

# Socialist Challenge

## OPERATION STRONG STATE IN ILFORD



# FIGHT THE BAN



Sisters and Brothers,

The decision to ban all marches in London for two months amounts to an unprecedented attack on civil liberties.

It threatens a number of demonstrations already planned:-

- \*National Union of Students Demonstration 3rd March
- \*International Womens Day March 4th March
- \*Anti-Apartheid Movement demonstration 18th March
- \*Friends of the Earth Demonstration 19th March
- \*Haringey Labour Movement Anti-Racial March 15th April

The right of the labour movement to organise and demonstrate is a basic right fought for over the years. At a stroke it has been removed in the capital city for two months. Further it is clear that if the precedent is set such a ban may well be used again in the future. For example the Notting Hill Carnival could be banned if the National Front threatened to march in that area and any other labour movement marches could be dealt with in the same way.

We consider that the broadest possible campaign must be launched against this attack on civil liberties.

- SYD BIDWELL (Labour MP, Southall)
- TOM LITTERICK (Labour MP, Selly Oak)
- GWILYM ROBERTS (Labour MP, Cannock)
- BARRY CLARK (National LP Political Education Officer)
- DAVE COOK (National Organiser, Communist Party)
- MIKE GAPES (LP Student Organiser)
- TERRY PARRY (Fire Brigades Union)
- PAUL HOLBORROW and PETER HAIN (Anti Nazi League)
- KEN LIVINGSTONE (Labour Councillor Hackney & Prospective Candidate for Hampstead)
- TED KNIGHT (Labour Councillor for Norwood & Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Hornsey)
- ERNIE ROBERTS (Prospective Labour Parliamentary Candidate for Hackney North)
- TARIQ ALI (Editor, Socialist Challenge)
- DUNCAN HALLAS (Chairman, Socialist Workers Party)

# Editorial

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Photo: COLIN CHALMERS

## After Ilford— before hindsight

AT THE LABOUR PARTY conference last year, Home Secretary Merlyn Rees stated quite categorically that the Public Order Act was too wide in its scope. He argued: 'Racialism is the problem today. Let us not confuse it with public order. There may be public order reform, but let us deal with the National Front for what they are — racists, not to be confused with normal political parties. This is the direction in which we should go.'

We have now had two experiences of how the Labour Government has enforced the Public Order Act: Tameside last October, and Ilford on Saturday. For the Labour Government the problem was not racism but 'public order'. The bans were aimed at demobilising the anti-fascist movement and, in particular, driving a wedge between revolutionaries and reformists on this issue. In this the Government has been aided and abetted by the Labour left and Communist Party who have consistently called for the banning of National Front marches as an alternative to the mass mobilisation of the labour movement.

They have forgotten the lessons of the Thirties. They have forgotten that it was the mass united action of the labour movement at Gardiner's Corner and Cable Street which smashed Mosley's fascists. They have forgotten, too, that the Public Order Act was introduced to stop such 'threats to public order'.

While the anti-fascist forces have been demobilised and split by these bans, the National Front has been accorded the full protection of 8,000 police in Manchester and 5,000 police in Ilford. In doing this the State has helped contravene Section 5A of the Public Order Act, which states that stirring racial hatred is an offence under the law.

The lessons are clear: the bans are essentially aimed at the anti-fascists. They constitute a massive attack on the democratic rights of the labour movement. At the same time, the State is given the opportunity to strengthen its repressive techniques with all the paraphernalia of riot control tactics. Furthermore, in the eyes of the masses, the 'trustworthy' State appears to have prevented 'two bunches of extremists' from fighting it out on the streets.

The notion that the bans have increased anti-fascist consciousness is wrong. At worst, the NF may even appear as a 'persecuted minority'.

We do not have an abstract position on the question of bans. We judge them on the basis of whether or not they aid the defence of the racial minorities the fascists seek to persecute. We remain opposed to the fascists being given a platform by the media; we continue to support local Labour councils who ban the fascists from their halls. But we insist that the Public Order Act is used to defuse and defeat anti-racist and anti-fascist mobilisations.

Not only will the London ban affect several planned anti-racist marches over the next two months, but the NUS demonstration for higher grants has been transferred to Birmingham, and the Windscale anti-nuclear protest cancelled. More confident than ever after Ilford, Martin Webster is also trying to provoke the cancellation of the Notting Hill Carnival. Given the fascists' friendship with Scotland Yard, they might even succeed.

We believe that the spokespersons of the Anti Nazi League were mistaken in their analysis of the ban and the Public Order Act. Although complaining about the equivalent ban on anti-fascists, they hailed the ban as a 'victory'. In doing so they let the reformists who did not mobilise for Ilford, including the overwhelming majority of the League's sponsors, off the hook.

The fact that none of the League's speakers on Saturday denounced the ban, and all but Peter Hain were members of the Socialist Workers Party, is doubly regrettable. Because of this position the League was unable to give any lead against the numerous police provocations of the picket. An urgent post-mortem is necessary, and if the spokespersons of the League want to build a strong Anti Nazi League they must involve those affiliated to it and the existing anti-fascist movement in its future decisions. The confusion at Ilford shows that internal democracy is not a luxury in the fight against fascism which the League can do without.

A number of figures in the London labour movement, including Ernie Roberts, Ted Knight and Ken Livingstone, have sponsored a meeting on 2 March to discuss the best possible way of fighting against the ban.

We are in full support of this meeting and all other initiatives to get this anti-democratic ban lifted. In the meantime the anti-fascist organisations and activists should take a long and hard look at the events which began at Lewisham and Ladywood and ended in Tameside and Ilford. On the last two occasions the far left was successfully isolated from the broader anti-fascist forces. We now have to move rapidly to reverse that process.

# Ilford Saturday 25 February... Ilford Saturday LOW INTENSITY

CONFUSION is probably the only word that sums up reactions to last Saturday's events in the East London suburb of Ilford.

After the police commissioner had imposed a two month ban on all marches in the Metropolitan area, both National Front and anti-fascist demonstrators changed their plans to comply with the ban. At least 5,000 police mounted a massive security exercise to enforce the decision.

Anti-fascists leafleted a section of the borough,

while the NF had a 'mass canvass' elsewhere, then picketed the school where the fascists held a meeting under police protection.

All are agreed on these facts, but on their interpretation there could hardly be less consensus. In our editorial we maintain that the imposition of the ban was directed against anti-fascists and was not, as the Anti Nazi League argues, a victory for the left. We consider that the facts of what took place in Ilford last Saturday speak for themselves.

### Tuesday 21 February

At a press conference to build Saturday's counter-demonstration to the National Front's planned march in Ilford, Paul Holborow, organising secretary of the Anti Nazi League, announced that the ANL has produced 50,000 leaflets and a special poster to counter the Nazis.

Also present are Barry Hugill, press officer of the Redbridge Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, Joe Simmons, organiser of a planned 'cabcade' protest drive by hundreds of taxi drivers on Saturday morning, and Brian Smith of the all-London Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist co-ordinating Committee.

All are agreed on the need for mass mobilisation. Ford body plant shop stewards from nearby Dagenham works call for 'the biggest anti-fascist, anti-racist demonstration in London in years.' As many as 10,000 anti-fascists are expected.



### Wednesday 22 February

Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir David MacNee announces a two-month ban on all public processions in the London area.

The National Front's march in Ilford is stopped. So is the National Union of Students demonstration for higher grants, the Windscale anti-nuclear protest, and several planned anti-racist marches in the London area.

National Front activities organiser Martin Webster says between 1,000 and 1,500 of his members will still be in Ilford for a 'mass canvass' and by-election meeting. The ban is supported by the Labour, Liberal and Tory candidates.

### Thursday 23 February

Martin Webster announces that the National Front will march the full length of Ladbroke Grove on August Bank Holiday — a provocation to get the West Indian Notting Hill Carnival banned. Webster makes his announcement after being briefed by Scotland Yard on the march ban. He adds: 'Every single requirement by the police we have agreed to do.'

The editor of the Ilford Recorder writes in a front page comment: 'Now is the time for

Parliament to stop passing the buck and take firm action to ban forever all political marches and street demonstrations'.

Home Secretary Merlyn Rees, speaking in the Ilford North constituency, says: 'I will support the police in the exercise of their responsibilities for maintaining public order' (our emphasis).

### Friday 24 February

The Morning Star reports that Redbridge CARF has cancelled its counter-demonstration and reports that 'it had called for a mass picket in Ilford on Saturday afternoon were not correct'. The taxi-drivers 'cabcade' has also been called off.

Peter Hain, press officer of the Anti Nazi League, says 'We will be instructing our 2,000-plus supporters to co-operate fully with the police at all times and avoid any punch-ups.'

'Our supporters will first be dispersed in small groups to leaflet local streets and will then converge on the Front's meeting for a peaceful picket. We will be obeying in full the terms of the Commissioner's ban.'

The South Essex Communist Party announces it will be distributing leaflets outside WH Smiths in Ilford High Road at 2pm.

The police begin to turn Barkingside into an armed camp. A playing field adjacent to the police station is commandeered and several huge marquees erected. Throughout the day supplies are ferried in, including operational equipment. The rest of the playing field will be used as a helicopter pad.

Additional receiving and other unidentified equipment is installed on top of the police station. To further simulate a 'war game', shopkeepers are encouraged to board up their premises, giving the whole area the appearance of being under siege.



The police encampment close to the NF meeting

### Saturday 25 February

The police siege operation gets underway as 5,000 officers from the Essex, City of London and Metropolitan Police forces are drafted in, backed up by the Special Patrol Group and

horses. The aim is to split the borough in two, containing the anti-fascist forces in the southern end of it while allowing the NF free reign in the northern Hainault area. Fleets of police buses line Cranbrook Road and other Ilford streets, while more are spotted waiting in countryside lanes way out to the east of the borough.

Also in use is a new helicopter-mounted camera which can beam sharp colour pictures to a long range ground situation and to a mobile control unit operating within a mile. At the request of officers in the ground station or mobile unit, general views of 'trouble spots' can become instant close-ups of those involved.



### 11.45am

Anti-fascists begin to arrive at Seven Kings Station for the Anti Nazi League protest. They receive two leaflets.

The ANL's says: 'The decision to ban the march of the National Front is an important victory for all who are concerned at the growth of a Nazi organisation in Britain. We do however reject the assumption that Nazi marches and anti-racist marches should be regarded in the same light, and feel it would have been more appropriate to have a ban specifically directed against Nazi organisations alone.'

It adds that 'the decision of the National Front to flout the spirit if not the letter of the law... must not go unanswered.'

An appeal to all anti-fascists from the International Marxist Group has a different

'mass canvassing' and other means. It will give them the appearance of being a 'persecuted minority' while, in reality, the ban is a massive attack on the democratic rights of the labour and anti-fascist movement....

'The Nazi march has not been banned because it was a blatant racist provocation but because of the threat to 'public order'. In other words, the anti-fascist movement is so strong that the police could not guarantee the safety of Martin Webster and his cronies.'

### 1-1.20pm

Anti-fascists still arriving at Seven Kings Station at the time given by Redbridge CARF for the original counter-demonstration. People move off from the car park in groups of 20-30 with bundles of ANL leaflets.

Although the intention is to mount a mass peaceful picket of the NF meeting at Ilford County High School, Fremantle Road, three miles north of Seven Kings, groups of ANL supporters also travel south to Ilford Station and out of the constituency. There is a great deal of confusion as ANL supporters are dispersed over several square miles.

### 1.15pm

Police start blocking off roads in the immediate vicinity of Ilford County High School. The first ring blocks off Mossford Green, Mossford Lane and Fairlop Gardens, the second Clayhall Avenue and Longwood Gardens. Police cameras are in action on top of a block of flats in front of the school.



Leaflet teams working northwards through the constituency are forced to walk in groups of two ten yards apart. One group goes for fish and chips. A minute later a full police bus and three SPG vans arrive outside the shop. Some Jewish residents join the leaflet teams, others stand guard outside synagogues. The police are everywhere, two or three on most street corners.



Photo: G. M. COOPERSON (Socialist Challenge)

by 25 February ... Ilford Saturday 25

# OPERATIONS

## How they saw it



The school where the NF met is at the centre of the map

### 2.20pm

Police start setting up a new series of road blocks three quarters of a mile distance from the school. Buses on the Cranbrook Road are stopped just north of Loudon Avenue and diverted. There is effectively another road block on the roundabout near Fairlop school to the north east of Ilford County High.

The nearer the leafletters get, the more often police helicopters pass over their heads. Groups of police are now placed at thirty yard intervals along streets like Horns Road. Even if you are in a well-strung out group of people the police stand in front of you so you have to go single file.

### 2.30-3pm

The main picket assembles in Fremantle Road to the south of the school — which looks more like a fort. As well as standing in large grounds, it is surrounded by a brick wall surmounted by a spiked fence. Then there are the police.



Behind the police lines in Fairlop Gardens are police horses. Two minutes trot away at police HQ other police horses are nibbling at the grass.

### 2.45pm

Anti-fascists approaching the school from the south west are prevented from joining the picket in Fremantle Road. The 300 pickets are ushered northwards into Clayhall Avenue where they assemble behind the police cordon. More police from the City of London force are brought up behind them.

### 3.00pm

After 15 minutes of confusion, the police officer in charge addresses the crowd through a loudspeaker and tell them all to join the main picket in Fremantle Road (about 150 yards away the other side of a roundabout).

To do that he instructs them to take a wide circle north of the school — total distance about

three-quarters of a mile. The crowd decides not to move. A Socialist Challenge reporter who takes the route encounters police cordons and is only allowed through on presentation of a press card.

### 3.25pm

IMG comrades use a loudhailer to start a meeting on the smaller picket at which representatives of all organisations present are invited to speak. A discussion over whether the ban is a victory ensues.

### 4.10pm

A decision is taken to disperse. National Front members are seen at a distance in Mossford Lane. Pickets surge forward but are stopped by a police cordon. Pickets then disperse although this is opposed by some individuals. There is a further fear that some Front members may have infiltrated this picket.

### 3.15pm

Meanwhile... back at the main picket in Fremantle Road around 1500 anti-fascists are gathered. Paul Holborow speaks followed by Nigel Harris.

Harris says the distribution of 50,000 leaflets is a great step forward. In the local elections in May when the Front are standing 1,500 candidates he argues we must organise mass canvasses like this to distribute 2½ million leaflets.

Sean Docherty speaks from Teachers Against the Nazis. All the speakers are from the Socialist Workers Party. Other than Peter Hain, none of the sponsors of the ANL appears to be present.



Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)

The fascists' protectors greet pickets in Fremantle Road

### 3.30pm

While the meeting is still continuing two police officers are heard discussing the possibility of driving a police bus into the pickets.

A few minutes later Paul Holborow asks the crowd to move to the pavements to make way for an ambulance. Some of the crowd are reluctant to do so, feeling they have been messed about by the police.

Before there is a chance to discuss, a police cordon at the back of the picket opens and City of London police charge through throwing people onto the pavements and into other police cordons.

Fifty or more police also storm the lorry of the Maoist East London People's Front, who have been urging people to attack the NF meeting, arrest most of those on board and drive away the lorry.

No ambulance ever arrives.

### 3.30pm

Police are seen chatting with individual fascists and directing them from the top end of High Street Barkingside down Fulwell Avenue and Mossford Lane into the side entrance of the school.

### 3.30-3.50pm

The crowds on the pavement are now pushed back into the road. Anti-fascists who had moved down Trinity Road in response to police pressure find another police cordon coming up behind them.

There are jokes about Grunwick and anti-fascist sandwiches, but the mood and humour is definitely low.

Pickets complain of the lack of direction from ANL either in terms of what's going on or stewarding, despite the fact that the police are obviously breaking the 'agreement' to allow a mass peaceful picket.

### 3.50pm

Paul Holborow announces

that we will picket for a further ten minutes. There are some half-hearted chants of 'Nazis — Never Again'. Socialist Challenge supporters in Trinity Road sing the Internationale to buck people up and chant 'No Bans, No Platform, Smash the National Front' and 'No Bans on Anti-Fascists, Defend the Right to Organise'. The rest of the picket is almost silent.

### 4.00pm

Over a loudhailer Chris Harman (SWP) repeats the claim that this is a victory. The picket begins to disperse.

NF members continued to be ferried into the meeting by bus until 4.30. The police charge the remaining anti-fascists out of Fremantle Road.



PETER HAIN, press officer of the Anti Nazi League, says he was 'very pleased' with Saturday's events. 'It was a disciplined operation which promised to be peaceful and with a few minor blemishes it was,' he explains 'because of the direction of the League rather than the police.'

'If you mobilise on a mass basis and the State reacts by imposing a ban, that's a limited victory. What do we do — demand they don't ban the Nazis?'

'The ban does allow the police to protect the Front in a more controlled way, but it clearly puts the Front on the defensive by preventing them marching. I'm opposed to the blanket ban, and when we have had an opportunity to assess the Ilford operation some moves will have to be made on the ban.'

'The thrust of the work has to go back to the factory floor, the schools and the estates, rather than the Saturday shows — although we should still have these when necessary.'



Peter Hain addressing the picket. Left: Paul Holborow

PAUL HOLBORROW, organisation secretary of the Anti Nazi League, describes Saturday's events in Ilford as an 'undoubted success'. 'It was a victory,' he says, 'in stopping the Nazis marching. The ban against the Nazis is unquestionably a victory for anti-fascists.'

'The motivating factor in the decision of the police and the Home Office was the threat of a massive mobilisation by the League and other anti-fascist forces. The deputations to the Home Secretary, by us and numerous others, produced absolutely nothing until they knew there would be 10,000 out against the NF.'

'We reject completely the equation between the Nazis and the anti-Nazis. It's quite possible under the police's powers to have a specific ban on Nazi organisations, which is what we have been calling for. The Anti Nazi League will be discussing this week what action we should take against the ban on anti-fascists.'

'The whole operation in Ilford was unquestionably extremely successful. Anti-fascist pressure produced the ban and stopped the Nazis marching. They threatened to roam the streets, but in the event it was the anti-Nazis who did, distributing 50,000 leaflets in 95 per cent of the constituency.'

'The action of the police was provocative and heavy handed. We had an agreement with them to mount a picket across Fremantle Road close to the school. They broke it by trying to shove the anti-fascists on to the pavement. It created a great amount of confusion, and it was only by good direction and stewarding that we prevented

pickets walking in to the trap. 'The press barrage in the preceding days was aimed at stopping anti-fascists coming, but 2,500 did. Ilford was an example of drawing in new people to the campaign. It was the start. The next focal point will be the May local elections, for which we've got 2½ million leaflets on the stocks.'

BRIAN GROGAN, National secretary of the International Marxist Group, says that the ban under the Public Order Act was 'clearly aimed' at the Left and anti-fascist forces. 'It undermined the mobilisation, and gave an excuse to the reformists to demobilise. But the operation on the day itself — as it will be for the next two months, was essentially aimed at the Left.'

'The police, as in Hyde, worked hand in glove with the Front. The anti-fascists were harassed and intimidated and finally prevented from holding a peaceful picket. It should now be obvious that the ban has operated to allow the fascists the fullest freedom while concentrating the biggest repressive force for many a year on the Left.'

'A campaign against the ban, linked with the fight to mobilise the labour movement to impose 'No Platform', does not give the fascists free reign. To join in the call for a ban does.'

'It is only in this light that we could have been prepared for the way the police reneged on their deal with the Anti Nazi League to allow a mass picket. It is true that we were overwhelmingly outnumbered by the police. But with the eyes of the whole movement on Ilford, the League should have asserted its right to hold the mass picket — putting the blame for any violence that ensued on the police.'

'If the police had moved in, we would have been able to mobilise the whole labour movement in our defence and shown what it means to rely on the State to do our job. In the event, the leadership of the League capitulated all the way down the line and thoroughly demoralised the demonstrators.'

'Towards 4pm, we did begin to hold our ground in Trinity Road and the police backed off. This could have been done from the word go, if the League had had political clarity. The next step is for a mass campaign to organise throughout the labour movement to get this ban lifted.'

From a report by Godfrey Barker in Monday's Daily Telegraph: 'The Front contrived to distribute 35,000 leaflets in Ilford on Saturday — "Join Britain's great new political party" — as well as dominate the conversation on apparently everyone's lips.'

'It also had the satisfaction of seeing Mr Rees commit 5,000 police into the area to secure 21 arrests, all left-wingers, as successive speakers pointed out at the enthusiastic rally.'

MARTIN WEBSTER, national activities organiser of the NF at Saturday's rally: 'Of course we are opposed to the ban, but we have still scored a victory. We are meeting and the red hooligans have been kept away from us.'



Photo: G. M. COCKBON (Socialist Challenge)

## Middlesbrough Socialist Unity gets all the press coverage

'WE DON'T vote socialist. We vote Labour'. That was the response one Socialist Unity canvasser received in the run-up to the Ayresome Ward by-election in Teesside on March 9, reports STEVE POTTER.

The remark is a good comment on the state of the Labour Party in Middlesbrough. The Labour councillor who represented the ward in the past did not attend enough council meetings to remain in his post; while those who cross swords with the right-wing clique that runs the Labour Group get short shrift.

Last week, five Labour councillors were expelled from the Group for daring to vote against a pleasure jaunt to British Columbia to commemorate the town's most famous son — Captain Cook!

Middlesbrough is in the heart of Poulson country. The large local shopping centre stands as a tombstone to his memory. Unlike Tyneside, however, no charges have been brought against local dignitaries.

Poulson never did the repairs on the Whinneybanks Estate — repairs that would have benefitted working people rather than swindlers. Houses with no gardens, smashed windows, wrecked fences and gates bear testimony to decades of neglect by council bureaucrats.

The crimes of the Labour Party do not stop there. Notoriously dominated by a right wing 'catholic mafia', the response of the local Labour Party leader, Shopland, to the decision of the Labour Party Conference to back free abortion on demand was: 'It wasn't my party that decided it'.

The working people of Tyneside vote Labour because of their hatred of the bosses and the Tory Party. 'I'm afraid I'd

vote for a rabbit if it was standing for Labour, lad' was one response to a Socialist Unity canvasser last week. But the interests of the working class are way down on the list of priorities of Labour's representatives once they close the Town Hall door behind them.

Only the Socialist Unity candidate, Alan Theasby, has declared that he will have nothing to do with the secrecy of council committee rooms. If elected, he will call regular mass meetings of the local workers' organisations and community groups to report on what is going on inside the council and put his policies before the meeting.

The story doesn't change when it comes to the trade union bureaucrats on Teesside. The local paper recently featured a prominent advertisement from the electricians condemning the handling of a pay dispute by their full-time official.

Redundancies negotiated by

the steel union bosses will push up unemployment even higher than the nine per cent at present. In nearby Hartlepool, one man in six is now unemployed.

All this fuels the frustration and anger of local people. Some doggedly stick to Labour. Others will say that they will try anything to maintain living standards. For some that will mean Socialist Unity; for others, the National Front.

Since the successful counter-leafleting in the ward by the local anti-fascist committee, the Front has kept its head down. Only one NFER stood trembling with patriotism outside his run-down council house to defend his 'patch' against the alien hordes of the anti-fascist committee, clutching a rounders' club behind his back.

Only one campaign is getting any press coverage, and that is Socialist Unity. This is hardly surprising since only Socialist

Unity is doing anything more than fetching in the votes. Two public meetings will be held in the ward in the final week of the campaign.

The first, in the heart of the large council estate, will hear Alan Theasby on 'Labour's betrayals — The Socialist Alternative'. The second meeting, on 8 March, will be held in the part of the ward which is home to the few Asian families that have become the butt of the NF campaign.

Entitled 'Workers United Against Racism and Fascism' the main speaker at this meeting will be Tariq Ali. Other speakers will include a representative from the anti-fascist committee, and the president of the local polytechnic students' union, which is presently fighting the racist quota system that will mean the expulsion of scores of overseas students.

On March 9, Ayresome will

have a clear choice. A vote for Socialist Unity will mean support for real socialist policies for Middlesbrough; for the desperately needed fight back against Labour's cabal at the town hall, and a shot in the arm for genuine workers' democracy.

A vote for Labour will mean that once more the workers of Middlesbrough have assigned their interests to the never opened 'pending' file of Shopland and his bureaucracy.

### MIDDLESBROUGH PUBLIC MEETINGS

'Labour's betrayals — A Socialist Alternative.'

Speaker: ALAN THEASBY, Socialist Unity Candidate for Ayresome Ward.

2 March, 7.30pm at St Matthew's Church Hall (corner of Aeklam Road and Whinneybanks Road).

'Workers Unite Against Racism and Fascism'

Speakers include: TARIQ ALI, editor, Socialist Challenge, ALAN THEASBY, Socialist Unity candidate, LEWIS DAVIES, President, Teesside Poly Students' Union (personal capacity), MARTIN HANSELL, Cleveland Anti-fascist Committee. Invited: Communist Party and Labour Party candidates for Ayresome Ward.

8 March, 7.30pm Main Hall, Newport Road Junior School, (Greta Street near bus depot).

Socialist Unity Benefit  
Saturday, 4 March, at RAOB Club, Woodlands Road, 7.30pm.  
Disco Late bar, Raffles, Admission 40p.

### Brixton

THE DEATH of Marcus Lipton, Labour MP for Brixton, means another by-election within the next few months. Socialist Unity will be discussing its intervention and whether to put up a candidate for Brixton. It will be approaching other groups in the area and nationally — especially the Socialist Workers Party — to discuss the possibilities of a united electoral slate.

The campaign could provide an important political focus for socialists and anti-racists in the area. The fascist NF has already announced that its intervention in Brixton will make Ilford look like a 'tea-party'.

### SOCIALIST UNITY MEETING LAMBETH CENTRAL

To discuss whether to stand an election candidate — and if so, whom. All left-wing organisations and independents invited.

Thursday, 9 March, 7.30pm at Tate Central Library, Brixton



MONEY being collected inside fascist meeting



FASCIST leader Webster in Ilford

## Swindon In line for election unity

Supporters of Socialist Challenge and Socialist Worker in Swindon, together with independent left-wingers, have agreed to seek to build a broad-based socialist electoral front for the council elections in May, reports ED WALLER.

This follows a recent letter

from Socialist Challenge supporters to Socialist Worker supporters in which they argued: 'We believe that it is in all our interests to seek to build an open, united and democratic campaigning socialist body which can group us together on as many issues of agreement as possible.'

'Of course,' the letter continued, 'this does not imply unprincipled compromises, or

submerging important political differences. But in our view it does mean allocating those differences a certain sense of proportion, for there are many points of principled agreement also.'

After discussion, it was agreed to hold a meeting open to all those wishing to develop a united fight-back against the Government's anti-working class policies. Sponsorship is now being sought for this

meeting, to be held on 12 March, at which the main task will be to open up a discussion on the possibility of standing in the May election, and what might be gained for the left as a whole. A subsequent meeting will need to agree on a platform and a candidate.

In the view of local Socialist Challenge supporters, much could be achieved by an open and democratic campaign.

## School students counter NF in Wandsworth

FIFTY school students met in Wandsworth last Thursday to start to organise and counteract the National Front infiltration of schools in this SW London borough, reports a school student Socialist Challenge supporter.

Some of us had already produced a leaflet attacking the NF for the anti-racist picket and demo held at the educational television centre. We went on to call an

all-Wandsworth meeting, publicising it through informal contacts and members of the Socialist Teachers Alliance in Wandsworth secondary schools.

Six secondary schools in the borough were represented at the meeting, which heard speakers from the executive of the National Union of School Students and from Wandsworth Against Racism.

Everyone felt the need for school students to take some kind of action against racism and fascism: all were in favour of supporting the mobilisation for Ilford last Saturday.

Discussion centred around organising support for local anti-fascist activities; how to take up cases of racism in individual schools, whether it comes from teachers or fellow students; curriculum content; and pressing publicly for school students against fascism.

We will continue this discussion at our next meeting. It was agreed to go back to schools, and organise meetings there to discuss the issues, getting help from teachers where necessary. Some students hoped to get a school resolution against NF leaflet-

ing. The next all-Wandsworth meeting will take reports from schools, and set up a committee — two delegates per school, but open to everyone to attend — to organise meetings, produce leaflets, and so on.

The meeting showed that school students are both willing and able to organise. We hope that in other areas similar organisations will be set up. Because of the likelihood of victimisation, the author's name has been withheld. Those interested in the Wandsworth meetings should contact Socialist Challenge.

'Dark days in sight' with Duffy

## VOTE FOR BROAD LEFT

A TORRENT of support for Terry Duffy, the right-wing presidential candidate in the current elections of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, is brewing among the gaffers' friends on Fleet Street.

JOHN GRAHAM argues that the March postal ballot in the union will rouse journalists, like Woodrow Wyatt of the Sunday Mirror, from their usual disinterest in the labour movement to stir up a patriotic fervour in support of the union's right wing. He explains what steps militants should take in the face of the outcry we can expect.

Fleet Street's outpourings next month once the ballot is underway will be backed up by such notable employers' journals as *Truamid*, *Iris* and the *Economic League*. All hands will be joined in these circles to ensure that Terry Duffy fares well. And it won't only be the usual 'reds under the beds' stories.

Support for Duffy will be centred on his approval for Labour's anti-working class policies, and for Michael Edwardes — British Leyland's new hatchet man.

The only other alternative to Duffy in the second ballot is Bob Wright, the Broad Left candidate. This is whom militants in the AUEW must back. If Terry Duffy succeeds in the second ballot it would be a big blow for the working class.

Dark days would be in sight



TERRY Duffy

for rank and file militants in the union. And it would be seen as a further indication of support for wage restraint and the 10 per cent limit. Duffy's victory would encourage the Labour Government to make further attacks on the living standards of the working class as a whole.

Bob Wright and the officials of the Communist Party dominated Broad Left grouping in the union have done little to make sure Wright gets elected. In the first ballot the votes of all left candidates — Roy Fraser, A. Wilkins, Ian Morris, and Bob Wright — gained more votes than that of

the right wing. Duffy's votes were greater than Wright's, but only by a narrow margin.

However promising these first ballot votes might seem, Duffy has many cards still to play. The right wing has the whole weight of official union policy and Government policy pulling in its direction. And it can always count on the ready 'help' from the bosses' pundits in the press.

The record of the Broad Left since the September elections leaves much to be desired. No strategy whatsoever has been advanced to involve the membership in a struggle against the employers and the Government.

The November national conference of the Broad Left called for a campaign around the national wage claim, leading to a conference of convenors and shop stewards. This was to act as a counterweight to the inevitable sell-out the right wing would attempt. But nothing has been done to implement this resolution.

Hugh Scanlon — the last Broad Left presidential candidate — cast the vote of the AUEW against the firefighters at the TUC without a murmur from the union. This vote spoke volumes of what was likely to happen to the national engineering claim which was well above the 10 per cent limit if it was left in the hands of the right-wing officials who dominate the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

Dangerous lessons of this absence of struggle in the union have been drawn by sections of the Broad Left. Prominent Broad Left figures have responded by moving from a position of simply failing to resist the right wing and the Labour Government to actively co-operating with their anti-working class projects.

Derek Robinson, AUEW convenor at Austin Longbridge and a member of the Communist Party, voted for the Edwardes' carve-up in



BOB Wright

Leyland, and has spent the last three years policing management's policies in the factory.

Jimme Arlie, another CP convenor from Govan shipyards, was instrumental in getting the order for the Polish shipbuilding contract accepted on the Clyde. This left workers at Swan Hunters isolated, and they now face 110 redundancies.

The bulk of the rank and file in the Broad Left is not heading in this dire direction. Rather it is looking for a lead to build a fightback against the right wing. But it's just not possible to build such a movement, when it is led by such anti-working class characters who

consistently act counter to the interests of their own members and those of the union's left in general.

If the result of the March election is uncertain today, it is because the Broad Left officials have steered a course which takes its ranks down the wrong road. To put the rank and file on a fighting road a socialist alternative in the union is vital. Militants involved in the fight for policies which can mobilise the bulk of the union's members in opposition to the betrayals of the right and the inactivity of the Broad Left leaders can help create this kind of alternative.



SCANLON Greeted by pickets



FREDA Cruise, AUEW shop steward, addressing women members striking against the grading system, used at Magnavox to get round the Equal Pay Act.

## A retreat on wage claim

In the John Boyd page of the January edition of the AUEW Journal, this little ditty was quoted under 'thought for the month':

'Think truly and thy thoughts  
Shall the world's famine feed.  
Speak truly and each word of thine  
Shall be a fruitful seed.'

The message apparently, was

that workers don't need boring old things like wage rises to purchase goodies from supermarket shelves: good thoughts and honest words are sufficient to fill empty bellies.

And in the accompanying article John Boyd did indeed speak honest words: 'To ask for a £70 minimum rate for Skilled... is not the extravagant claim which the Press and Radio pundits delight in portraying.'

'It represents an increase in wage costs of only 7.9 per cent.... these minimum and

differentials makes sense and can be justified.'

But three weeks ago these 'honest words' failed to produce the promised 'fruitful seed'. Led by Boyd and Hugh Scanlon of the AUEW the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions ditched the original claim of £70 and replaced it with one of £60.

The original AUEW claim had also demanded a 35 hour week without loss of pay. The Confederation reduced that to a claim to be implemented over a

five year period, a capitulation which was predictable considering Boyd had not even mentioned the 35 hour week in his article on the claim.

For its part the Engineering Employers Federation have upped their offer to £57 and a meeting of the Confederation executive a fortnight ago in York decided to try and close the gap between this offer and the reduced claim.

The claim has been rewritten without any consultation with the rank and file. The November National Committee

of the AUEW unanimously called for a recall National Committee and special shop stewards quarterly in all districts immediately after the reply to consider industrial action. No such district shop stewards meetings were held.

The most dangerous aspect of the employers' offer is that it is made on condition that further locally negotiated increases above the minimum time rate must not push increases above the Government's 10 per cent limit.

The traditional opposition in

the AUEW, the Broad Left appeared too concerned about the coming election for the president of the AUEW to mobilise the rank and file against the retreat from the £70 minimum. With their candidate Bob Wright veiling for the 'moderate' vote the message seems to be — don't rock the boat.

But by itself, Bob Wright sitting in the presidential chair will no more maintain the standard of living of engineers than will John Boyd's 'thoughts for the month.'

## CP view of democracy

## The Broad Left road to stifling debate

'LEFT-WING newspapers only confuse union members and should be banned at branch meetings and weekend conferences'. So argued Broad Left members at a Manchester divisional council meeting of TASS, the white collar section of the engineering union, last year.

DICK DAY writes that this kind of disregard for democracy continues unabated in the union, and the Broad Left has led this attack — all in the name of 'extending the union's democracy', of course!

The Broad Left in TASS is organised through small groups at the union's divisional level. It holds monthly meetings in London before the union's executive committee meets. The only 'open face' it has is regular mass meetings at the union's national conference.

In the '60s the grouping had fairly broad support, and was responsible for transforming the union from a small craft-based union with a right-wing leadership to today's 150,000-strong union led by the Broad Left, with the Communist Party as the main political force.

Despite these advances in the union, the Broad Left has concentrated in recent years on fighting for changes in the union's structure which are totally undemocratic.

Under the banner of 'streamlining the union', 'more effective decision making', 'cutting costs', and giving the executive committee 'a national authority', the Broad Left has taken steps which seriously curtail the control of rank and file members over the affairs of our union. Just take a few examples.

\* The executive committee has been cut by half, and its members are now elected on a regional basis. Branches are represented on 26 divisional councils, but the executive

committee is based on 11 regions. And so the direct accountability of the EC to the branches disappears.

This step has been taken despite the lack of support from conference delegates in 1975 which even the intense Broad Left lobbying couldn't change.

\* The Broad Left expelled members who tried to modify its proposals, so that the executive committee would be more accountable to the membership. This happened in 1976, after some of us in Manchester won a resolution along these lines at our branch meeting.

\* The executive committee last year made proposals to give divisional councils, rather than branches, the powers to elect conference delegates. The early proposals from the EC gave these councils the right to amend and select which branches resolutions go to national conference.

Branches would thus be denied their ability to send resolutions directly to conference and, after discussion and debate on all resolutions, to mandate their delegates.

With widespread rank and file opposition, the EC finally compromised, and agreed to divisional conferences. This reduced the power of branches, but increased three-fold participation in decision making, in

comparison to the original proposals.

\* The Broad Left opposes implementing a policy of electing all full-time union officials. They are rather selected by executive members, and appointed for life.

Furthermore, union members are bound by rules which prohibit canvassing in elections. The Broad Left opposes the right of union candidates to publish election addresses. Of course canvassing does take place, but with these policies it is 'underground' with plenty of distortions and innuendos.

How does the Broad Left justify these measures? It argues that a modified TASS structure will bring us closer to the engineering section of the Amalgamated and Union of Engineering Workers, thus helping along the process of amalgamation. But in reality, it has been these undemocratic processes which John Boyd and the right wing of the engineering section have seized on to hold up the process!

Five years of negotiations over amalgamation have now taken place between different sections of union leaderships. The merits and deficiencies of the 'Working Proposals' for amalgamation have been more than aired. The engineering section is losing ground, because it has dragged its feet for so long.

Other engineering unions, like the vehicle builders and the boiler makers, have merged with the transport workers' union and the General and Municipal Workers' Union. This has prompted the engineering section to extend an open hand. And none other than Frank Chapple of the electricians' union has grasped



SCANLON (left) and Boyd at the opening of the AUEW museum. Scanlon will soon be put in a glass case. Let's hope Boyd joins him soon.

it! The undemocratic terms which Chapple will want to hold to in any amalgamation aren't difficult to imagine.

Misconceptions and deals behind closed doors excluding members will only make matters worse for the union as a whole. Today's measures are a far cry from the early struggles for amalgamation which really

did involve the rank and file.

An important way to ensure that the AUEW becomes a fully amalgamated and democratic union is by extending and developing joint shop stewards committees, involving both staff and manual workers. Local conferences of shop stewards committee delegates

should meet to develop tactics for defending living standards, and to work out a strategy to strengthen their union through democratic amalgamation. Combine stewards committees could also become a powerful lever in the fight for democratic amalgamation if national structures were developed.

# Turning policies into actions

THE FIRST Divisional conference ever held by the Technical and Supervisory Staff section of the engineering union is scheduled for 11 March. GRAHAM WILLIAMS from Leeds TASS argues it will be an opportunity to take stock of the union's policies.

And at least on two counts, he maintains, the union has good policies: against wage restraint, and for women's right to abortion.

Whenever the union's executive has given a lead, the membership has responded tremendously. When TASS fought a long and hard strike against victimisation at Hopkinson's firm in Huddersfield,

the EC was able to harness union members behind its call for boycott, collections, and support for the pickets.

The need to link up in active solidarity with other workers is especially important today. The Fire Brigades Union returned to work in defeat. And Labour is talking about a permanent incomes policy.

The only way to break the wage restraint imposed by the Government is by launching a political campaign aimed at educating and organising our members. At the end of Phase 2 this kind of step was taken, but much more needs to be done today.

From this year's conference, we must take our policies back into the membership and translate them into actions. We need to demand that the leadership of the union call on such bodies as the Liaison

Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions to appeal for national industrial action against Phase 4.

Our union has always supported the LCDTU. Now is the time to get this body to organise a co-ordinated fight-back.

And the gains we have made in involving women in the union over the past years will strengthen the fight-back. We have now introduced an equal pay campaign; our women's committees are functioning regularly; and meetings for women only have led to a much greater involvement of women at all levels of the union.

Much remains to be done, especially because for the last three years the rights of this group of members has been directly threatened by proposed restrictions on abortion rights.

This presents us with a challenge. Can we defend our members' rights, and win the entire membership behind this fight? If we are successful, we can be certain that it will lead to an even greater participation of our women members.

The continued growth of the National Abortion Campaign — whose activities we have continually supported — augurs well for the future. But we need to promote the ideas and activities of the campaign amongst more than branch activists. It has to be taken to the membership as a whole: in the factories and in the offices.

The stakes have been raised by the Government. We can only face them if our union is won to policies which can prepare us for a fight-back. The Conference on 11 March will give us the opportunity to begin to organise to do just that.

# TASS branch backs Czech dissidents

'What's Charter 77? That, in effect, was the response of the executive council of TASS — the Engineering Union's white collar section — when my branch called on it to take up the campaign against repression in Eastern Europe, writes JOHN HUGHES.

Towards the end of last year, the Manchester East branch of TASS (Technical and Supervisory Section, AUEW) condemned the suppression of human rights in Poland and Czechoslovakia, especially in relation to the signatories of Charter 77.

By raising these issues in the union, socialists can answer their critics who — quite rightly — claim that we campaign against repression under fascist regimes, without questioning repression in the Eastern Bloc.

My branch's resolution instructed the No. 10 divisional council to contact sympathetic groups in the area with a view to setting up a local Charter 77 solidarity committee. And it called on the executive council to publicise the Charter aims in the union journal, and to protest to the Czech embassy.

The response of the executive

was amazing. It claimed it could take no action 'due to lack of information on the subject matter'. This despite the fact that among the members of the executive is John Forrester, who happens also to be a member of the Labour Party's national executive.

In January 1977, the latter body passed a resolution condemning 'the arrest and harassment by the police' of the Czech citizens who signed Charter 77. Manchester East branch has now sent our executive a copy of a strong speech by Eric Heffer, recently published in Labour Focus on

Eastern Europe. We await its response.

Charter 77 is, of course, only one aspect of repression in E. Europe. In Poland, there have been reprisals against those who organised strikes against the proposed increase in food prices. In Rumania, 4,000 miners were arrested or sacked when 90,000 miners went on strike against cuts in their living standards. Just a few more examples...

By building campaigns on such issues, and by drawing in broader sections of the labour movement, we can demonstrate that we support all workers' struggles against repression.

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# Labour Party youth Action needed!

On 25 March, the Labour Party Young Socialists conference will take place in Llandudno, for a change. Unfortunately little else has changed.

VINCENT MOSS, from Hemel Hempstead LPYS, reports on the growing opposition to the inactivity and useless policies of the leadership, which is incapable of any action that might disturb the left bureaucracy.

As a result of the orientation of its leadership the LPYS was totally inactive during the fire-fighters strike, or any other fightback against the Government's policies. The one campaign that the leadership has hesitantly committed itself to — the Youth Campaign Against Unemployment — degenerated into propaganda meetings, plus the annual outing to Parliament to lobby Tribunes and applaud Eric Heffer.

A conference motion from two YS branches attacks the 'passive propagandising of the campaign to date'.

It is not only the lack of any real campaigning perspective of those around the *Militant* paper that is criticised. The appalling policies on Ireland and on women's oppression are the subject of many motions to be discussed at Llandudno. As in previous years, there is certain to be polarisation around these questions.

The LPYS's present policy on Ireland equates the Republican and Loyalist paramilitary organisations, calling both 'sectarian terrorists', and makes no distinction between the Army's attitude to the Nationalist minority and the Loyalists. It calls for a trade union defence force to defeat all terrorism.

Many resolutions support the leadership's position and capitulate to imperialism, but

others do attack these attitudes. One resolution calls for 'the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland as recognition of the right of self-determination for the Irish people as a whole'. Another adds: 'repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act'. Others call for support for the International Tribunal on British War Crimes in Ireland.

The backwardness of the Young Socialists' leadership on women's oppression is challenged by motions stating support for the autonomous women's movement, and demanding active involvement in the National Abortion Campaign, The Labour Abortion Rights Campaign and the Working Women's Charter.

These and other motions — particularly on racism — set out the basis for an active campaigning perspective for the YS in the coming year, but what is still lacking is a real co-ordinated left wing alternative.

The Tribunes are so tarnished by the inactivity of the left MPs that they cannot be such an alternative, while the divisions on the far left fatally hamper them in the construction of such a current.

Supporters of *Socialist Challenge* will be fighting to overcome these divisions, to build a united opposition and a campaigning YS committed to class struggle politics.

A HUNDRED electricians on stand-by for work were sacked last week when they were recalled to the North Sea oil rigs, and informed management they were on strike.

While on shore, the one hundred had been on the picket line at Mather and Platt (Alarms) in Manchester, in support of 30 electricians sacked last month following a sit-in on the rigs to protest redundancies.

## SUPPORT

The union involved — the EETPU — still refuses to recognise the strike. Union officials claim that 'procedure in the dispute has not been rigidly adhered to'.

The firm is now trying to recruit scab labour in both Manchester and Hull. It has found the pages of the local press and the services of labour exchanges at its disposal.

The real problem facing strikers — who are in the forefront of organising workers on the rigs — is the difficulty in winning support.

# 100 oil rig electricians sacked



PHOTO: JOHN SMITH (JEL)

MORALE is high, despite union refusal to back the strike.

Inside the Park Works factory the shopfloor union leaders shelter behind the fact the strike is unofficial.

Much more is at stake than merely a few extra bob for electricians. The outcome their dispute will have big effect on the whole future of union organisation on the rigs.

A meeting is being organised for people and organisations prepared to help the strikers. Efforts will continue to get support from inside the factory, and pickets of local EETPU offices has begun.

## CONTACT

The rest is up to the labour movement. Trade unionists should demand official backing for the strikers, for a boycott of all Mather and Platt (Alarms) materials, and for local campaigns against further recruitment for those jobs on the rigs.

Unions in the northwest should organise delegations to be on the picket line from 7.45am till 5pm from Monday to Friday. Money and messages of support urgently needed:

Vincent Foy, 12 Moorlands, Jarrow, Tyne and Wear. Tel: Boldon 4417.

# Squatters: the first test of trespass law

THE SOUTH WESTERN Magistrates Court in Battersea was picketed by 200 squatters, workers and students on 22 February in defence of Alan Beddoe — the first person arrested and charged under the criminal trespass law (Criminal Law Act).

Beddoe was charged with resisting eviction at a squat in Battersea on 9 December, and was given a sentence of one month suspended for one year, with £50 costs.

Battersea Squatters Association and the London Squatters Union called the demonstration, and support came from all over London including Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council, Wandsworth NALGO, Hounslow Trades Council, Hounslow Hospital occupation, TGWU 5/909

Rover Solihull, and Battersea and Norwood Labour Party. Supporters from Brighton also travelled to the picket.

The 'exemplary' sentence (as the magistrate described it) shows the state is not amused by those who have the audacity to defend their homes. When barrister David Watkinson raised the controversial nature of the trespass law, the magistrate interrupted saying, 'I should not, if I were dealing with the matter on its merits, be contemplating maximum sentences. If, however, you invite me to delve deeply into the background I may change my mind'.

This new law is aimed at all forms of occupations and direct action. Squatters are being used as a testing ground. This makes it imperative to



have a concentrated campaign against this law, supporting all squatters threatened with its measures.

Without such unity, the state will be able to use the law on workers or students with impunity.

Further details from Cam-

aign Against A Criminal Trespass Law, c/o 35 Wellington St, London WC2 [01-289 3877]. Battersea Squatters Association are collecting money to pay the court costs. Donations to 26 Latchmere Rd, London SW11 [01-223 1450].



PHOTO: MARK RUSHER (JEL)

'SAY NO to Braine damage!' 'Women say: Off our back, Braine!' These were messages from placard-waving demonstrators outside the House of Commons last Tuesday, to protest against yet another anti-abortion bill.

The latest restrictive bill, put forward by Tory MP Sir Bernard Braine, further strengthens the control of doctors over women's bodies. It was passed with a slim majority of only six votes, but is unlikely to get parliamentary time to become law.

The *Morning Star* was prompted by this shift in Parliament to sport a headline, 'Mobilisation of MPs safeguards abortion rights'. This is mistaken. It was not the

mobilisation of MPs that safeguarded women's rights last Tuesday.

It was rather the consistent independent mobilisation of women — through the efforts of such groups as the National Abortion Campaign — which has forced the labour movement, and some MPs, to support the right of women to control their own fertility.

The danger of Government backing to Braine's bill still remains and the National Abortion Campaign is on guard. Growing support for day care NHS abortion facilities throughout the country will put the campaign one step closer to NAC's goal of winning a woman's right to choose.

# Women students launch Charter

MORE THAN 200 women attended the National Union of Students Women's Conference at Keele on 18 February. Ideas put forward by women of the Broad Left in the NUS were rejected in favour of proposals suggested by the Women's Left Caucus, reports PAMELA HOLMES.

In spite of national media

publicity for NUS president Sue Slipman's 'clean-up campaign', women were not prepared to accept her usual demagoguery.

The only contributions that the Broad Left leadership (including Slipman, member of the executive committee of the Communist Party) made to the three hour perspectives discussion compromised on women's rights.

They proposed a return to 'women's posts' within the union; that women should get involved in smaller structures

because general meetings are too big; they even suggested that the existence of 'committed feminists' within the union caused problems.

But conference preferred the proposals of the Women's Left Caucus which incorporated ideas from a group of Broad Left women dissidents from Sussex University.

This perspective recognised two major tasks for the NUS. First, the right of women to self-organisation as a prerequisite to playing a full role within the mass organisation.

Second, to organise campaigns involving all sections of the membership on issues of women's oppression.

Proposals for a two-day women's aggregate and two-day open campaigns conference were overwhelmingly accepted. Integral to these structures was the decision to develop a 'Student Women's Charter' to put forward the demands of women in the NUS.

All questions of access to further and higher education for women (including abortion, contraception, and nursery facilities, and entrance qualifications), as well as content of education, job opportunities and participation in union activities, must be raised in the Charter if it is to unite women successfully against sexist discrimination in education.

The Women's Left Caucus is a grouping of socialist women in the NUS Women's Campaign, formed in 1976 to fight the NUS executive's persistent failure to implement decisions taken by the women's conferences. Further details and copies of the caucus' resolutions to NUS conference from Pauline Roe, Birmingham Poly Students Union. Tel: 021-454 5184.

# Lesbians unite!

A PICKET of over 50 people assembled outside the Mansion House court last Thursday for the trial of Jackie Plaster. She had been arrested for spray-painting 'Lesbians Unite' on one of the London Evening News vans, after the paper's 'exposure' of lesbians using artificial insemination by donor in order to have a child.

The pickets raised the slogan: 'Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide'. The gallery was filled to hear Jackie plead 'technically guilty, but justifi-

fied.' But she wasn't allowed to make her statement about irresponsible journalism.

The court considered that her reasons for the action were irrelevant. She was fined £30 — retribution, no doubt, for the occupation of the newspaper offices, which secured lesbians a right of reply. A complaint against the authors of the original articles has now been taken up by members of the NUJ's magazine branch under the union's code of conduct.

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# Strike ends And now the fight for jobs

**WITH ONLY 20 workers voting against, a mass meeting of 2000 workers at Leyland's threatened Speke factory voted last Friday to return to work. MARK TURNBULL reports from Merseyside on the meeting and shadow of the dole queue which now hangs over 3,000 workers.**

The overwhelming desire of the meeting was to get back to work. When engineers convenor Michael Everett put a motion to the meeting which suggested a fight by any means against redundancies, he was shouted down by a large number of strikers. Everett was forced to postpone any stand on the closure until another mass meeting.

The 17 week long strike began when management arbitrarily tried to introduce new manning levels and track speeds after the workforce had returned from a six week lay-off. But the press hysteria created against 'lazy workers' and hints of a 'golden handshake' if the closure went smoothly meant that the Speke workers had conceded on these original issues. When they return to the production track they will discover that many four person teams are being cut to three and many three person teams to two.

This setback lies squarely at the feet of the shop stewards' committee who, since the strike began, called only one mass meeting. Consequently the majority of the workers were kept in the dark over the negotiations with management. It was left to the gutter press and TV to tell the workers what was going on.

Similarly only stewards were involved in picketing the factory. Although the threat of closure only became public on 1 January many stewards knew long before Christmas that the shut down was the intended fate of the Speke No 2 plant. Peter Doherty, a former deputy convenor commented last week, 'everyone knew for months it was the company's intention to close down. We should have been on the offensive'.

It was not until 15 February that the Transport and General Workers Union made the strike official. It was six days after this that plant director C H Skinner sent a letter to Speke's employees. It stated, 'We are forced to propose the closure of the No 2 factory and transfer the TR7 assembly to elsewhere'. Skinner's reasoning was that the plant had too many assembly tracks, that the TR7 cost too much to make and that plans for a 2 plus 2 V8 engine had been scrapped.

Between the sending of this letter and the mass meeting on 24 February the media worked overtime to smear the workforce. Headlines screamed that 'lazy workers' and 'mad militants' could pick up £10,000 in redundancy payments. Leyland's statement promised 'a very substantial ex-gratia payment from the company in addition to the statutory redundancy payment'.

For many workers, isolated at home and knowing only what the media tells them, this is an offer they find hard to refuse. And the company has inserted a final sentence in its statement which aims to divide those who want to fight and those who want to take the money.



'This package', insists Leyland 'can mean very substantial payments to those who we have to declare redundant. We can only offer this package if the transfer of the model is done smoothly and we will be talking at once with the union to try and achieve this'.

The response from the stewards' leadership to these carrot and stick tactics has been useless. The convenor Dave Thomas used to head the shop stewards committee at the nearby Garston bottle company until that closed down. Ever since Leyland issued redundancy notices he has said nothing about how the workers were going to defend jobs. His opposite number in the AUEW, Michael Everett said 'We are trying to use spheres of influence rather than talk about hostilities which people in those areas frown upon'.

## CONTROL

Among those 'spheres of influence' is the Leyland combine shop stewards committee and the Labour MPs on Merseyside. Both groups have shown very quickly their dislike of 'hostilities'. A meeting of the combine executive held 3 days after the closures were announced agreed to organise a weekly levy, while vice-chairperson Eddie McGarry said no work would be accepted at the Canley plant unless the Speke workers agree. In other words they will sit around and wait until there are no workers left at Speke and then accept the transfer of the TR7 to Coventry.

The Labour MPs have been equally paralysed. Left MP Eddie Loyden, in whose constituency Speke lies, said 'We intend to meet the Leyland management and seek from them the evidence they have about the correctness of this decision. At the moment we are far from convinced that the closure of Speke will solve Leyland's problems'. Suppose it did. Would Loyden then be happy with the closure?

Neither he nor the leadership of the shop stewards committee have an answer to Leyland, who can claim in terms of capitalist profitability, that some Leyland plants need closing. Figures issued by Leyland tell how the TR7 just haven't taken off.

At full production the capacity of the number 2 plant is 100,000 cars per year. In 1975 the target set was 17,550 of which only 65 per cent were made. In 1976 the target was 38,040 of which 80 per cent were made, in 1977 when a double shift was introduced 43,810 was the target and only 53 per cent were made. Thus in the first three years only 68,510 cars were made out of the target of 89,400. However only 64,250 have been sold so far. After four months of total stoppage there are still 4,000 unsold TR7s in compounds and showrooms.

A local radio station news reporter who went to America, where 80 per cent of all TR7s are sold, has described the situation: 'According to motor industry sources here the TR7 story is without precedent. Here's a car which captured the imagination of America but which was left at the starting gate by its Italian and Japanese rivals. Twice Leyland recalled all the cars that were sold because of minor faults in design. On top of that bad workmanship irritated the increasing consumer conscious American. Neither factor represented major setbacks but taken together with the erratic supply of cars they did.'

This raises the important question that shop stewards need to face in planning a fight back to the closures. The TR7 is not selling because of design faults and management's refusal to extend the range where there is demand (soft tops and four seaters). Michael Edwardes is attempting to streamline Leyland so that it only produces five or six models. This means old models and unprofitable new ones will go — the Dolomite, MG and TR7. To oppose Edwardes plan implies that the workers at Speke and throughout Leyland need to be thinking of an alternative workers' plan.



## Liverpool's growth area—the dole queue

**IF THE SPEKE plant is closed over 3,000 workers will join the Merseyside dole queue, boosting unemployment in the area from 11.5 to 12 per cent. The future can only look grim unless a major fightback is launched by the labour movement.**

Recently there has been a spate of disputes against manning levels and speed ups which have all resulted in job losses:

\*The new teaching hospital is due to be completed in the spring and without any new major start over 1,000 construction workers face the dole.

\*The Tate & Lyle sugar refinery has gradually been running down and will eventually close in a dockland area where unemployment varies from 25 to 50 per cent.

\*At Birds Eye in Kirkby 456 women production workers were declared redundant

while they were laid off from a strike involving 120 fitters. The company has settled with the fitters but are now making acceptance of the redundancies, plus nine outstanding points on productivity conditional for a return to work.

\*Cuts of 6 million miles of bus routes a year will mean less bus workers.

The list could go on and on, but the picture is clear. Rationalisations and redundancies are going ahead full steam on Merseyside, and resistance to them is very uneven. Traditionally well organised sections, like the docks and the Ford Halewood plant have both won recent strikes over productivity and manning. It is at the smaller plants where the attacks are meeting success.

And very little is coming in to replace the lost jobs. Metal Box opened a major new plant in Speke recently which employs 30 people. Guinness has just done the same. The trend is for increasingly capital intensive investment.

In such a situation the demand for work sharing with no loss of pay is the only one which can unite employed and unemployed throughout every industry in Merseyside.



# Waiting for God

APART FROM the usual attacks on strikers two other angles have been presented to the gossip merchants of Fleet Street. When they heard that one of the women was organising a petition to stop the Speke strike visions of Mrs Miller from Cowley sprang to mind.

The woman in Speke's case is Maureen Crooks who organised a lobby of parliament with seven other strikers' wives. But try as they might the media could not make her come out and denounce unions.

On the day of their lobby she said: 'We want the union to make the strike official with the TUC and we want the government to tell us where this factory stands.'

She wasn't a supporter of the strike as such. For her, making the strike official meant bringing in the full time officials to cook up a deal. Thus when the closure plans were announced she immediately called for a return

to work.

The press seized on this: 'Wives' leader calls for end of strike', was one headline. What they didn't say was that she lead nobody. This was evident when Maureen Cooks called for wives to lobby the mass meeting. No-one turned up.

The other story picked on by the press — including the Morning Star — was Catholic Archbishop Derek Warlock. His divine intervention came two days before the mass meeting. He declared his moral support for the campaign to save the factory — as long as the strikers returned to work.

The Star gave prominent space to his leadership, perhaps suggesting that if God is on your side jobs will drop from heaven.

However the real cherry in the pie came from the Liverpool Daily Post on the day of the mass meeting. Its front page featured a ranting worker who had quit during the strike.

His name was Frank Callaghan and he wrote: 'The shop floor is rife with causes of communism, Workers Revolutionary Party, Socialist Workers; the pamphlets of Big Flame abound. The production of the TR7 and other cars are only secondary to these circles of workers.'

'They are a gutless lot, it takes a brave man to oppose the political causes or the power of the unions. The shop stewards are a cog in a big wheel; they take their orders from above.'

It has not yet been established whether this Mr Callaghan is a relation of you-know-who, but the signs are there.

# Corti goes to the courts Behind the Cowley witch-hunt

THE TRIAL began on Monday of 11 Transport and General Workers Union militants at Leyland's Cowley plant. The trial took the form of 'disciplinary' hearings overseen by the national leadership of the TGWU.

Predictably, an attempt by one of the 11 — Frank Corti — to get a High Court injunction to stop the trials failed the day the hearings began. But as JOHNNY HAINE reports, the eleven's real strength lies in their rank and file support.

In March 1975, the JSSC launched a campaign for Leyland to open the company books. Parsons 'dissociated himself from the request'. Later that year Leyland launched a 'quality offensive' on the Princess line. We JSSC countered by proving that poor material rather than workers was responsible for low standards and organised a fightback. This led to a joint management/union enquiry which cleared the workers.

In December, 1975, Parsons was elected Senior Steward, Thornett and Corti were elected chairperson and secretary of the TGWU 5/293 branch, which covers the Cowley assembly plant.

Six months later the battle lines were becoming clear. In April 1976, Jack Jones appointed David Buckle 'supremo' of the Cowley Assembly Plant as well as Body Plant.

In May, Thornett was elected chairperson of the JSSC. The very next month, Buckle and Parsons arbitrarily declared the JSSC an 'unofficial body', timing the declaration with a company statement that anyone found distributing 'unofficial leaflets' would be disciplined.

The Hussain case in August 1976 showed more of the character of Buckle. A black worker was sacked for asking to have his job re-timed, and Buckle, then Senior Steward, refused to support him. Stewards began to organise support, only to find four of them had lost their recognition by the company.

A mass meeting voted to support the sacked worker but Parsons and Buckle refused to take the case up. In April of the following year, an inquiry into the case by the Regional Committee alleged that the four stewards were 'working to undermine the authority of the senior steward'.

During 1977, as union collaborators were working out the disastrous participation policy with Leyland management, Buckle attempts to reorganise the structure of the TGWU at Cowley, to undermine support for the left.

In October, an Oxford District Committee meeting broke up in chaos when chairperson Bill Roche simply refused to allow discussion of various items of business. The committee set up an 'inquiry' to hear charges of disrupting its meeting and of 'transmitting union business to unauthorised persons through the 5/293 report'.

Workers at Cowley have themselves shown what they think of this. On 5 December, Bob Fryer, a left winger was elected convenor. Alan Thornett and Frank Corti, both facing the disciplinary charges, were elected deputies,

Parsons, before the election, in a leaflet distributed at work benches, said: 'It appears now that our elections are here again, I am like most of my deputies the subject of unsigned soggy socialist swill (really identified as Trotskyite extremists) — approximately 20 members and supporters work in this factory. Their object of course is to undermine the democratically elected leadership they disagree with'.

He lost to Fryer by 200 votes.



## FIGHTING BACK

- \*For a national conference of Leyland stewards, called by the Leyland combine committee to fight the Speke closure and the Edwardes' plan
- \*Cut hours not jobs — a shorter working week with no loss of pay
- \*Support those who demand the occupation of Speke
- \*Urge Liverpool Trades Council to go ahead with its offer of a one day Liverpool wide strike and the convening of a national solidarity conference
- \*Establish support committees in every town where there is a Leyland plant
- \*Demand Labour MPs fight the Edwardes' plan

— Political Committee, International Marxist Group

# Rank and file paper launched

After the Edwardes' meeting, convenors said they would resist plant closures and compulsory redundancies. But the reaction to the Speke closures gave little hope that any fight would lead a fight. It is now clear that any fight against the attacks on Leyland workers means a fight with a leadership which is taking the union on a disastrous right-wing course.

In Birmingham a small group of carworkers from Longbridge and Rover have got together to launch a Leyland Cars Charter. This aims to unite all those prepared to fight for independent democratic trade unions and against management attacks on Leyland workers.

Below we reprint the proposed statement which is suggested as a basis of the new paper.

The Leyland Cars Charter has been started by a small group of shop stewards and shop floor workers at Rover Solihull, Longbridge, Oxford, and Coventry. Its aim is to fight against the rightward trend of the unions in Leyland Cars. The last few years has seen the development of participation in Leyland which has meant the surrender of the independence of the unions in favour of joint union management bodies whose main task is implementing management decisions.

This process reached its worst stage yet when the Edwardes plan was unveiled at Kenilworth, when unions and management together voted on a management proposal for massive job losses and redundancies.

Our first position is therefore: for the independence of the trade unions in Leyland, end participation now.

Management's proposals for Leyland mean anywhere between 20,000 and 30,000 jobs gone. The multiplier effect of this in the components industry means possibly 100,000 to 150,000 jobs. Leyland Charter says we must fight this plan.

The workers are not responsible for the crisis in Leyland. We are not responsible for over-production in the world car industry. We are not responsible for shrinking markets. But we are expected to pay for this situation with declining living standards, harder work, and unemployment.

We say: no to redundancies, no to job loss, fight the Edwardes plan.

In the past few years management has made big strides towards the centralisation of Leyland Cars. The most recent move in this has been in the field of pay bargaining. But it has also occurred via participation and such meetings as that at Kenilworth.

In the course of this leading union bodies have become more and more remote from the shop floor. For example, the Joint Negotiating Committee set up after the ballot is not directly answerable to any single body of Leyland workers. So it feels free to reach agreements on the Security of Earnings plan, which has already been rejected by the membership.

We say: defend trade union democracy. All committees to be responsible to mass meetings and shop stewards bodies, and to be subject to mandate and recall.

To achieve these policies Leyland Charter aims to build a broad alliance of trade union activists throughout Leyland Cars. The Charter's function will be to fight for union democracy, and organise systematically through union branches, shop stewards committees and mass meetings for the policies outlined above.

The paper is open to all who are opposed to the spineless policies being followed by the union leadership, and who are prepared to fight for trade union democracy, and against the attacks on Leyland workers.

The unions in Leyland have become based on the Cars Division as a whole. In this process they have become less democratic and more remote. It is essential to provide a response throughout the Cars Division. Charter aims to set up Charter groups in every car plant, fighting on a common programme of democracy and defence of Leyland workers. When union leaders voted at Kenilworth to accept the Edwardes' plan with its proposals for 20,000 to 30,000 jobs lost in Leyland alone they continued the policy of putting management demands before the members' interests. Since the Ryder Report the unions have become an arm of management: boosting production, accepting speed-ups, and agreeing with Labour's incomes policy.

## What's Left

- EAST LONDON Socialist Unity** is organising the intervention into the May council elections. Business meeting at the Britannia, Mark St, Hackney at 8pm on Wed 8 March.
- PIRATE JENNY** theatre group presents 'Mad Micks and Englishmen', 18 March 7.45pm at Preston Poly Students Union, 50p. This is a play about the political situation in Ireland, and aims to open a discussion among socialists around: What is the British Government trying to do in Ireland? Do the British troops play a peacekeeping role? What role can socialists in Britain play in this conflict?
- THE STRAITS** (new wave women's band) plus discs, Chappeltown Community Centre, Leeds, Sat 4 March, 8-midnight, 50p non-payers, 75p earners. Late bar Benefit Socialist Unity.
- WEST LONDON women's exhibition**, including photographs, other visual material, bookshop and play area. Organised by 10 women's groups. At Westway exhibition centre — opposite Ludbrooke Grove tube, under motorway, 6-8 March 5-8pm; 9-10 March, 10am-8pm; 11 March, 2pm-12pm. Admission free. Further information: Louise on 01-468 8106 (day).
- FORD WORKERS** struggle against lay-offs and lack of security. A 40-minute colour slide show based on the 1977 Gwent strike, with spoken commentary and illustrated pamphlet. The show is a weapon in the campaign for declassification in the motor industry. For bookings, write: Red Notice, Box 15, 2a St Pauls Rd, London N1.
- MIDLANDS IMG Area School** for sympathisers and new members, 4 March, 10.30-4.30, Birmingham Centre, 76b Digbeth (next to Civic Hall), Coache in Centre, Registration £1.
- CARDIFF** public debate with national speakers between Workers Action and IMG: 'What strategy for revolutionaries?' 7.30pm, Tuesday 7 March. Venue to be fixed.
- WORKERS POWER** public meeting, 'Marxism and the Trade Unions', Speakers: Ron Haycock and Stuart King, Wed 3 March, 8pm at the Redback, Tollesham Court Road, Ipswich and South Africa — two racist states! Speaker: Peter Hellver (author of UN report on Israeli-South African economic ties), Sun 12 March, 2pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. Entry free. London Area British Anti-Zionist Organisation (BAZO), c/o 28 Old Broad Street.
- BUILDING Worker fund** raising social to pay off the debts of the rank and file paper Building Worker and enable us to print the next one, Sat 4 March at 36 Alphonse Rd, SW4. Nearest tube Clapham Common, Som. Admission 50p.
- SOCIALIST UNITY Day School** for Candidates and Election Agents in Birmingham, 11 March. All areas expecting to stand candidates in May, and those considering standing in the general election should make sure they are represented. Credentials and documentation from G. Turnbull, 78b Digbeth, Digbeth High St, Birmingham, £1 per person. Please indicate whether accommodation and/or crèche needed, and age of children. National Steering Committee 12 March.
- RELEASE Ngugi Wa Thiong'o Now!** Picket at Kenyan embassy, Portland Place, London W1, 12.30pm, Fri 3 March. Further details from Ngugi Defence Committee, 2839 Southampton St, London WC2.
- INTERNATIONAL Women's Day** march, Assembly 2pm, Saturday 4 March, Clapham Common to St Matthews Meeting Place (opposite Brixton Town Hall). Food and music. No banners, leaflets or slogans containing the six demands of the women's liberation movement. No advertising on the march which is not women's liberation. Women only.
- LABOUR Abortion Rights Campaign** conference, 11 March, City University, London, 10am. Turn Labour votes into Labour policy. Further

- details: A. Gordon, 73 Albion Rd, N15.
- BUILDING workers' picket** against fascism and racism. Assemble at Shorechurch Church, 5 March, 10am. All those unionists welcome.
- BROADSIDE Mobile Workers'** Theatre (full-time) Long term commitment. Acting ability an advantage. Write: 58 Holborn House, Holborn Place, London SW1. Phone 01-455 6921/7305388.
- IRISH PRISONERS DAY** 3 March, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. 7.30pm Public meeting on the ending of political status. Speakers include two women from Belfast Relatives Action Committee, Jackie Kaye of Prisoners Aid Committee, 5 March picket of prisons called by Student Movement Campaign on Ireland to demand immediate transfer of Irish political prisoners in Britain to jails in Ireland; the immediate return of political status to all political prisoners in occupied Ireland; release all political prisoners. Leicester and Gertree prisons. Leicester, Stragways, Manchester, Winton Green, Birmingham, Hull, prison (all Yorkshire picket), 5 March Liverpool SWCI and UTM will leaflet International Women's Day march on Irish women political prisoners.
- SOCIALIST FEMINIST** educational: The Political Economy of housework, 4 March, 2-4pm, St Anne's Hall, Vaux St, Clapham SW4 (one minute from Clapham Common tube). Creche available. For further information ring 720 7315.
- BRIXTON Socialist Club**, 3 March, The Pits, punk rock evening, Canterbury Arms, Canterbury Crescent, London SW9, 8pm, 50p.
- LONDON National Abortion Campaign Day School**: Argentina — 'Which Way Now?' Is defence of the '57 Act enough? Can Parliament offer us anything? Should our demands be set down in a Charter? Does abortion on demand mean right up to 9 months? Is self-help a way to win our rights? Sat 11 March, 11am-4.30pm, South Bank Poly Students Union, Rotary St, SE1. Creche and food available — all welcome. Details from: 485 4263.
- JAM TODAY** (feminist women's band) is together again with new women and new music, and will be available for gigs from the end of May. For more details a please write: 40 Crows Rd, London NW5 or phone 01-425 2799 (Ailsa) or Terry, or 01-784 9317 (Nicky).
- JUST OUT**, Socialist Student, journal of the Socialist Students' Alliance. Articles on 'Racism and Education', 'Thames Poly occupation', 'Ireland', 'NUS Women's Campaign', grants campaign and more. 20p each, 18 pages. Orders with money to: Colin Tait, 39 Cambridge Gardens, London W10.



The badge with the anti-racist slogan that no militant should be without. Out next week. 20p plus 7p p&p for one; or 16p each for ten or more. From J. Wilson, PO Box 50, London N1. PO/cheques should be made out to J. Wilson.

# International Appeal launched The demand grows: put Britain on trial

The London-based planning committee of the International Tribunal on British Crimes in Ireland this week launch an international appeal for support for the tribunal. The appeal is made at a time when support for the tribunal is growing: Herbert Marcuse and Jean Paul Sartre are the latest to give their support.

Socialist Challenge reprints the international appeal. It can be used to mobilise backing for the tribunal not just internationally but in student unions, trade union branches and elsewhere, although specific appeals for these areas are also being prepared.

**THE TRIBUNAL'S SPONSORS INCLUDE:**  
Simone de Beauvoir



Angela Davis  
Lord Anthony Gifford  
Herbert Marcuse



Jean Paul Sartre

In Ireland:

Dr Noel Browne — member of Irish parliament  
Cyril Cusack — actor  
Margaretta D'Arcy — playwright  
Fr Denis Faul — priest, civil liberties campaigner  
Phil Flynn — deputy general secretary, Local Government and Public Services Union  
Tomas Macanna — artistic director, Abbey Theatre, Dublin.



Bernadette McAliskey (Devlin) — former member, British Parliament  
Eddie McAteer — former leader of the opposition in N Ireland parliament  
Matt Merrigan — district secretary, Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union

Please address all correspondence to  
International Officer  
Committee for the International Tribunal  
182 Upper Street  
London N1  
Britain

John Mulcahy — editor, Hibernia, Irish weekly magazine  
Michael Mullen — general secretary, Irish Transport and General Workers Union



Dr David Thornley — professor of political science, Trinity College, former member of Irish and European parliaments

Association of Legal Justice, Belfast  
National Executive, Irish Transport and General Workers Union

In Britain:



Maureen Colquhoun MP  
Dick Kelly MP  
Arthur Latham MP



Tom Litterick MP

Shortly after the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg on January 18, 1978 which found Britain guilty of contravening Article 3 of the European Human Rights Convention by subjecting internees in Northern Ireland to inhuman and degrading treatment, the appeal for a Tribunal was launched at a press conference in the House of Commons in London, in mid-January 1978.

Although the British Attorney General, Sam Silkin had given assurance at the European Court in February, 1977 that such practices had been discontinued and would not be repeated, there are still an alarming number of reports of torture, brutality and violation of the most elementary human rights by the British security forces in Northern Ireland.

We list below a very limited number of these reports:

a) The case of Leo Norney, aged 17 shot dead by the British soldiers near his home in Belfast in 1975: The British Army claimed that he was a gunman. In May 1977 the Northern Ireland High Court effectively quashed that claim by awarding his mother £3,000 in compensation for his death.

b) On March 13, 1977, the London newspaper, the *Sunday Times*, carried a report on 'The Army's secret war in Northern Ireland'. The article reported that i) The British Army were used in Northern Ireland to set off explosions merely to discredit the IRA in November 1974. ii) Prisoners were planted with evidence including ammunition. iii) Statistics were falsified by the Army.

c) Recent Reports of the Use of Torture:

Members of the Police Surgeons' Association — doctors employed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary — have recently protested at the brutal treatment of persons undergoing interrogation. They have moved to make public the contents of their case-books.

d) The Prevention of Terrorism Act in Britain:

Much concern has been aroused by the operation in England and Ireland of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, first introduced in November 1974, and revised in 1976. Over 3000 men and women have been arrested under the Act, and over 100 deported without charge or trial.

## WHY AN INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL ON BRITAIN'S PRESENCE IN IRELAND?

As the above cases demonstrate, we believe that exercise of military, judicial and political control in the northern Six Counties of Ireland has disturbing implications for civil and human rights — in Britain as well as in Ireland. We consider that information so far available makes an open investigation into many aspects of the British presence and its repercussions not only advisable, but necessary.

It is necessary for the British people because the government acts in their name — therefore they have the right to know precisely how it operates.

It is necessary in the international sphere because the world community has an absolute right to satisfy itself that there is no torture, intimidation, discrimination, or denial of human rights in any shape or form as a result of Britain's presence in Ireland.

It is necessary also because of the apparent absence of any determination on the part of the responsible authorities to deal with allegations of abuse of power.

It is hoped that such an enquiry will concern itself with:

- \* The role and activities of the British Army, and the British security forces in Northern Ireland — the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment.
- \* Allegations of torture at interrogation centres, and allegations of abuse and assault on Irish prisoners in British, including English, jails.
- \* The operation of no-jury courts in Northern Ireland.
- \* The operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) and the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act.
- \* Charges of discrimination in many fields levelled at the Northern Ireland authorities.
- \* The treatment of Irish prisoners in the Maze Prison (Long Kesh), Armagh Women's Prison and other jails.
- \* The question of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Is the Government's influence being used to censor the flow of information and ideas?

## THE FORM OF THE TRIBUNAL

Because it is the right and duty of the British people to uphold human rights and call for their own government to account in the event of any violations, the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland will hold its major sessions before the largest and most representative possible body of delegates elected from trade unions and other bona fide labour movement organisations, acting as jurors.

Because it is the right of the world community to monitor the development of a conflict such as that centring on Britain's presence in Ireland, the 'jury' will be joined by a panel of figures of international repute, selected from the growing lists of sponsors of the Tribunal, to review the evidence in its various forms.

The evidence will be taken from all relevant sources, regarding all relevant questions, in the form of spoken and written testimony, film, slides and photographs. Those invited to make submissions will include both expert and lay witnesses, commentators, legal, medical and scientific professionals with relevant experience. The Committee for the International Tribunal is also issuing an invitation to Mr. Mason, and Mr. Merlyn Rees, Home Secretary, to appear or to appoint representatives to appear, or to make submissions to the Tribunal.

I am appealing on behalf of the London-based Committee for support from you or your organisation for this important initiative. We feel that international support can play a key role in broadening support for the Tribunal and strengthening its authority. In appealing for this support we would like you or your organisation to publicise the Tribunal in your own country. In particular there are a number of steps which can be taken right away, in addition to others over the course of this year.

1. Add your name [or the name of your organisation] to the list of sponsors of the Tribunal.
2. Campaign for participation in the Tribunal from the widest spectrum of political, trade union, cultural, legal, academic individuals and organisations in your country.
3. Help finance the Tribunal. The cost of collecting evidence, bringing international judges to London, organising delegations to Ireland and hosting and publicising the Tribunal will be high. Any financial help you can give directly, or organise in your country will be greatly appreciated. Donations should be made by International Money Order where possible and made out to The International Tribunal.

Oscar Gregan  
International Officer



Joan Maynard MP  
William Wilson MP  
John Arden — playwright



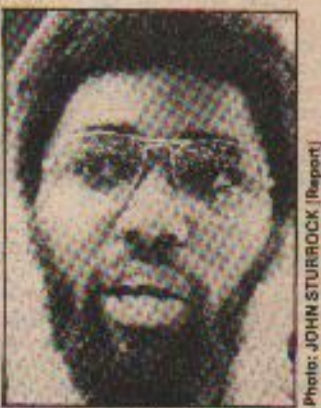
Pat Arrowsmith — peace campaigner



Peter Hain — anti-apartheid campaigner



Edward Bond — playwright  
Ralph Miliband — professor of politics, Leeds University  
Sheila Rowbotham — feminist writer



Executive, National Union of Students

Trades Council — Battersea and Wandsworth, Barnet, Coventry, Croydon, Greenwich, Hackney, Lambeth, St Albans, Stepney and Bethnal Green, Tameside.

Photo: SOCIALIST CHALLENGE

Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)

Photo: CHRIS DAVIES

Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)

Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

# Women's day rally

THERE WILL be a chance for women from all over the world to get together at a rally to celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March.

Participating will be West Indian, Asian and Irish women; women from Africa, Latin America and Iran; British women will be representing various aspects of their struggle.

There will be songs, speeches, dances, drama, poetry, displays, and bookstalls. A creche will be available.

The organisers hope that the evening will help to launch an international tribunal on repression against women. This can help build links with women around the world, to launch mass action in support of women's struggles internationally.

The rally is at the London School of Economics, Old Theatre, Houghton Street, London WC2 on Wednesday 8 March at 7pm.

# The plight of Latin American women

THE Latin American Women's Group in London explains its support for International Women's Day.

Understanding the different forms of women's oppression in different parts of the world is the only way to help us understand our own oppression.

The general problems of women's oppression are aggravated by imperialist domination and economic backwardness in the colonial and semi-colonial world.

Even the limited facilities won by women in some imperialist countries are not available. Structural unemployment goes hand in hand with a large number of women in domestic service, with the most stringent limitations on their personal freedoms.

Family planning programmes are not aimed to help women control their own bodies but to control population growth when social order seems to be threatened. Nevertheless more women now go out to work which brings them into contact with other struggles.

The masses in Latin America are still reeling from a series of defeats, particularly by the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone. But women have been especially active in solidarity struggles and in the campaigns in defence of political prisoners.

In Argentina 300 women recently demonstrated to demand the return of relatives who had been snatched away and not seen since.



ARGENTINIAN police. This is what women in the Southern Cone of Latin America have to contend with.

After a recent miners' strike in Bolivia, wives and friends of the miners, who had been active in solidarity, were joined by other women workers in a hunger strike to demand the release of all political prisoners. The military government was forced to give in.

The dictatorships respond by an especially severe repression of women. Horrific accounts of sexual torture are only the tip of

an iceberg in a society where women suffer a double exploitation and oppression.

We want to stress the significance which active solidarity from feminist movements in Europe can have for small but important women's struggles in Latin America. We feel that the International Women's Tribunal, proposed at the International Women's

Conference in Paris in October 1977 is a practical way of carrying this out.

It was also proposed that an International Women's Commission should be set up to investigate the conditions of women prisoners and allegations of rape and torture in prisons. We should work to have 20 May declared as an International Day against Repression.



ANGRY American miners demonstrate at their union headquarters in protest at their president's agreement to a compromise with the coal bosses over safety provisions. That compromise was roundly rejected by the members, whose three month strike continues.

This week miners will be balloted on another compromise put forward after negotiations with the Carter Administration. The result is still unclear but it is likely that the deal will again be thrown out.

# Under review An introduction to Marxism

ARTHUR STEWART reviews *From Class Society to Communism*, the latest book by Ernest Mandel.

This volume is a much needed contribution to socialist literature in English — a readable outline of the main ideas of Marxism from a Trotskyist point of view. It is based on 15 years experience of educating young militants in Marxist theory.

Mandel's method of presentation is quite new. Rather than beginning with an exposition of the philosophical basis of Marxism, materialist dialectics, Mandel starts from the readily verifiable fact of class inequality.

He explains the origins of class divided society and the emergence of the state as an institution which maintains, both by force and ideological integration, the subordination of the producing classes to the exploiters.

In five short chapters the book explains the development of capitalism from its earliest appearance as merchant capital up to the present monopoly and imperialist stage. Mandel maintains that state intervention in the economy cannot overcome the contradictions of the capitalist system which result in periodic crises of overproduction.

He criticises the idea that capitalism has been transformed by the 'managerial revolution'. Although the

monopoly capitalists delegate many of their powers to managers they still make the final decisions on the key questions of accumulation and investment.

To safeguard the monopolists' profits the interests of small shareholders are readily sacrificed.

Independence of most of the former colonial countries does not mean the end of imperialist domination. The mechanisms of 'neo-colonialism' bind the impoverished masses of the 'underdeveloped' world to the imperialist system. The ruling classes of these countries are unable to lead a way out of this subordinate position.

Mandel explains the limitations on the democratic rights of the masses even in the most democratic capitalist democracies. For Marxist democracy is only one form of the capitalist state.

Threatened by economic crisis and the demands of the working class, the bourgeoisie moves towards regression to the extent of military government or fascism. Hence the democratic rights of the masses are never secure while the bourgeoisie rules.

Mandel contends that a workers state based on elected and recallable workers councils would be more democratic for



the masses than the most democratic bourgeois state. Revolutionaries have to stress the democratic aspect of their aims, particularly in view of the disastrous experience of Stalinism.

Other chapters deal with the development of the workers movement and the divisions within it, the Russian Revolution, the class nature of the Soviet state, the development and the crisis of Stalinism and the foundations of the Fourth International.

The theoretical and historical background leads to discussion of the task of revolutionaries today — how to link their socialist aims to the mass movement.

The capitalists are adept at taking away with one hand

what they have been forced to concede with another. 'To break this vicious circle', writes Mandel, 'the masses must be won to the adoption of transitional demands as the objectives of their present struggles — demands whose realisation becomes more and more incompatible with the normal functioning of the capitalist economy and the bourgeois state.'

The united front (the 'class against class' front) is the way the workers can move forward as a class.

Revolutionaries seek to involve all the organisations of the working class in the united front to strengthen the fighting capacity of the workers and provide an opportunity for the workers to compare the proposals of the revolutionaries and of their class-collaborationist leaders.

The united front is based on working class demands which are opposed to the interests of the bourgeoisie. This is contrasted with the popular front, which aims to unite the workers movement with a section of the capitalist class — the so-called 'progressive bourgeoisie'.

Inevitably, this must be on a programme acceptable to this bourgeois sector, subordinating the needs of the working class to the interests of capital.

Mandel explains why it is impossible for the working

class to arrive spontaneously at revolutionary conclusions and to work out the strategy and tactics necessary for the overthrow of bourgeois rule.

Only a revolutionary vanguard party can assimilate the lessons of the past and translate them into a programme of practical action to guide the masses towards revolution.

The vanguard party cannot make a revolution on behalf of the masses, but without a vanguard party the spontaneous actions of the masses will not be channelled towards the seizure of power.

The chapter on classless society outlines how a society based on increasing abundance will eliminate the inequalities of the past, end the division between mental and manual labour and give rise to a situation where work will become an expression of human creativity and individuality rather than an alienating burden.

Only after this exposition of the origin, evolution and historic destiny of class-divided society does Mandel turn to the philosophical underpinning of Marxism, materialist dialectics.

A volume of this size which attempts to cover so much historical and theoretical material can only present a highly condensed account of Marxist theory.

The suggestions for further

reading should help readers to follow up and amplify what they have learned.

One of the main merits of this book is that it provides a handy framework for collective study and discussion by groups of socialists.

One major weakness is the failure to bring out the role of the family in the origin and development of class society.

The increasing combativity of women over the past decade, their attempts to change their subordinate status in society and the growth of a women's liberation movement, have stimulated interest in the historical roots of the oppression of women as well as a quest for a coherent strategy to win liberation.

Marxism has much to say on these questions, even if Marxists do not have a unanimous opinion. The failure of the book to take up this aspect of Marxist theory can only be cause for dissatisfaction with what is otherwise an excellent introduction to revolutionary politics.

\*From *Class Society to Communism. An Introduction to Marxism*. Translated from French by Louisa Sadler. Ink Links £1.95.

The book is available from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1, post free for all orders in the next two weeks.

## Nationalisation and the French elections

## Tweedledum and Tweedledee

Different attitudes towards nationalisation were at the centre of the breakdown of the Union of the Left over the redrafting of the 1972 Common Programme, write RIC SISSONS and PAM HURST.

Georges Marchais, leader of the Communist Party (PCF), claimed that this separated those favouring 'real change' and those who just wanted to 'manage the crisis'.

All this was posturing. No basic differences separated the two parties on this issue. Both accept the Common Programme's demand for the nationalisation of only nine major companies. 85 per cent of industrial production would still remain in private hands.

The dispute is over how many of the nine's subsidiaries would be included. According to the PCF, 'scientific criteria' in 1972 indicated 1450. On 15 September last year Marchais considered it to be 1008.

## COMPROMISE

A week later, still applying the same 'scientific' standards the leader of the PCF had reduced the number to 729!

Meanwhile, in the interests of compromise, the Socialist Party (PS) had increased its figure from 69 to 250. The gap had narrowed to such an extent as to only include 150,000 workers or less than 0.2 per cent of all French firms.

Neither the PCF nor PS see their policies of nationalisation as opening the path to socialism. In May 1977 the PCF declared that 'democratic nationalisations' were necessary to 'weaken the monopolies and thus create the

conditions to pull the country out of the crisis; to provide the democratic authorities with a modern efficient tool to attain the economic and social objectives of the Common Programme...in order to establish democratic management.'

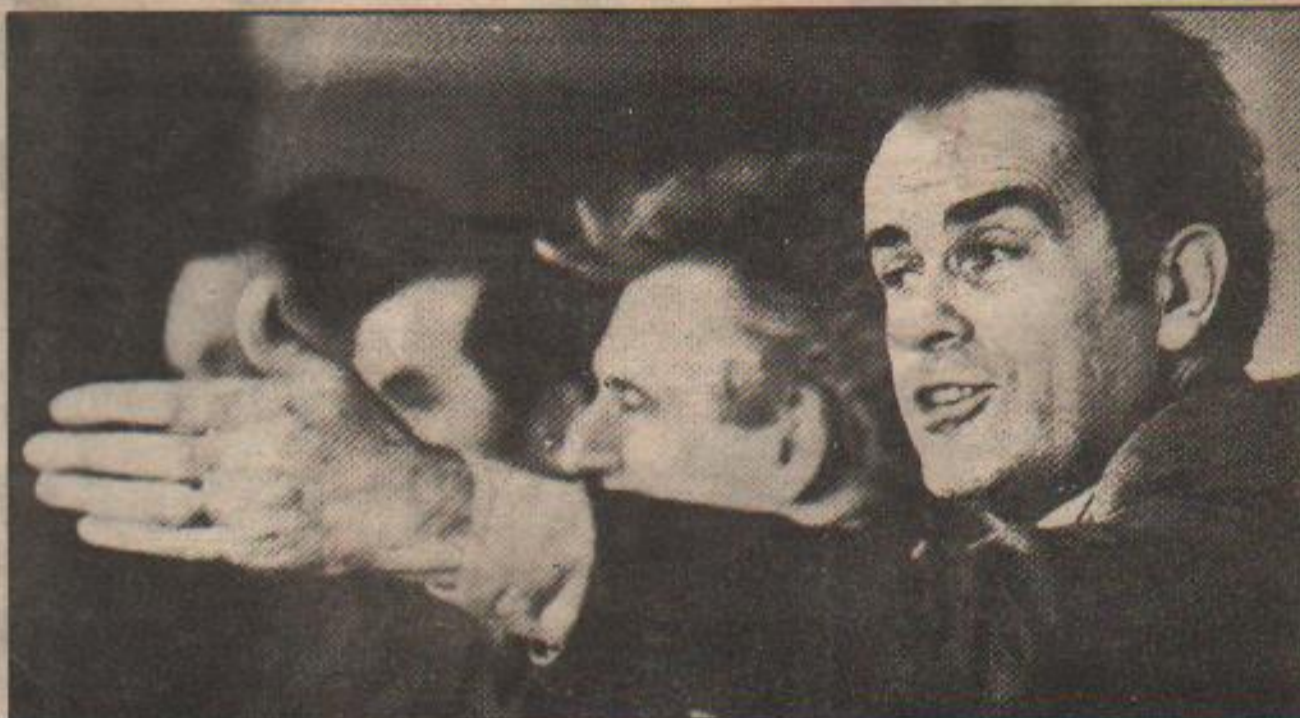
Neither is the capitalist market to be challenged or overthrown. The newly nationalised nine and their subsidiaries are to coexist with the capitalist market.

The PS argues the nationalised sector should operate according to the same criteria as the private sector, while the PCF considers the market 'irreplaceable' to maintain supply and demand.

Without all the key sectors of the economy being nationalised the nine will remain at the mercy of the market. Without the government controlling foreign trade the French economy would fall foul of the world capitalist economy.

For example the French motor industry is dominated by three giants. While Renault has been in state hands since 1945, Peugeot-Citroen and Chrysler-Simca are in private hands, and are not among the nine listed for nationalisation.

The PCF has at various times called for the inclusion of Peugeot-Citroen but now does not. However if the motor industry was to be state influenced why does the Common Programme take no



MARCHAIS: ready to lower the nationalisation stakes in the interests of compromise.

attitude to the components suppliers, such as Ferodo?

What plans do they have for the reorganisation of the industry in terms of pricing, range of models and quantity? How do they propose to control the other multinational car producers who sell in France? None of these questions is tackled.

Neither the PCF nor PS wants the unfortunate nine to go away empty handed. All nationalised firms will be compensated.

Marchais' party estimates

compensation would cost 3 billion francs a year for the next 20 years. Mitterrand is more generous. He advocated 7 billion!

Both parties advance worker participation schemes to run the nine companies. These would be on two levels. Firstly administrative councils, composed of one third workers, state representatives, and consumers. These would elect the director and top management.

Secondly, there would be

factory committees which would discuss the plan for the factory and working conditions, but would only have the right to veto decisions on hygiene and factory conditions.

There would be no guarantee of employment and levels of productivity must match those of the private sectors.

A government acting in the interests of the working class would nationalise all the key sectors of the economy, without compensation. Within the factories, councils would be

established, composed of delegates representing the workers, who would be accountable and recallable to regular mass meetings.

All information would be available to the workforce. It is these councils that would dictate work conditions and plan future work. To make this a real democracy the working week would be drastically cut.

Nationally there would be a plan for the economy, formulated through the centralised factory councils.

## Divisions in the French 'majority'

## Right up the creek

Gilles Giacomini reports from Paris on the crisis of the right wing.

THE UNION of the Left may have broken up but the bosses are still jittery about the election result. One symptom: the price of gold on the Paris market has shot up because of panic buying.

'Favourite purchases,' according to Time, include 'one-kilo ingots (worth \$5,738), which fit nicely under mattresses, and the sock-sized \$61 Napoleon d'Or and \$46 demi-Napoleon coins.'

For the past month opinion polls have shown a left lead of around 51 per cent to 44 per cent. A more recent poll showed a wider gap: 52 to 44 per cent.

The right's failure to take advantage of the left split is a result of its own polarisation between Jacques Chirac's Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) and the recently formed Union for French Democracy, a bloc of Giscard d'Estaing's Independent Republicans, the Centrists and the Radicals.

## DISSOLVE

The Giscard-Chirac split erupted in March 1976 after major left gains in the cantonal elections. Chirac, then Prime Minister, urged Giscard to dissolve the National Assembly and call early elections, reasoning that things would get worse before they get better and that time was on the left's side.

Giscard disagreed and Chirac resigned. But that tactical dispute masked a more general division within the ruling class

as to how to deal with the rising support for the reformist workers' parties.

The Giscard tendency wanted to construct a 'liberal' party that could 'extend a hand' to the Socialists (PS). The aim was to group the 'centre' and try to erode PS electoral support by minor, cheap reforms — lowering the voting age, liberalising the abortion and divorce laws and so on.

Ultimately, if the Gaullists could be cut down to size, there could be a Centre-Left government, breaking the PS from its alliance with the Communist Party.

Chirac's Gaullists favoured a head-on attack on the workers' movement, arguing that 'mini-reforms', far from eating into PS support, would give the workers a taste for more.

In late 1976 Chirac founded the RPR and announced his candidacy for mayor of Paris. Installed in the city hall after the March 1977 municipal elections, Chirac turned it into a base to challenge Giscard.

RPR slogans echo the classic Gaullist bid for the traditional petty bourgeoisie: for 'genuine free enterprise' and against 'collectivisation'; for the 'national independence of France' against the 'limitation of sovereignty' imposed by NATO; against the 'socialo-communist danger' of the Union of the Left.

The Giscardians are 'soft on communism' — such was the tone of an RPR rally of 60,000 only a fortnight ago. The anti-Giscard propaganda has

been stepped up in recent weeks.

In early January the Giscardians issued their own election platform, the Programme de Blois. It listed 30 'objectives' grouped under four chapter headings typifying vapid American-style liberal phrase-mongering: 'free and protected citizens'; 'economic progress in the service of employment'; 'solidarity in the service of social justice'; and 'raising the quality of life'.

To the extent that it says anything the platform is a continuation of the austerity plan pursued by the Giscard-Raymond Barre Government

for a year and a half, with little success.

But launching the platform was a clever move, for the Gaullists were put in the embarrassing position of not being able to oppose it without formally opting out of the majority bloc.

At the same time, however, the Giscardians rigged together their Union for French Democracy (suspiciously like the title of Giscard's book, French Democracy). They announced that they would field their own candidates in the first round, in competition with the RPR.

Chirac reacted angrily ('The

anti-Gaullist front constitutes a suicidal initiative for the majority') and escalated the rhetoric, calling the Centrists and Radicals 'courtesans' of the President.

The two camps further disagree about what to do if the left wins. Chirac maintains that Giscard should resign as President, shifting the battle against the left onto the streets. Giscard insists that he will remain in his post and try to cooperate with a Socialist Prime Minister.

The right's disarray reflects the failure of the ruling class to come up with an effective way of dealing with a worsening economic and social crisis. Unemployment remains over a million, despite claims to the contrary by scandalously manipulated figures released by the government last week. Inflation is still more than 11 per cent a year.

A recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and

Development study reported that the income gap between highest and lowest was greater than in any other advanced capitalist country. Basic wage rates for industrial workers are 10-15 per cent lower in France than in most northern European countries.

The ruling class has no effective way to deal with this crisis. This underlies the acrimonious division of the capitalist parties and the scurrilous character of their campaigns. Leading politicians — perhaps including Giscard — have been implicated in the falsification of ballots in advance of the elections.

The right's campaign slogans are grotesquely sterile. The Independent Republican poster shows a blue sky traversed by a rainbow with the slogan: 'The good choice for France'.

The bosses cannot face the future with confidence — no matter who comes out top on 19 March.



**What's your own situation at the moment?**

The Charter has described my situation in its letter of 12 December to Mr Strougal (President of the National Assembly). That is that my flat is under round the clock surveillance by the police, VB (uniformed police) agents are watching me and look at the identity papers of those who come to visit me and often prevent people from coming in, especially if they are from outside Prague.

This is what happened last Sunday to my father-in-law (Jan Sabata, a party official in 1968, sacked and imprisoned after the Prague Spring) who had come to visit my wife, his daughter. They also prevent people who are on the list from entering, and do not allow any more people in once there are three people here.

**Who is on the list?**

Some friends of mine such as Julius Tomin, Vaclav Benda, Vavrinec Korcis, the Ruml brothers, Karel Frauwind, Zdenek Fiser, etc.

**But from what milieu?**

Various. Mainly people who have been my acquaintances for a long time, in situations which the police regard as suspicious. For example, 'five o'clock teas' at which 10 to 15 people were present. At two of these 'teas' there have been as many as 25 people present, in the first case for a lecture and the other time at my birthday.

In the first month — I started keeping count on 27 September after the first search — 70 people of all kinds came to see us; altogether perhaps 120 to 140 people have come.

It annoys them that so many people have come in, so they invent all kinds of limitations which are illegal and contrary to the penal code, but I am not in a position to complain against these practices.

**Have you reacted to what the authorities have been doing to you?**

Of course. I have written to procurator General Fejes, whose only reply has been a form letter telling me that the matter will be looked into.

**When did you send the letter?**

A week later I wrote another letter and I have just complained to Zbynek Kiesweto, the chief military procurator, because one of his VB agents had committed a theft which is punishable by law.

In the corridor outside our flat this guy jostled the son of my friend Julius Tomin, a boy of 14, and tore pages out of his hands including some of his father's personal correspondence. The police gave it back two hours later.

Apart from this I have not done anything. I do not think that there has been sufficient reason.

At the moment Dr Kriegel and the Charter are taking up my defence. Perhaps this will bring results — I don't know. I've been subjected to many repressive methods since January 1977 (the launching of Charter 77), and they have continued to get worse.

I have lost my driving licence, my rank in the army has been withdrawn, the telephone has been cut off, I have had problems at work, and recently I got a letter sacking me, which you must have.

**I have got it.**

So you know already.

**Have you asked your guards why they are keeping you under surveillance?**

Yes, often. They just invoke some order stating that it is necessary to take my protest to the commissariat in Peace Square.

Fellow citizens and friends have tried it and have been told that this is a simple administrative measure from their point of view, and that they have received an order from the Ministry of the Interior and it's all in the hands of some unknown 'operative' (security agent) whom no-one knows and no-one can contact...

**Leaving aside your personal situation, what is the situation now with regard to the Charter?**

Taken as a whole, good. The Charter has become more active again, there are three spokespeople again, new people are signing and even giving their names publicly, there is a multitude of activities, and, very slowly, the barrier of fear is lifting.

For me, as a revolutionary Marxist, the Charter shows clear analogies with the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. It contains demands which, in the context of the present system, are partly realisable and partly unrealisable. They are demands which get people moving.

It is true that there are few demands concerning the workers, the working class strictly defined, but there are very few 'workers' in the narrow meaning of the word. Nevertheless the Charter refers to two

# 'The barrier of fear is lifting'

## Interview with Czechoslovak oppositionist PETR UHL

**PETR UHL is one of the most prominent advocates of the Charter 77 human rights manifesto in Czechoslovakia — for which he has lost his job and been subject to continual persecution.**

**This interview was carried out over the telephone by an Austrian journalist sympathetic to the Austrian Socialist Party. Petr Uhl gives his views on the state of the Charter, police repression and his own political convictions**



international pacts which our country has signed, and also contains prescriptions which concern the workers, and which have to be publicised.

**Although you say that the activity of the Charter has expanded, we are receiving less news than we did at the beginning.**

That's possible; fewer numbered documents are being issued; there have only been two recently, numbers 13 and 14. Have you heard about number 13?

**Yes, it's about pop music.**

That's right. This is very important for us because young people are interested in this. There is a pressing, and often elementary need for cultural life.

Also, as far as I know, another document has been published containing about 80 new signatures. That doesn't seem very many, but one has to bear in mind the repression which comes down on each signatory.

It is also important that most of the signatories are young and are often manual workers. This I find very positive.

Also there is intense activity around holding meetings. At the start this was called the 'anti-university'. Now we use a more modest name; it's simply a question of lecture courses in philosophy or other spheres which take place in Prague and Brno.

The Charter has also been successful in taking up the case of P. Landovsky who has been released from prison, and also that of Jarda Hutka, who still suffers persecution, but, it seems to me, of a less severe character than previously.

All this activity has been concretely expressed around the Ornest trial. The manner in which it was carried out, the fact that the verdict was fairly moderate, perhaps has something to do with the activity of the Charter.

**Do you think that the authorities are showing signs of a certain tolerance towards the Charter, or perhaps one should say are showing more intelligence in their choice of methods in combatting it?**

I am, of course, very critical of the way the authorities have been behaving, but I must say with satisfaction that the Charter has, all in all, become legal.

Both when I and other people have been interrogated we have been told, 'good, the Charter is okay, no-one can take legal action against you for that, that's quite legal, but there's something else....' And they try to establish the existence of certain political contacts, of political activity so-called, outside the Charter.

Naturally, it annoys them having to proceed in this roundabout way. Except for certain situations where it presents certain temporary problems, it is not possible to take legal action against someone who supports the Charter, who types out its documents and distributes them.

There is still a reluctance to do these things openly because cases of persecution, such as mine, are known; they took two typewriters from me, and nothing further has come of that, nor, I am convinced, will they attack me on that basis.

It wasn't so clear at the beginning. Before Vaclav Havel (one of the first Charter spokespeople) was released we thought that he was under attack explicitly for his Charter activity. But we found out afterwards that this was not the case.

**Sometimes there have been rumours going around that there was a group within the Charter which was planning terrorist actions. Evidently this is an attempt to discredit the Charter....**

That is quite possible. The police have dreamed up this group and these people. I don't have information about this.

**But there have been interrogations about it.**

Yes, but it hasn't been stated during the interrogations. According to the records, two questions on this subject have been put to six people during interrogations. Have they heard anything about kidnapping or other outrages, and should they answer yes, are they aware that they must denounce such acts?

Outside of the records, verbally, my name has been mentioned. But when I asked my 'friend' Jarda Basta (a policeman) if he and his mates were trying to establish a connection between me and this business, he said no, it had been badly expressed and so on.

All in all this particular police action was very half-hearted, only affected six people and only lasted a month. Just before it started Dejmala and myself were held for between 25 and 30 hours, my flat was searched at the end of September, and after the search there was some confusion among the Charter concerning these rumours of terrorism.

It was put about that the police suspected us. It wasn't the case, and I don't think it had any basis, but people were seized with a sort of panic.

It is false that the police had said to anyone that they had my flat bugged, that they had a recording saying that I was in contact with West German terrorists and was trying to get hold of arms. All this is untrue.

Unfortunately people living in an atmosphere of fear sometimes begin to imagine things and start rumours, some of which even get as far as Vienna...

**You have expressed support for the Fourth International. Recently you sent a protest letter against the Berufsverbot in West Germany. Do you see any difference between your situation and that of a state really menaced by terrorism, where the Berufsverbot might have quite a different character?**

I signed a collective letter with six people. I don't want to get into an argument, but I do not think that the Berufsverbot is directed against terrorists.

**Of course not. But there are certainly people who work in the police or the civil and public services who defend principles which are opposed to those on which the state is based. To be more concrete: it is difficult to employ people in the police force who are in favour of the destruction of the system.**

I'm sure it is. In any case I am not a supporter of the West Germany police. But I agree with you. However, according to what I have heard one has to raise certain objections to the Berufsverbot. Especially with regard to teaching. My friends who have been affected by this measure are essentially teachers. In this sense I have protested.

**Don't you think that in stressing so strongly the principles of the Fourth International and its influence, you have reduced the effectiveness of the Charter in the eyes of western public opinion?**

When I refer to the Fourth International — as an ideological current, but not on the organisational level — this is not for tactical reasons.

It's a matter of conviction, and as a communist I think that in all circumstances one must say what one thinks, and defend publicly one's principles if only so that no-one can be deceived in the future.

My activity and the public defence of my opinions simply demonstrate that the principles of the Charter and those on which the Fourth International are based are in agreement.

## Stop the bombing

THE TROOPS OUT editorial (23 February) is completely inadequate; by simply stating that the La Mon hotel bombing was not the way to fight British imperialism, you fail to place it in its proper context, and to draw the necessary conclusions.

The Provisional IRA is currently involved in an escalation of its military campaign; as part of that campaign they have destroyed, by incendiary and explosive devices, a number of hotels in rural areas of the Six Counties. The La Mon bomb was one such attack which went tragically (I am tempted to say criminally) wrong. Less than two weeks before the La Mon incident a busload of schoolchildren narrowly escaped death and/or injury when a bomb fixed underneath their bus fell off and exploded some yards away. The driver of the bus is a member of the UDR, and the bomb was part of a campaign to assassinate members of the UDR and RUC Reserve.

There are two points which it is necessary to understand about both incidents. First that, obviously, the operations went wrong, through a technical failure or the ineptitude of the volunteers involved, or both. Secondly that they are more than simply regrettable failures of a campaign against British imperialism: both incidents were part of a campaign against 'soft' targets, which has been embarked upon because other possibilities of military action have been closed by the successes of the British Army and the RUC.

To the extent that ineptitude and inexperience played a part in these two incidents, that also is a reflection of the success of the security forces in keeping experienced volunteers out of action. In other words the La Mon bombing was not a tragic accident, but was a necessary outcome of the present relationship of forces between the Provisional IRA and the armed forces of imperialism. So long as the present campaign is continued, and especially if it is further escalated, we can expect further horrifying failures, as operations go wrong.

I am reluctantly drawn to the conclusion that the time has come when militants who have solidified with the anti-imperialist struggle in the Six Counties, should say to the Provisionals: 'Comrades, your military campaign has failed to achieve any concrete political results; a cease-fire under present circumstances would be an admission of partial defeat, but it would allow other methods of struggle, especially over prisoners, to develop. For the sake of the struggle, have the courage to dump arms now.'

BOB PURDIE (Warwickshire)

## Watch your language

IN TWO RECENT issues of Socialist Challenge I have noticed the use of language reflecting reactionary values.

In News from Nowhere [2 February] issue, you ask for stories

about 'a dalek in blue conversing with the computer after stopping a long-haired person, thus suggesting that it could be either a man or a woman who is stopped, but the connotations of 'long-haired' are unquestionably male; it is only men with long hair who represent revolt for the bourgeoisie, the police and so on, and not women.

The other reactionary linguistic slip occurs in Jamie Gough's article on gay rights [9 February], where he uses the word 'straight' to describe heterosexuals. 'Straight' is used by reactionaries to mean heterosexual because it also means 'morally respectable' and is the opposite of 'bent' — perverted — which for them is what homosexuals are.

By pointing this out, I do not mean that the content of either of the articles was reactionary, but that revolutionaries must be careful not to slip into reactionary linguistic traps, thus reinforcing reactionary views.

NICK HEWLETT (Paris)

## Jewish fears

BOTH NATIONALLY and in many local areas it is becoming clear that the Jewish community is playing a major part in the anti-fascist movement. But intense criticism of Zionism on the part of the left over the past ten years has alienated the Jewish community and, in consequence, hampered the anti-fascist struggle.

Of course, any accommodation between Zionism and Marxism is out of the question. However, the left has shown a lack of genuine sympathy and understanding for the particular oppression suffered by the Jews, and failed to realise that racism and fascism raise the spectre of another holocaust, not only for blacks, but also for the Jews again — now!

After the Second World War, the Jewish masses all over the world turned to Zionism largely as a response to the double failure of the European left to prevent the destruction of European Jewry and to provide an alternative in the fight against anti-Semitism. Hence the understandable tendency in the Jewish community to identify anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, and the initial reluctance to co-operate with the left in the anti-fascist struggle — though the Jewish response to the Nazi threat grows ever more militant.

If this situation is to be reversed, it demands a serious attempt on the part of revolutionary socialists to produce a clear analysis of the Jewish question free from oversimplified slogans that set aside or ignore the complex historical and psychological factors involved.

The socialist alternative has to be seen in practice to tackle the problems and deep fears that still confront Jewish communities all over the world.

CLIVE GILBERT (Bury Socialist Challenge Group and member of the Jewish Socialist Group)

READERS should send their letters to the editor, Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, Islington, London N1

## 'Destiny hindered anti fascist movement'

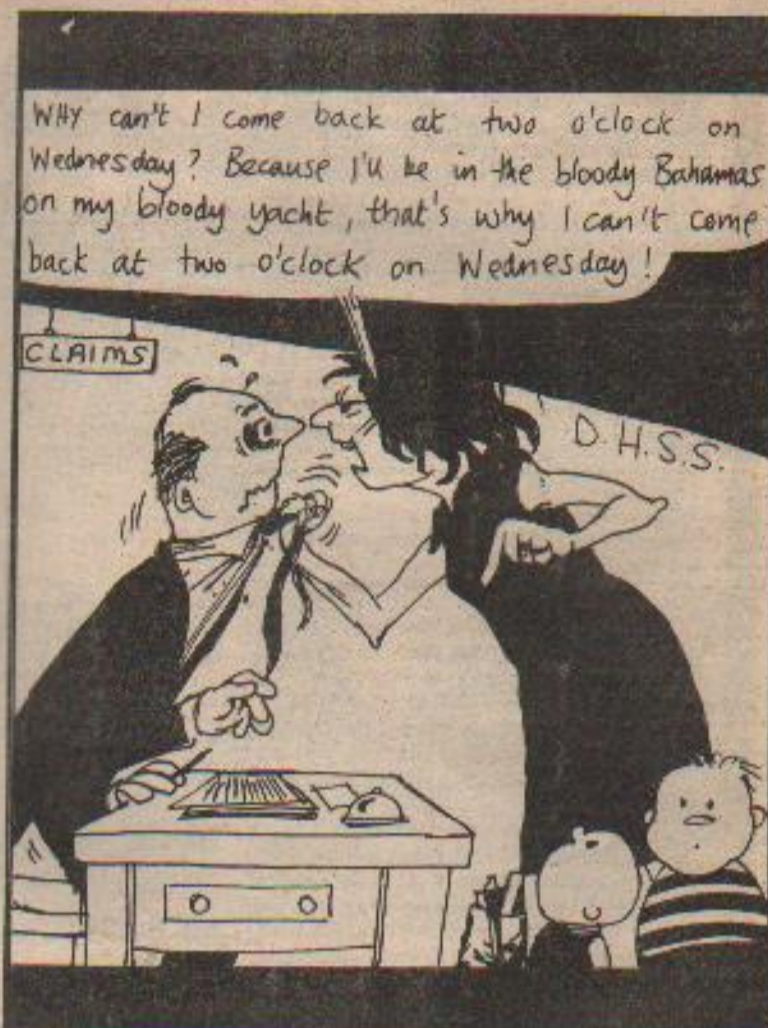
I DISAGREE with your assessment of the television production of Destiny. It probably hindered rather than helped the anti-fascist movement. Any workers who watched it right through [not many, probably] might have ended up attracted rather than repelled by the NF. What comes across in the play is a fairly attractive blend of strength, confidence purpose and plausibility on the fascist side. This contrasts of course with the utter bankruptcy, feebleness and hopelessness of the other parties. Take the scene where the Tory goes to the Nation Forward offices to 'confront' them. His whimpering banalities about fairness and decency, his pathetic liberalism is met by the down to earth politics of the fascists. Cleaver's politics are based on the 'realities' of the uncle swamped by blacks, the old lady with shit through the door, etc.

What's missing from the play, of course is the genuine voice of the left. Not the scheming cynical corrupt left, like the left labourites in the play. But the authentic voice of the anti-fascist workers. The only people who could have fitted the bill — the striking workers, were, because of the structure of the play, completely marginal to the main action. The appearance of the white worker in the Labour Club making the appeal for money and help, was belated, token and very very confusing. And he only reduced the anti-fascist question to solidarity on the picket line — 'black and white unite and fight'.

The left in general has welcomed this TV play as your reviewer did as a useful weapon in the anti-fascist struggle. I think this may be based on a misconception of how we address our ideas to the class. The ideas we present have to be related to the experiences of the people we are talking to. Most of the revolutionary left press is related to the experiences only of the small circle of people close to the revolutionary left. Edgar's play was only intended for an audience of people who already had a good understanding of what fascism is all about.

Lenin said that propaganda is many ideas to few people; agitation few ideas to many people. If this is so then Destiny was very subtle propaganda directed to a few people 'in the know' about fascism. If there was any effective agitation in the play it was expressed entirely by the fascists who were able, with a few key ideas, to offer a seemingly plausible world outlook to workers looking for answers. They spoke to the experiences of the working class. The class' understanding of those experiences was wrong of course. What the left has to do to change this false understanding is to stop congratulating ourselves on the excellence of our drama and propaganda, stop talking in a jargon ridden secret language and start expressing ourselves in relation to the real experience of the class.

MICHAEL BRYANT (Liverpool)



## The truth about The Spongers

I TAKE OBJECTION to Carl Gaidiner's view of The Spongers and the overall definition of socialist art implied in his letter (16 February). 'The Spongers', says Gaidiner, ends up reconstructing and reinforcing bourgeois reality and a bourgeois world view' because the playwright's mode of expression is 'bourgeois naturalism' which merely reflects 'reality' and does not pose any alternative to it, how to fight back etc. The mood of the play is pessimistic out of which can spring the seeds of reaction.

It is, however, hard to see how Jim Allen's work can be assimilated to naturalism. Allen, I would suggest, is more in the realist mould than any naturalism. Naturalism essentially turns the historical into the natural; the relations between people have a preordained and dead quality no longer imaginable as being a dynamic creation of men and women. Naturalism deals with meticulously observed detail and surface phenomenon. It does not show typical features or what lies 'behind' these impressions. The writer is reduced to a mere 'observer' and not an active participant in history.

Jim Allen, on the contrary, by his very choice of the title even, does not merely describe some 'objective' reality; his is an active intervention

into an on-going political debate. He penetrates the accidental-seeming circumstances and reveals typical social laws at work — concerned with unemployment, social security, the role of social workers, Labour councils, and so on from the point of view of a working class woman.

Allen argues through his selection of circumstances and characters against a prevailing view of 'reality' which sees the large proportion of working people on the dole as lazy or spongers. This is a false reality and therefore is ideological. He implies quite explicitly that royalty are the spongers instead. It is hard to see how this can reinforce bourgeois reality.

The deaths at the end of the play were clearly not seen as inevitable. Allen cleverly unmasked all the debates and political decisions based on the cuts in local government. Obviously many people would think twice about voting for Labour councillors if alternatives were put forward in the form of the revolutionary left at a local level. If Allen's play had the effect he desired, it seems very likely that Allen did have success with the play among the working class, judging by the Sunday Mail (a working class Labour-supporting Scottish paper) readers voting it top television viewing for that week.

A socialist art does not necessarily mean the depiction of what could be done. By showing the effects of capitalist policies, Allen surely bolsters the left in their fight against the cuts, paves the way for the intervention of revolutionaries' socialist solutions, with the effects of bourgeois ideology dented just a little.

RON PRATT (Aberdeen)

## Socialist Challenge EVENTS

### NORTH WEST

**PRESTON** Socialist Challenge group: first meeting, Thursday 9 March, 7.45pm in Windsor Castle pub, Ege St, Preston. The Politics of the National Front. Speaker: Colin Kirkpatrick from the Tameside Trades Council anti-fascist committee (personal capacity). If you would like the Socialist Challenge regularly ring Preston 54616.

**BURY** Socialist Challenge group meets every Wednesday, 8pm at the Wheatfield pub, Bury New Road, Whitfield (near Whitfield bus and train station).

**WARRINGTON** Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-231 2352

**LIVERPOOL** Socialist challenge group meets fortnightly on Wednesdays at the Colphie, Ganning Place.

**SOUTH MANCHESTER** Socialist Challenge group meets every other Thursday at the Albert Inn off Wilmow Rd. Help sell Socialist Challenge between 11.30am and 1pm at Moss Side shopping centre or Longlight Market, Dickenson Rd. Further information from 061-236 2052.

**DARLINGTON** Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Northern Rock on High Row, 11am-1pm.

**MIDDLESBOROUGH** Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Boots at Cleveland Centre, 11am-1pm. Socialist Challenge is also available from Harrisons (newsagent) in Leazes Road.

**DURHAM** Socialist Challenge supporters group meets Thursday, 16 March, Big Jug Pub, Citygate, Durham City, 7.30pm. Further details from J Fox, 41 The Avenue, Durham.

### YORKSHIRE

**HULL** Socialist Challenge readers group meeting, Wednesday, 7 March,

7.30pm, Waltham Club, Norfolk Street. The socialist attitude to immigration control. Further details from Dave, Hull 432855.

**YORK** Socialist Challenge meeting, Friday 3 March, 8pm. 'Building the class struggle left wing in the trade unions'. Speaker: Roland Shaw (Illing Trade Council, personal capacity). Centre Market pub, Barbican Rd.

**HUDDERSFIELD** Socialist Challenge group meets first at 8pm on 9 March and fortnightly thereafter at the Friends and Trades Club, Northumberland St (opp. station).

### SCOTLAND

For information on Socialist Challenge contact Scottish Socialist/Socialist Challenge bookshop, 64 Queen Street, Glasgow. (Tel: 041 221 748). Open weekdays 10-4, late closing Thursdays 6pm. Wide range of Fourth International publications.

**DUNDEE**: information about Socialist Challenge, activities from 64 Queen St, Glasgow. Join in 50 sales outside Boots corner of Reform Street each Saturday, 11am-2pm.

**EDINBURGH** Socialist Challenge meetings every second Wednesday. Contact George Kerran, 12 Merchiston Grove, Bonborough, Tel: 031-346 0468.

**ABERDEEN**: information about Socialist Challenge activities, ring Jim on 43896 (after 6pm).

### SOUTH EAST

**COLCHESTER** Socialist Challenge supporters sell the paper every Saturday outside Caters from 10.45am-1pm. Further information of local activities from Mike, 11 Angleside Rd, Wivenhoe.

**COLCHESTER** Socialist Challenge group to be set up in town. If you are interested, come along to a meeting at the Labour Party Hall, North Chapel Street, 14 March, 7.30pm.

**BRIGHTON** Socialist Challenge Forum, Tuesday, 14 March, 8pm. 'Fascism'. Resources Centre, North Street, 8pm.

### SOUTH WEST

**SOUTHAMPTON** Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday from 10am-1pm outside Ubows Bar Post Office, Bargate.

**SOUTHAMPTON** Socialist Challenge meeting 'Women and Socialism' with Judith Arkwright of the steering committee of the National Abortion Campaign, persons especially Wednesday, 8 March, 7.30pm. In The Anchor, East Street. Further details about future meetings from 28 Tennyson Road.

**CARDIFF** Socialist Challenge Forum, next meeting, Friday, 3 March, Four Elms, Elm Street, off the Newport Road, discussion on 'Art and Politics'.

**SWANSEA** Socialist Challenge group meets every other Wednesday at 7.30pm in St Helens Inn, Vincent St, Swansea. All supporters welcome. Next meeting 8 March.

### MIDLANDS

For details of activities of local supporters contact the Socialist Challenge Centre, 7th Digbeth High Street, Birmingham. 021-643 9291

### LONDON

**NEWHAM** Socialist Challenge Forums held regularly. Details of next meeting from Newham Forums, PO Box 50, London N1.

**GREENWICH/LEWISHAM** Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly. For details ring Rev. 01-859 1187.

**SOUTHALL** Supporters group meets fortnightly. For details ring 01-573 5695.

**HARROW** Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. Anyone interested please contact PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

**SOUTH WEST LONDON** Socialist Challenge supporters meet fortnightly in the WOCR Neighbourhood Centre, 172 Lavender Hill, SW11. Next meeting, Wednesday, 8 March, 8pm. 'Why Socialist Unity is standing candidates in local elections'.

**HARROGATE** Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly. Next meeting Monday 5 March, West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road (off West Green Road), Turnpike Lane tube. Speaker: Geoff Sheridan from Socialist Challenge editorial board on 'The project of Socialist Challenge'.

**HAMMERSMITH** Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly — details from London IMC, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

## What did Marx read?

I DON'T THINK that John Sullivan was vilifying culture in the manner of Goering, as a member of the Socialist Challenge Editorial Board suggested to me when John attacked the 'cultural rubbish' in the paper at the conference of ex-International Socialist comrades. It is a matter of orientation, though.

If the paper is aimed at advanced workers and militants it should speak to their cultural preoccupations which often, of course, reach them via television. This does not mean a regular social realist column on successive Bruce Forsyth shows — god forbid — but it does mean taking up serious programmes in a sensitive way. After all probably far more British shop stewards saw the Marriage of Figaro on TV than did members of the 'menu peuple' in 18th century Paris.

Are not the political preoccupations of Beaumarchais and Mozart of interest to our movement? There is a serial on BBC2 which far more people are looking at than at Socialist Challenge and the alternative cinema put together, and which should have enormous interest for socialists and feminists. On one weekend last month there were serials on The Mayor of Casterbridge and the Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, together with To Kill a Mockingbird and the 1959 version of the Doctor's Dilemma! Plenty to talk about I would have thought, not in a solemn and didactic way ramming socialism down people's throats at every opportunity, but instead putting a humane and sensitive point of view in simple and straightforward language.

Of course, this is very difficult to do well — far more demanding than staring at the counter-culture's navel. But ask yourself what would Marx have done? What were his reading habits? Did he not delight in the popularisation of Darwin's ideas in working men's institutes? Would he have regarded a TV series on one of Flaubert's novels as talking down to poor thick buggers who wanted to look at some silly quiz show?

Make no mistake, Socialist Challenge does not yet talk to advanced workers but to very, very advanced ones. They may well be looking at BBC2. Though the paper is a huge advance on its predecessor, there are light years of distance ahead of us. The very best of luck in making a lively, readable revolutionary weekly paper.

TED CRAWFORD (W. London)

## The CP's real roots

THE ARTICLE by Clive Turnbull, along with other material in Socialist Challenge on the Communist Party(ies), though well-researched and non-sectarian, tantalisingly refuses to inquire into the class nature of the CP — a necessity for elaborating effective tactics.

Clive wrote: 'The root of the CP's failure lies in its left-reformist programme...' and at the end: 'As a small cadre organisation, it should have turned away from left social democratic reformism and linked up with forces fighting against class collaborationism. It refused to do so' (my emphasis).

Now, to say somebody should have done X implies that it was within his/her possibility to do it, though s/he didn't. Clive seems, therefore, to think that 'the left social democratic programme' of the CP is merely a ghastly aberration which can be corrected if alternatives are but sufficiently explained to them.

But where do the programme and activities of a party come from? Surely not from people's heads. The kinds of practices of the CP described by Clive are in fact eminently rational because they correspond to particular interests. Isn't it high time we related to the CP on the understanding that most (not all) of the people who join it do so precisely because its programme and practice are not revolutionary (their subjectivity and socialist

phraseology are quite secondary), and that 'small cadre organisation' or not, there was and is no possibility of the CP aligning itself with revolutionary forces on anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic struggles.

Much is excluded from this letter and it is possible only to touch on what is crucial: the classes or layers upon which the CP rests. Very basically, I would suggest there are two. First, a wing of the trade union bureaucracy, including a section of shop stewards, which wishes to — aye, dreams 'utopian hopes' — about directing the bourgeois economy and the bourgeois State at the expense of private capital (though like the latter, to the exclusion of the working class).

The second layer is a section of the salaried petit bourgeoisie, which wishes to take the bourgeois democratic demands of equality and freedom to their limits, but which has no interest or intention of destroying the capitalist State or of transforming production relations in the interests of working class power.

If we want to politicise workers it is this (among other things) that we must grasp and transmit.

JOHN WEAL (N. London)

## North West Conference appeal

A RECENT meeting at the Warrington Socialist Challenge group, addressed by Bob Pennington — national organiser of Socialist Unity, has sparked off a debate on how to build Socialist Unity, and if it can be a springboard from which a new, unified revolutionary organisation can be formed.

This raises the question of whether Socialist Challenge is really playing the role it could — and should — to bring about the aims of building a socialist alternative and a unified revolutionary organisation.

Warrington Socialist Challenge group has therefore decided to call a north-west conference of Socialist Challenge groups and supporters to be held on Saturday 1 April at the Socialist Challenge centre, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester.

The first session will start at 11am. We also see this conference as being a contribution to the debate underway in the International Marxist Group in preparation for its conference — some of which has been published in the paper.

We feel that four important contributions have already been made in the pages of Socialist Challenge and at different recent conferences.

These include the Battle of Ideas supplement in issue number 31 of the paper (based on a major document by the National Committee of the IMG, which members of Socialist Challenge groups should have); 'The Future of Socialist Unity', a document by Paul Thompson for the Socialist Unity conference; 'Politics and the Party' by Martin Shaw for the ex-IS conference; and 'In defence of Socialist Challenge' in issue number 32 of the paper.

Because we feel that the ideas in these articles should be debated more fully we suggest they form the basis for the agenda, which of course would be subject to amendments or change if the conference should so wish. We have copies of all these documents available.

We also intend to invite Martin Shaw who — having given support for Socialist Challenge — has made a significant contribution to the developing debate on the possibilities on building a united revolutionary organisation.

Whilst we regret the decision of the comrades of Big Flame not to join the editorial board of the paper, we would still welcome Paul Thompson as a guest speaker, as a way of continuing the debate with Big Flame on the need to build Socialist Challenge.

We shall also invite a member of the

editorial board of the paper and would ask the following groups to discuss the proposal at their next meeting: Bolton, Liverpool, Bury, Preston, Leigh, Hebdon Bridge, South Manchester, and Birkenhead, and to contact Warrington with any suggestion they would like to make.

All those who propose supporting this conference — and we urge all north-west supporters of the paper to do so — please contact the address below. Discussion documents will be sent out as soon as possible, and further details will be published in Socialist Challenge.

C.CHARNLEY, (10 Mersey walk, Warrington, WA41SU, Cheshire).

## Connecting with WIRES

'COULD YOU tell me where the nearest lesbian group is?' 'I'm doing a project on sexism in education. Could you refer me to relevant sources?' 'Could you tell me about the various feminist publications available in Britain, and how I can get hold of them?'

These are just a small sample of the queries that WIRES answers continuously. WIRES (Women's Information, Referral and Enquiry Service) is the national information service of the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain. It was set up by the national WLM conference in 1975, when it was evident that a fast-growing movement needed its own channel of communication, and dissemination of information on a national level.

Unlike most other forms of organised political groups, the WLM has no central committee, no leadership. The unit of organisation is the group. A variety of groups are engaged in fighting women's oppression — consciousness-raising groups, women's aid support groups, groups organised in and around women's centres, direct action groups, rape crisis groups, groups involved in ongoing campaigns and so on.

It is therefore obvious that a movement as large and diverse as ours needs a national organ which would assimilate information, build the Women's Liberation Movement as a cohesive network which operates efficiently without hierarchical structures; and thus build up an accessible history of activities and information of the movement. This is one of the functions that WIRES performs.

The other is the national twice-monthly newsletter that WIRES produces. This concerns itself mainly with keeping women informed of what is going on nationally — conferences, meetings, WL publications, campaigns, etc. It also opens its pages to letters, opinions and debate, and carries reports of local actions, and passes on experience from different groups. The newsletter has a high readership, and is internal to the Women's Liberation Movement, and is therefore available to women only.

A collective of five women operates WIRES at the moment, which is now based in York after having spent its first 2½ years in Leeds. We invite sisters to subscribe to WIRES: individual rates £6 a year (£4 if poor); groups £12 a year (£8 if poor) for two copies.

WIRES COLLECTIVE  
32 Parliament Street, York



## Widgery: My smile

IT IS I who is the Patron Saint, it transpires (Comment, 26 January, 2 and 9 February). And by defending the Socialist Workers Party, my human face-mask-halo has slipped and I'm letting down my quite undeserved reputation as everyone's political nice guy. 'Human face of the SWP' indeed! I decline the honour of canonisation. My smile (an increasingly rare event) is more like Radek at closing time than Dubcek in Spring.

Still I'm grateful to my disapproving correspondents for inadvertently demonstrating the point I was trying to make — that, despite the political candy floss, Socialist Unity depends too much on fostering inaccurate anti-SWP feeling. Steve Cass puts the compact cliché-case against us: Socialist Worker 'contains little serious political analysis'; the membership is not increasing, its quality declining and constantly turning over. Martin Shaw repeats and strengthens his view that 'the political level of SW is abysmally low'.

Old sweats like Mick Gosling (who since the first issues of Socialist Challenge have barely been able to contain their dislike of the unity line) accuses SWP, inter alia, of declaring its own General Strike and censoring its correspondence. All agree that SWP's involvement in the Anti Nazi League is essentially a plot against the rest of the left; in Martin Shaw's words a 'blatant attempt to bypass the united anti-fascist movement'.

Let us examine these criticisms. Most of them have some — slim — basis; all caricatures have some resemblance to reality. SW has sometimes been declamatory, cretinising and shy of the marvellous; some SWP leaders suffer from occasional bouts of megalomania; we have lost some members of real worth.

But in total the Shaw-Cass-Gosling picture is a caricature, and a highly inaccurate one. First, on membership. SWP's current dues-paying membership is 4,700, nearly a thousand more than our peak in the 1972-73 period. Some are new, even young. But at least 30 have clocked up 20 years in the organisation, and in Glasgow alone we have 30 comrades who have been members for over ten years.

As for Socialist Worker's political level, just glancing through the last few weeks' issues, I have enjoyed and learnt from: Tariq Ali on Leyland; Phillip Agee on his battles in Holland; Mickey Boulter on the English national football team; Ray Challenor on the Liddle Towers case; Paul Foot on the Labour Party's immigration legislation, and the unofficial steelworkers' national conference; Billy Gates on Jack Jones' ennoblement; Reg Groves on Charlie Chaplin; Tony Lynn and Nick Rowling on Dada; Jo Rollo on the voyage of the Jewish refugee ship 'St Louis'; and Cal Winslow's report on the US miners' strike.

Which of these would Martin Shaw consider of 'an abysmally low political level, all or just most? As for the letters page, there is much controversy. Indeed I note that the Spare Rib collective write suggesting we censor letters more strictly. We are, of course, no more obliged to print every missive on 'Socialist Unity' than they are every letter from the Power of Women.

On the Anti Nazi League, your correspondents' hostile attitude illustrates perfectly their habitual negativity to all things SWP. I work in Bethnal Green where many recently arrived Ugandan Asians, as well as an older population of Caribbean and Bangladeshi migrants, make their life in the heart of a traditionally strong fascist area.

Despite Hilda Kean's splendid showing in the Spitalfields by-election, IMG-Socialist Unity are a tiny force. For most of the locals, the attitude was a plague on both their houses. Within a few days of the Anti Nazi League being formed, Brian Clough's statement, and the anti-fascist front pages — at last — in the Daily Mirror and the News of the

World, the whole atmosphere visibly improved. Years of battling by the far left had made anti-fascism legitimate in mainstream culture. A joint statement by Messrs Shaw, Thompson, Kirkwood, Ali and Cliff would mean sod all in Bethnal Green. Can we not therefore have some credit where credit is due, rather than more retreading of political sour grapes.

Of course, the planning stages of a propaganda operation like the Anti Nazi League are done quietly; so was the Committee of 100 launch, and the Manifesto of the 121 against the Algerian war. Far from going behind the backs of people, I hope the League has the decency not to publish its list of eminent socialists and feminists who refused to sign in the early stages. The League, a loose propaganda movement of individuals making a personal stand, in no way conflicts with the existing, delegate and trades council based, local anti-fascist committees which, in some cases, are already supported by SWP local branches.

It has certainly been welcomed by many members of the Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee (see page 5 of issue 3 of the excellent CARF), and members of the IMG ought to be a little restrained in attacking the League in the name of that body.

Finally, on sexual politics, which the Trotskyist detractors of SWP seldom raise, but which has been a problematic area for many members and a lot of feminists and gay revolutionaries, I believe a fundamental change of attitude has taken place here. Even as Bob Cant was regaling the ex-IS conference, yet again, with tales of homophobia, hundreds of SWP members were supporting the Gay News defence march and John Lindsay spoke from the platform for the IS Gay Group. Now, of course, that doesn't tell you too much about individual consciousness, but I believe there has been a sea change in SWP, and a fair reader of Women's Voice and SW would see a genuine and new commitment to sexual politics. Long belated it may be, but perhaps it's more meaningful than an instant conversion. There is such a thing, Bob, as living in the past.

In short, the widely broadcast reports of SWP's death, as Claude Cockburn said of his obituary in The Times, are 'somewhat overstated'. A perspective built around the irrelevance of SWP would be a historical blunder. And I repeat my (unanswered) question about the dual-personality of the IMG.

Is there a genuine change of heart, or do things still stand, in the words of the last published United Secretariat Theses on Britain (Jan '76, Section 12): 'Through fraternal debate, polemics and the demonstration of the correctness of its line in practice, it seeks to break (one could write a poem on that word, DW) them away from their original shibboleths and convince them of the need to regroup their forces with the IMG, to create a strengthened and united revolutionary organisation in Britain, under the banner of the Fourth International?'

Because when I read this and notice that, in Queen of all places, Tariq Ali, of whom one would have expected better, chooses to make yet another condescending attack on the SWP rather than advance the case for socialism, I begin to wonder if this non-sectarian transformation has been achieved simply by inversion of the preceding sectarianism but pursued in the same mentality.

In such a case it ought to be quite clear why SWP does not want an organisational merger with IMG, even if it were much larger, better based and with a more impressive political record. As for joint electoral candidates, SWP is currently reviewing its experience.

I suspect SWP will go ahead with a more modest programme of candidates and perhaps support Socialist Unity operations in other areas. But the exact arrangements do not seem to me to be the real issue. What perhaps can be said more modestly than the Socialist Unity schema, is that the far left has weathered the worst of the retrenchment and that all sorts of lefties in all sorts of parties and none, men and women, gays and lesbians, are more confident and more co-operative than for years. This is something bigger than both of us.

DAVID WIDGERY (N. London)

# STUDENTS MARCH AGAINST RACISM

TWO THOUSAND students marched through London on 22 February in opposition to the racist quotas imposed on overseas students.

The march, organised by the National Union of Students, was led by Thames Polytechnic students union, which has been occupying the college for the past fortnight.

The demonstration was in opposition to attempts by the Inner London Education Authority to cut overseas student numbers through quotas on admissions.

Thames' president John Ford was cheered when he pointed out that the days' activities were not an end in themselves, but the first step to launching a national campaign against the quotas and racism in education.

Thames will be calling a further national day of action on 8 March in London. For speakers, phone Thames Poly students union on 01-855 0618.

\*Following the dictates of 'Hammer' McNee, the Metro-

politan Police commander, the Broad Left leaders of the NUS executive have switched a demonstration on grants — planned for London on 3 March — to Birmingham.

The decision was taken without consultation with the union executive, despite requests from executive members belonging to the Socialist Student Alliance for such a meeting.

Birmingham Area NUS opposed the change of venue, as did the SSA and the National Organisation of International Socialist Societies.

Colin Talbot, an SSA member on the union executive, says the Alliance has called for 'an all out mobilisation for Birmingham, but is organising a massive intervention to expose the executive cowardice and inaction'.

## Journalists censored for anti-Nazi reports

THE SPORTS EDITOR of a North London group of newspapers has been told by management that his attacks on the National Front are 'too provocative', and he has been threatened with the sack, reports GEOFFREY SHERIDAN.

Ken Burgess, sports editor of the Islington Gazette, Hornsey Journal and Camden Journal, warned football fans in a prominent back page article on 20 January: 'Don't be conned by Nazis!'

The following week, Burgess wrote a report on the decision of Arsenal's Jewish supporters to join the Anti Nazi League. Without any consultation with Burgess, group editor Mike Pearce watered down the story, deleting references to 'Nazis' and the League's address.

Pearce promptly issued a formal warning to Burgess, which the National Union of Journalists both locally and nationally is demanding be withdrawn.

The NUJ chapel at the North London group has strongly opposed racism, securing from

management last year an agreement on race reporting, including confirmation of the union's own guidelines and a positive policy of exposing racism.

It was the Hornsey Journal — part of the groups which is owned by Heart of England Newspapers Limited — which last April published a brilliant front page montage denouncing the Nazis.

'We believe there has been pressure from top management every since that front page,' says Clive Steele, father of the Islington Gazette chapel.

'As far as we're concerned, Pearce acted unethically in censoring an accurate story on the Arsenal supporters, rendering it inaccurate. It now looks as if we're on the threshold of a major confrontation.'

## OUR FUND DRIVE

# Money, money, money...

Scandalous! Outrageous! Unbelievable! How could you have sunk so low? Only £16 came in last week's post for the Emergency Fund.

We thought it was clear that we were relying on the maturity and understanding of readers. We did not want wild, sensationalist appeals for money. Were we wrong? We hope not.

Though we might have to resort to such devices if money does not come in over the next few weeks. We need £3000 by the time the national conference of Socialist Challenge supporters takes place on 27 May. That means we still need £2,800. Local supporters should organise special drives to raise the money.

We need this money not just to pay off our creditors but most importantly to buy a small printing press. One of the weaknesses of the paper has been our failure to produce lots of leaflets, stickers and posters to advertise the fact that we have the best revolutionary paper in Britain.

Without our own press the cost is prohibitive. The money we have to date would hardly cover the cost of a month's

supply of ink. So if you want to really assist the long term growth of the paper then support our emergency appeal.

The regular fund drive to sustain the paper and paint the Tatlin tower red, received a welcome boost from our bankers orders. These total £138 per month and represent a real commitment to the future of the paper.

Just over £30 of this total has been collected as part of the campaign to sponsor a journalist. If you want to give us a regular donation then fill in the form on this page and send it to Socialist Challenge.

This brings the total to date in the Tatlin tower fund drive to £987.20. We are now over half way there, but still behind target. With the emergency appeal and the fund drive running together we urge our supporters to make a special effort.

Our thanks to the bankers order donors and the following for the donations to the emergency appeal:

Newham Socialist Challenge Group	5.00
R. Jones	5.00
J. Pastors	1.00
M. Mulvihill	5.00

## We'll be meeting

THE FIRST national Socialist Challenge conference will be on Saturday 27 May in London. This will be open to all supporters of the paper.

Since the paper was launched less than one year ago sales have been rising locally and Socialist Challenge groups mushroom-

ing. This conference will be the first opportunity for these groups and supporters to meet nationally and debate out their experience.

As part of the preparation for this conference the pages of the paper will be open to our supporters to make their comments on the past and future of Socialist Challenge. The North West groups, at the request of the Warrington supporters, are organising a regional conference. Other regions should take note.

Full details of the agenda on the May conference will be announced in the next weeks.

## SPECIAL

YOU CAN now obtain a copy of this unique publication for only 25p. The special, produced at the time of the 60th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, has been designed by David King, and contains a previously unpublished text by Isaac Deutscher.

This must be the bargain of the month at 25p.

Either ask your local paper seller or send a cheque or PO to Socialist Challenge for 25p plus 12p postage.

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Socialist Challenge

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