed up with standing outside a factory as the scab private lorries sailed in, and where several hundred steel workers were working after voting to return to work two weeks ago.

But they still gave a rousing response to our news about the youth march. As one of them said, 'We're fighting for our kids' jobs as well as our own'.

Over Easter youth in South Wales will be showing that they're fighting too, for their jobs and for their parents' jobs.

The march can show school students, apprentices and youth on the dole that there are real possibilities of getting together to fight for what they need.

That's the sharpest plus for supporting the youth crusade through the valleys this Easter. The youth march is really going to stir things up for young people in South Wales. We want to jog the TUC into doing something about redundancies. As the leaflet says: 'This is the beginning, not the end!' See you on the march.



# INVEST IN THE FUTURE

## WE MADE IT!

**WE MADE IT! In the very last week we cracked our £2,500 target in the Fiver to Fight the Tories campaign.**

**Thank you to the 315 supporters who sent us a fiver, making up over half our quarterly fund total.**

Thanks to all the other supporters who sent us donations, however small, and to the International Marxist Group branches which organised fund-raising events for the paper. And thanks to the International Socialist Alliance comrades whose generous £400 donation took us over the top of our appeal.

A number of IMG branches were not too helpful over the past few months, raising not a single

Fiver to Fight the Tories. They were: Aberdeen, Brighton, Bristol, Coventry, Colchester, Glasgow, North Manchester, Manchester District, Hull, York and Portsmouth.

Fortunately for them (and unfortunately for the rest of us) it looks like the Tories will be around for a while yet, so they still have time to raise those fivers and redeem their reputation!

Meanwhile the next Fund Drive is now under way, with a £2,500 target by the end of June. So please keep raising that money.

This week we thank:

SE London IMG	£25.00
Triona	3.17
Burnley IMG	5.00
Anon	5.00
Swindon IMG	5.00
Wyn & Gareth	5.00
Southampton IMG	20.00
Liverpool IMG	20.00
ISA cdes	400.00
Birmingham IMG	75.00
<b>Total this week:</b>	<b>£563.17</b>
<b>Final Total:</b>	<b>£2,876.97</b>

### SOCIALIST CHALLENGE BANKER'S ORDER FORM

Your Bank .....

Name of Account to be debited .....

Account Number .....

Our Bank Socialist Challenge

Lloyd's Bank, Upper St, London N1.

Account No 0179678

Sorting Code 30-94-57

Amount to be paid ..... Monthly

First Payment due ..... And on the same date in the month thereafter.

Signed .....

Send to: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP







## UNDER REVIEW

# Go and see 'Richard Pryor Live in Concert' and laugh

By Gerry Kelly

If you've got a sense of humour you don't think about black comedian Richard Pryor's jokes until you've left the cinema. While you watch him you just laugh until you feel sick.

Pryor is, perhaps, better known in this country as an actor whose films include *Blue Collar*, *Silver Streak* and *California Suite*. In America the other side of his talent — that of a stand-up comedian — has been on display for several years with live performances and LPs like *'That Nigger's Crazy'* and *'Bicentennial Nigger'*.

In this film (now showing at Gate Two, Brunswick Square, WC1), we get about 70 minutes of Pryor haranguing his audience, using only his face, the microphone and his body as props.

He is a brilliant mimic and a superlative mime artist but more than

that he is the funniest man I have ever seen. His humour, like most humour, consists of making people look ridiculous, extracting laughs from otherwise serious situations and making fun of himself.

So OK, what does he talk about? Well, his subjects range from heart attacks — a very funny account of his own affliction — through boxing, why you should run instead of fighting 'cos your ego will heal quicker than a broken jaw' to the foibles of animals and sex.

### Animals

His stories about animals are so keenly observed that when he 'talks' the part of a Great Dane or a Doberman Pincher you feel sure that, if they could, this is just the way they would talk.

It is his sexual comedy that might cause problems with some people.

There seems to be on the left a body of people for whom sex is so serious that no jokes about it are permitted. This view has its points, but Pryor's sexual skits often start as though they are going to be offensive only to redeem themselves with a cunning twist in the tale.

He is also what is sometimes called fowl-mouthed and, judging by his mania for stamping out swearing in the factories, Trotsky would not have approved. But then even Trotsky had the odd loony idea.

Pryor, like Lenny Bruce, and like all real comedians, is a moral and social commentator. When you've stopped laughing you start thinking.

Pryor's satire, though, is not overtly political. The nearest he gets to a stab at politicians is when he is talking about black men who are always feeling their pricks.

'Yeh, Even Andy Young does it when he talks to the President. Young

says, "Oh, sorry Mrs Carter!" She says, "Oh, that's alright Andrew, it's bigger than a peanut!"

### Wheaties

His satire is more directed at white middle class America and the police. ("Two coppers are roughing up a 'brother' when one of them drops him and says, "shit", he broke") He also takes several digs at 'Macho man', the kind of guy who says, 'I can fuck for eight or nine hours, Jack'. Pryor comments: *'Three minutes of serious fucking and I need eight hours sleep... and a bowl of wheaties.'*

Anyway, if readers of Socialist Challenge are worried about being offended, I can put their minds at rest. I saw the movie twice so I must be in the company of a good few worthy trendies. Some of them didn't laugh, but I heard not one howl of protest.

So do yourself a favour. If you haven't seen this film yet, take a night off from the revolution, go and see Richard Pryor Live in Concert and laugh. But watch it — your face might crack!

### THE OTHER BOOKSHOP

THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD  
Buchi Emecheta  
Heinemann £1.25  
OUR LIVES — YOUNG PEOPLE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES  
English Centre £1.75  
HAMBURG AT THE BARRICADES  
Larissa Reissner  
Pluto Press £1.95  
328 Upper Street, London N1.

# GREAT BLACK MUSIC II

By Skip Laszlo

## The Blues

In July 1978 Buddy Guy appeared at the 'Blues Festival' organised at the Hammersmith Odeon.

After patronising cat calls and shouts which some in the audience thought was 'blues behaviour', he walked off stage and didn't return until after the concert was scheduled to end and half the audience had left.

Then, to a respectful silence, he announced 'this is how it sounds in Chicago' and played the blues until 1am, long after the management wanted the event to close.

Blues is the most popular form of traditional black music. In a society where the marketplace regularly intrudes on culture, it is not surprising that the (white) record companies should pressure artists into playing the 'blues' they say will sell. This in turn begins to affect what their consumers want and expect.

## Clowning

The effect of this on white bands is that they stop playing blues. Though hard to believe today, both the Rolling Stones and Fleetwood Mac began as blues-only bands.

Blacks have responded differently. Although there is pressure on blacks trying to 'make it' to abandon blues for rock and soul, the blues is kept alive.

When Buddy Guy or Junior Wells play at a black club in Chicago, the clowning diminishes, they play more actual blues material, and they refrain from playing short segments of songs. Most of the clowning, pop material, and song snatches are reserved for whites only.

At Hammersmith, Guy was not in a clowning mood — and those who stayed were lucky.

John Lomax, a white blues archivist, had a hard time in 1940 getting Blind Willie McTell to play him the real blues, instead of the music he reserved for whites.

But Big Bill Broonzy, who had been playing with a backing band and an electric guitar for decades, was made to go back to an acoustic guitar by the whites who 'rediscovered' him in the 50s. They introduced him as an ex-ploughhand although he had been living in Chicago for 20 years.

## Chicago

These stories, recounted in Paul Garon's book *Blues and the Poetic Spirit*, show that the blues is much more than the product sold in the market.

*'The blues', says Garon, 'is the musical and poetic expression of working-class black Americans, and as such it has served and continues to serve a specific function in a specific social context.'*

The blues certainly grew up in the rural South where it can still be heard today. But with the urbanisation of the black proletariat after World War Two, 'urban blues' became more and more important. The centre of this was, and is, Chicago, which produced Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf and Buddy Guy to name but a few.



Moses 'Whispering' Smith in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1973. Photo: Val Wilmer. Apologies: the uncredited picture of Milton

Graves playing percussion in a Harlem street that appeared on the Under Review page last week was by Val Wilmer.

Thus, what is essential to understanding the blues is appreciating it as a record of the experiences and the dreams of Blacks in

America. Even the moves to musical assimilation mirrored the attempt of a layer of urban blacks

to become 'middle class'. Motown records, the only major label owned by blacks, will not record jazz, nor does it record blues except when its soul artists do a little reverse assimilation.

The blues is the thread which carries the heritage of all black music. And none of the innovators, from jazz to soul, forget that link, especially jazz artists.

## Jazz

The blues 'is the foundation of jazz', said the great Charlie Parker. This understanding is as central to the new music as to other eras.

Billie Holiday was not a blues singer; her publisher forced her to call her autobiography *Lady Sings the Blues* because blues was more popular in the fifties. She was a jazz singer, but she did sing the blues.

Not all blues musicians are jazz musicians, but all jazz musicians play the blues.

Lester Bowie, the innovative trumpeter of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, encountered another new music group rehearsing. *'Lester said "don't you-all ever play the blues no more?" and he sat down and played with (us)... and we just played the blues until it made me cry.'* recalled a member of the group, the Revolutionary Ensemble.

## Lyrics and spirit

It is no wonder those striving for white acceptance fear the blues. It has always been brutally honest, and rebellious.

Consider these lyrics:  
Bring your yo-yo, wind the string around my tongue  
Mama knows just how to make the yo-yo hum  
Bring your yo-yo daddy, and we will have lots of fun.

(Hattie Hart — Memphis Yo-Yo Blues)  
Explicit, unashamed sexual lyrics came from both male and female blues singers. They also sang laments of their treatment, something common for men but not so common for women in the rest of music.

The blues documented the drudgery of work:

I've got to go to work now,  
Get another start,  
Work is the thing that's breaking my heart,  
So I've got some sense of misery blues.

The police and the authorities, including the church, also found their way onto the wrong end of blues lyrics:  
*'The oppression of the day and I can't even write my name.'*

(Texas Alexander, Levee Camp Blues)  
'Now some folks say a preacher won't steal  
But he'll do more stealing than I get regular meals.'

(Joey — Preachers Blues)  
Is Blues what you played? No, the history of blues is a musical lyrical self portrait.  
The next chapters to hear it are: the appearance of blues in London, Hammersmith Odeon, April 5 and 6, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, April 14, Queen Elizabeth Hall, who will be reviewed in a subsequent issue. You should book now.



