

Socialist Challenge



Photo: BOB MURPHY (Socialist Challenge)

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**END
THE
TALKS!**

**JOIN
THE
ACTION!**

THE FORD strike is biting hard. Dagenham body plant convenor Danny Connor confidently predicts a complete shutdown of Ford's European operations from 6 November.

Hundreds of messages of support are pouring into strike committee offices. But instead of turning these expressions of support into practical solidarity, the union negotiators had other ideas. It looked like a flagrant breach of union decisions — Ron Todd of the TGWU and the engineering union's Reg Birch met the company in 'exploratory' talks on Monday.

(This followed a touching correspondence between Birch and Ford's Paul Roots, in which Reg talked about the 'ghastly mess' caused by the strike.)

Ford workers were angry — especially as the union side of the negotiating committee had already rejected the idea of such talks. It brought back memories of the role of Hugh Scanlon and Jack Jones in the 1971 Ford strike. The 'Terrible Twins' had appealed to the company and workforce over the heads of the negotiating committee to sell the strike out for a paltry rise.

The Langley stewards' committee sent a telegram to their negotiators reminding them of their commitment to the full claim. And a Ford speaker at a 150-strong public meeting in Hackney asked: 'Why did we go on strike if it wasn't to put the company in a "ghastly mess"?'.

Formal talks broke down with Ford's refusal to offer more than 8½ per cent on basic rates — nowhere near the £20 needed to take living standards back to the 1971 level.

The company has equally refused to discuss the demand for five hours off the working week — vital at a time not only of technological advance but also massive unemployment. Compromise on the principles in the claim would not just be a blow to Ford workers.

Public sector manual workers are next in the firing line with a claim for a £60 minimum wage (a rise of £17) and a 35-hour week — and they are looking to the Ford strike.

United action by these workers alongside Ford's would strengthen both as well as opening the way for others. TUC should be pressing forward with the government, the workers' feeling that they might not win.

It is urgent to recall the Coventry shop stewards conference which decided upon the claim, so it can reaffirm its commitment to the full demands and set about the vital task of spreading the strike to other groups of workers with claims pending.

*The fight against 5 per cent — see pages 3-6

EDITORIAL

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Owen to circumstances beyond his control

'FOREIGN SECRETARY, you have a reputation as someone who is deeply concerned about human rights.' From the moment when the former Labour member for Ladywood uttered these sycophantic words, it was clear that the Weekend World interview was going to be a bizarre affair.

But who could have guessed how bizarre? By the end the right-wing renegade Brian Walden was looking like a raving Trotskyist alongside our latter-day Palmerston.

For those who missed this statesmanlike occasion, Owen's argument went roughly as follows: the Shah is a decent chap who has been trying to liberalise and modernise Iran for 20 years.

OK, there have been human rights problems [though far less than people claim] but the Shah has listened very carefully to what I had to say and all that has changed now. These highly progressive moves by the Shah have provoked all sorts of reactionary elements who are now trying to undermine the regime.

Yes, they were British tanks crushing demonstrators but that's fair enough: 'You have to decide if you help your friends. And you can't just go on hedging your bets.' Afghanistan and Pakistan are unstable, so who but the Shah is going to defend British interests in the area?

LOONIES

The Shah would be replaced by Moslem loonies who would in turn be replaced by Commie loonies and terrorists, all of whom would remove civil rights beloved of the Shah and the Labour government [such as equal rights for women].

The Foreign Office has denied rumours that David Owen has been booked for the Morecambe and Wise Christmas show.

One's first reaction is that the good doctor has lost his marbles. But think about it: the man has committed the cardinal sin for a Labour Minister. He is telling the truth [or what passes for it in FO circles].

Not about human rights or the character of the opposition, evidently. But it is true that the Shah is 'our' friend — if by 'our' you mean British imperialist. It is true that he presents the only chance for 'stability' in the region — and hence the safety of oil from the Gulf and the extensive British economic interests.

It is true that he is also 'our' friend in that he buys large quantities of 'our' military hardware. It is also true, as Owen pointed out, that that hardware was used to crush opposition on the streets. And it is true that the Shah is potentially the last bastion against workers' power in central Asia.

Given all this, it should be more clear than ever where we stand. The fact that British imperialism is behind the Shah to the last ditch — and is happy to admit it — means that our general internationalist duty of solidarity with the Iranian people becomes all the more pressing.

LABOUR MPs

To their credit, there are Labour MPs who have consistently opposed the government's record on Iran. Only this week, a delegation led by Russell Kerr returned from Iran with new evidence on the Black Friday massacre and the Abadan cinema fire. And Owen's interview was greeted with an admirable outburst of anger from the Labour left.

The trouble is that we have heard these sort of displays only too often and they are followed up by...precisely nothing.

Verbal fireworks in the House are not enough [though we hope there will be some of them as well]. The point is how to take the campaign on Iran out into the labour movement, to stop arms, trading and diplomatic relations with the Shah.

The potential is there. Few people are taken in by Owen's apologetics. There are many Iranian students in Britain who are only too ready to campaign against the Shah. And bodies like the Committee Against Repression in Iran [CARI] have broad paper support from trade unions.

What is needed now is action: against SAVAK presence in Britain, against diplomatic contacts with Iran, and above all in industry against trade and economic links.

CARI, which has an excellent campaigning record, has the framework and perspectives to develop such activity. It deserves 100 per cent support in that task.

THE FIRST WORD

Law and order

A black youth enters the debate

JOHN is 16 years old. He is also black.

With the current 'debate' on 'law and order', we thought it only fitting that John should have the first word this week.

I'm going to tell you about when I was smoking with a few guys, at a house in Kilburn, and we got busted by the police and how they beat us up in the cells.

It was Saturday at about 11.30 at night. There were five of us round at this house smoking in the back garden.

There was a knock on the door. This guy Emmanuel got up to answer the door and he had a spliff in his hand.

As he opened the door, six or seven policemen came in. One of them said: 'We've got you, you black cunts.'

RAN

They just ran straight through the hall into the room. They picked us all up and took us outside into this meat wagon, there were three cars with it.

We were in there for about five minutes and they came back and said: 'We're going to really do you'.

They had this little box, 'cos they'd just searched the house down, you know. No warrant or nothing. They had two ounces of cannabis, rizla papers and tobacco. They said: 'This is our evidence against you.'

We were driving for about twenty minutes till we got to the police station. They just opened the door and took us and dragged us straight in. We never had no time to look round or nothing.

RIGHTS

They took us straight into this great big hall, and took names, addresses and ages. They didn't tell us what they were arresting us for, or about any rights we had.

They took us off to separate cells. It was in a little tiny room with a little bed in the corner. Then, 'cos I was tired, I rested and was looking up at the ceiling.

Then this door opened and a policeman came in and bent over towards me with a pillow in his hand, and said: 'It won't hurt you this way.'

I immediately guessed what he was going to do, so as he was leaning over the bed to me I punched him on his face and I messed up his nose and blood starts to come down.

He called his friends. They came into the cell. About seven of them. They put me into the middle and just started to kick

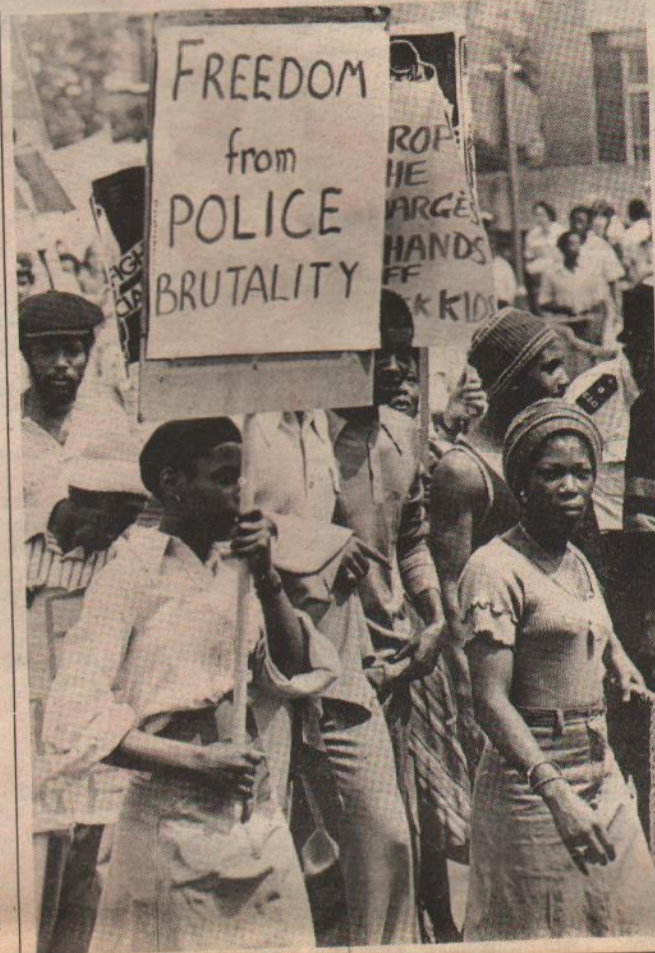


Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (JFL)

'The cops came back and said: "We're really going to do you"...'

'They got a stack of salt and rubbed it into the wound.'

'...they put my head into a sink full of water and cut my hair.'

me up.

After that one of them got a razor blade and one had a pot of salt. They cut my hand with the blade — little tiny cuts, you can't even see it. Then they just got a stack of salt and they put it in my hand into the wound.

It hurt and I cried. Then they got me to the sink and they put my head into a sink full of water and they cut my hair.

The others all got their dreadlocks cut off too. They told one of them they were cutting his locks 'cos they were an offensive weapon!

Then two policemen came and they took me into this room and started the heavy questioning. I asked them: 'What am I here for?'

They said: 'Well, first of all

just for cannabis. Now we got you for resisting arrest, assaulting a police officer, and breaking the peace.'

After all that, they said: 'We're going to set bail now. Then you have to appear in court at Willesden High Court.'

So very fortunately, 'cos I got a friend who just come down, a middle class guy — a rastaman — he came and he paid our bail for us. £70 each.

We just walked out, didn't know where the fuck we were. But I wasn't going to have it, 'cos I never did nothing wrong, and they were going to do me for all these things and they'd said I'd get eighteen months — at least eighteen months.

So I started to go round all my teachers at school for references and that.

MEDICAL

Also, before I'd got arrested I had a medical, 'cos I fell down the stairs at home, and he said I was A1 perfect, fit as a horse.

The day after I got out, the Monday, I went to the doctor again, to have a check-up. He told me I got bruised ribs and bruised back, he saw my head was cut and my hand was cut. I've got certificates for both of those visits.

Before I'd left the police had given me a number in case I wanted to contact the police station, but when I tried to phone it was a duff number, not a police station.

After that they'd given a letter to one of the other guys saying they were dropping charges against me.

I suppose that was because they were scared that what they did to me would come out. The others are still on charges, but none of them were beaten up.

We're now organising a demonstration against police harassment. We'll be marching to Paddington police station.

SUPPORT

We've got the support of the students' action group at school, the teachers union, and Paddington anti-racist campaign already, and we'll be asking the Anti Nazi League to back us.

But I'm not going to take on the police directly, 'cos if I make a complaint and get lots of publicity and all, then maybe I'll beat them this time, but they'll be after me then and sooner or later they'll get me for something.

Like look at this guy Liddle Towers — everyone thinks the police killed him, but no-one can do anything about it.

OUR POLICIES

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

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

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

* To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles. Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

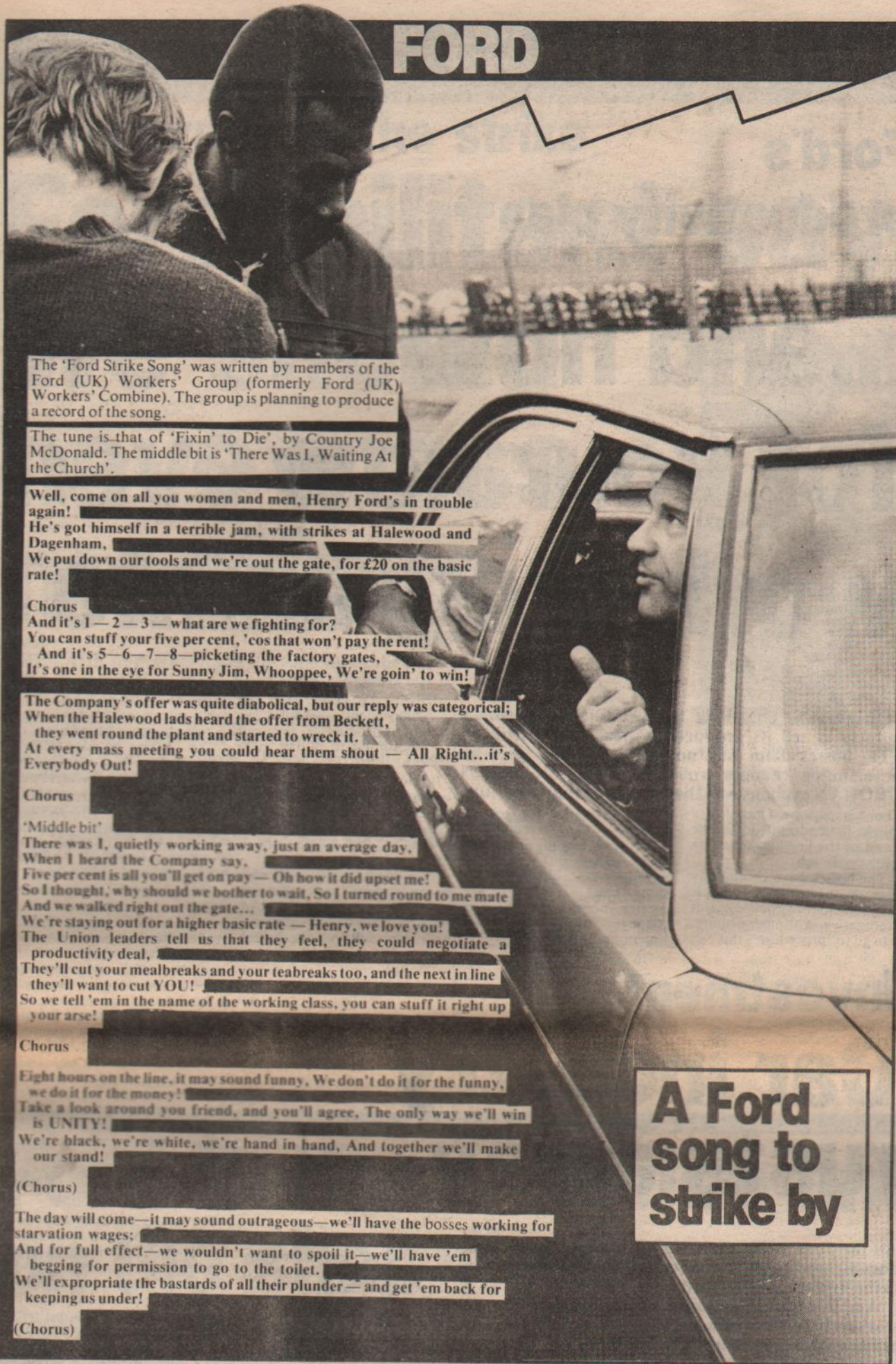
* I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs.

[Delete if not applicable]

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____

Send to Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper St, London N1.

FORD



The 'Ford Strike Song' was written by members of the Ford (UK) Workers' Group (formerly Ford (UK) Workers' Combine). The group is planning to produce a record of the song.

The tune is that of 'Fixin' to Die', by Country Joe McDonald. The middle bit is 'There Was I, Waiting At the Church'.

Well, come on all you women and men, Henry Ford's in trouble again!
He's got himself in a terrible jam, with strikes at Halewood and Dagenham,
We put down our tools and we're out the gate, for £20 on the basic rate!

Chorus
And it's 1-2-3 - what are we fighting for?
You can stuff your five per cent, 'cos that won't pay the rent!
And it's 5-6-7-8 - picketing the factory gates,
It's one in the eye for Sunny Jim, Whoopie, We're goin' to win!

The Company's offer was quite diabolical, but our reply was categorical;
When the Halewood lads heard the offer from Beckett,
they went round the plant and started to wreck it.
At every mass meeting you could hear them shout - All Right...it's
Everybody Out!

Chorus
'Middle bit'
There was I, quietly working away, just an average day,
When I heard the Company say,
Five per cent is all you'll get on pay - Oh how it did upset me!
So I thought, why should we bother to wait, So I turned round to me mate
And we walked right out the gate...
We're staying out for a higher basic rate - Henry, we love you!
The Union leaders tell us that they feel, they could negotiate a
productivity deal,
They'll cut your mealbreaks and your teabreaks too, and the next in line
they'll want to cut YOU!
So we tell 'em in the name of the working class, you can stuff it right up
your arse!

Chorus
Eight hours on the line, it may sound funny, We don't do it for the funny,
we do it for the money!
Take a look around you friend, and you'll agree, The only way we'll win
is UNITY!
We're black, we're white, we're hand in hand, And together we'll make
our stand!

(Chorus)
The day will come - it may sound outrageous - we'll have the bosses working for
starvation wages;
And for full effect - we wouldn't want to spoil it - we'll have 'em
begging for permission to go to the toilet.
We'll expropriate the bastards of all their plunder - and get 'em back for
keeping us under!

(Chorus)

A Ford
song to
strike by

TUC leaders Talking 'til they're blue in the face

TOP TRADE UNION leaders broke the mandate of every labour movement conference — those of their own unions, the TUC, and the Labour Party Conference — in their attempt last week to patch up a new pay deal with the Government.

While Len Murray and friends were silent about what was said, the Government trumpeted its message.

Denis Healey, who led the Government side in the talks with the TUC, gave his message to the bankers at their dinner at Mansion House last Thursday.

Britain's first task, he explained, was to get inflation down.

'That is why we have sought and will continue to ask employers and trade unions alike to work with us to achieve responsibility in pay negotiations,' Healey declared.

By an odd coincidence, 'responsibility' was the word used by the Transport Union leader, Moss Evans, as a so-called alternative to the Government's 5 per cent pay policy.

The Chancellor's view is straightforward: 'responsible collective bargaining' involves abiding by the Government's policy.

Failure to do so would be met by the use of 'fiscal' and 'monetary' measures. In plain English this means cuts in social services and higher unemployment.

Jim Callaghan has spelt out what a hard line would mean. He says that the Government is determined to stand by its policy even if it means a long, hard winter of strikes.

Meanwhile, Employment Secretary Albert Booth has delivered the Government's message to the low paid.

Rejecting a union request that he intervene in Wage Council settlements which fix minimum pay rates below the low-pay threshold stipulated in Phase Four, Booth explained that only if the settlements were above the £44.50 referred to in the White Paper would he step in.

The Employment Secretary pointed out that he had taken action along these lines when the Wage Councils fixed minimum rates above Phase Three's 10 per cent.

Healey, Callaghan and Booth have clearly set their sights on the wage claim covering one million public sector manual workers, which includes the demand for a £60 minimum wage.

The employers are due to reply to the claim next Monday.

With claims of 40 per cent by the miners, 30 per cent by workers at Leyland and the engineers, and the nurses' demand for 15 per cent all on the boil, the Government is anxious to isolate the public sector and manual workers.

By defeating them, the Government hopes to retrieve what it's lost through Ford and

British Oxygen overshooting the 5 per cent limit.

The public sector manual workers have to be isolated to prevent them from becoming part of generalised action against the pay policy.

The union leaders have shown their complicity in the Government's schemes.

They scrambled to the Treasury for three hours secret talks on Tuesday of last week, letting out whispers about bogus price controls as the only concession they could hope for.

What could upset the Government's plans is Ford and Vauxhall.

At Ford, Reg Birch, the chief negotiator for the Engineering Union, sent a letter to management appealing for talks to get them out of their 'ghastly mess'.

As the Financial Times has acknowledged, a shutdown at Vauxhall would 'greatly increase trade union pressure against the government's heavily attacked Phase Four'.

Yet, in response to a derisory offer there, the union leaders set a date for strike action a fortnight away. That falls on 1 November, two days after the offer to the public sector manual workers is to be made.

The Vauxhall claim is for 'substantial' rises, a phased reduction to a 35-hour week, and consolidation of various payments into basic rates.

The company's offer of increases of between 4.2 and 4.8 per cent on basic rates could not be sold to the membership. How much will they now need to come up with to avoid a strike?

Jack McGowan, secretary to the trade union side, has indicated that it will need to be nearer the 8.5 per cent offered by Ford. Chairperson Cliff Keech said that the union side favoured a productivity deal.

Also due on 1 November is a new offer from British Oxygen to the union's claim for 20 per cent.

There the Transport Union's national officer has said that 14 to 15 per cent would be acceptable since the company is likely to agree to the demand for a future change in the date of pay negotiations.

All these wait-and-see manoeuvres will doubtless wring the odd per cent from individual companies.

But in the context of the national talks over pay policy, the dallying plays into the Government's hands.

There is a clear alternative: Break the talks and prepare pay action now!

The press wheels out the wives

FINALLY the wives have been wheeled out to call for the end of the Ford strike, reports JUDE WOODWARD.

The Express, Mail and Sun have all quoted from Southampton workers' wives that they are 'shocked', 'disgusted' and think it's time the men went back to work.

As early as the second week of the strike, the Independent Television News went seeking anti-strike wives in Dagenham. But they didn't have much luck.

Most of the wives that they found to interview were solidly behind the strike.

Last week the press turned up trumps — in Southampton — where they found a few wives prepared to urge the men back to work.

These women were militant enough to want to organise a demonstration about it, encouraged no doubt by those after a good anti-strike news story.

But the Daily Express's

'petticoat rebellion at Ford' came to grief when the handful of anti-strike wives were met at the factory gates on Saturday by a much larger contingent of pro-strike wives and supporters. Needless to say, the Express made as little of that as possible.

ASSERTIVE

Some of the wives involved have clearly articulated right-wing views. They call for secret ballots rather than mass meetings, and demand that the union leaders accept the 8 per cent offer.

Others can easily be led on by the interviewing techniques of

assertive right-wing reporters: 'You're feeling the pinch now, aren't you?'

'It'll be better when the strike's over, won't it?'

Some wives are happy to be used to sap the strikers' morale; others don't realise that this is how their words will be used.

In Southampton, the organisation of the anti-strike wives provoked a counter offensive by those women behind the strike.

Not only did they counter the press attack, but they showed that their support was important for the success of the strike.

As Julie Alexander, a Ford wife active at Langley,

explained in Socialist Challenge a fortnight ago, women and wives should be involved in all aspects of activity around the strike: hearing the arguments, grappling with the problems, supporting the pickets and attending meetings.

If the unions and the shop stewards were to encourage such involvement, the women would be more likely to support the strikers every inch of the way.

And they'd be less likely to be gulled into supporting the strike-breaking ideas of those like Jean Russell or Susan Charlton who hide their thoroughly reactionary politics behind cries of outrage.



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)



Ford's productivity plan

...and now for your new work programme

FORD MANAGEMENT is suggesting it can work a miracle to sell its productivity deal to the strikers. The bosses claim that 'no production line speed-up or manning changes would be involved'. BRIAN GROGAN explains why they should be told to get lost.

Ford management has always fought for its 'right' to fix the speed of the line and manning levels on the job.

The bosses have continually been on the offensive against the shop-floor to challenge this prerogative. Although disputes can go to 'procedure', this can

stifle a grievance for several months.

The workers' only course for quick redress at Ford is immediate — unofficial — action. Thus in 1975, four out of five hours lost through stoppages were over work content and discipline.

Management's call for 'continuity of production' is a way of attempting to outlaw such action.

It is essentially offering bonuses related to national industrial action would cut the bonus of the whole labour force.

The intention is to pit any workers with a grievance against the rest of the Ford workers, not just management, with the result that the bosses

would gain total authority to increase line speed and absolute discretion over manning levels.

A similar ruse is being attempted over absenteeism.

Because of the crazy speed of the line and the soul-destroying shift system, many workers take days off. By tying bonuses to national targets, the whole workforce would again be hit.

Management's other proposals are an attempt to cut back on the limited gains Ford workers have made in relation to tea and meal breaks.

In the '60s, management sharply reduced these breaks. In Halewood, for instance, it was able in some shops to cut the meal break to 20 minutes and the time allowed during the day for going to the bog and having a fag to six minutes.

As one worker put it: 'We didn't even have time to wipe our arse'.

Since then, workers have made some gains through local agreements. It is these which management now wants to claw back.

The bosses basically want to import the German situation. In Ford plants there, every worker has an interest in the output of every other worker, which splinters the workforce and results in weak shop-floor organisation.

As the article on investment in the car industry details, production machinery in Britain is relatively ancient. Ford wants to introduce new technology here, and has already modelled its Bridgend plant on its operations in Cologne and Detroit.

There's no secret about what's in store for the workforce with updated technology: a heavy shake out of jobs.

The demand for no job loss needs to be taken up as part of any agreement. Above all, with the various productivity schemes the company would like to impose, we must be fighting for the full claim with no strings.

Communists attack Combine group

FORD STRIKE leaders have launched a witch-hunt against the Ford [UK] Workers Combine, an attack which has the full backing of leading Communist Party members.

The occasion was the decision of Hackney Trades Council to collaborate with the Combine in calling a public meeting on 'The Ford Strike and the battle against the pay controls'.

At last week's shop stewards committee meetings at Dagenham and Langley, Ford strike leaders said that the name 'combine' was designed to confuse the trade unionists into believing that the group was the national shop stewards organisation within Ford.

They also alleged that the group was raising money for the Ford strikers and pocketing it for the Combine.

NEWS SHEETS

At the Halewood plant, the attacks have gone further. Combine members and supporters distributing news-sheets have come under physical intimidation and threats of violence.

Some CP members have opposed this heavy-handedness, which isn't altogether surprising since there are party members involved in the Combine. Several CP members defended the Combine at the Langley stewards meeting.

The concern of the Communist Party leadership to discredit the Combine is not unrelated to the need to cover its own failings. Throughout the Ford strike, the CP has talked very 'left' but has failed to produce the goods.

Ford chief steward Sid Harraway, for example, was quoted in the *Morning Star* on 16 October, saying that the Ford Strike Committee would launch a massive campaign of solidarity, including 'visiting hundreds of factories and trade union branches'.

But when this came up at the shop stewards committee it was

in the form of a proposal that the stewards would simply respond to invitations from union branches and stewards committees.

Moreover, the CP completely failed to build an initiative of its own, the 'day of action' on 11 October, which was called through the No. 8 District of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

Fewer than four hundred turned up; half of them from Ford. There are several hundred stewards at Dagenham alone. The rally attracted less than 250 people, and cost the strike fund £400.

The most apparent way of building the strike and crippling the pay norms, by linking up with others demanding more than 5 per cent, seems not to have occurred to the strike committee.

There have been no visits to factories like British Oxygen or Vauxhall, or to the public service workers who now have claims in.

But the campaign to discredit the Combine has back-fired. A specific allegation made at the shop stewards meeting that a Combine member had attended a meeting at Rolls Royce in Bristol and pocketed the cash has been exposed as a lie.

DISTRIBUTION

The member concerned has a receipt from the official strike fund indicating that he'd paid over the donations — just one of many such collections organised by Combine speakers.

An attempt to have the Hackney Trades Council meeting called off was rejected by seven votes to four by the council's executive committee.

And to ensure that there is no confusion, the Combine decided to change its name to the Ford (UK) Workers Group. The group is still in desperate need of funds. Rush them to: 25 Deamer House, London SW2.

Investment Car industry rusts away

AS the Ford strike enters its fifth week, an unlikely document just published reveals the extent of the crisis in the British motor industry.

And it is not being caused by 32 striking toolroom workers in Birmingham or by unrealistic pay demands at Leyland, Vauxhall and Ford.

The Engineering Industry Training Board's 116-page reference paper on employment and training in the motor vehicle business shows that this key engineering sector is afflicted by stagnant or falling production caused by low investment and the rundown of existing plant.

The report shows that Leyland has an ageing model range, riddled with design defects and poor quality.

Ageing capital equipment is also the order of the day — a feature pointed up in successive Ryder and Commons Expenditure Committee reports on the motor industry.

In engineering as a whole, the average age of machine tools is 12.75 years — a real sign of low investment — but the EITB quotes figures which demonstrate in detail how old much of the stock in motor vehicle manufacturing is.

For example, only 26 per cent of capstan lathes in use are less than ten years old — 'a machine stock antique by any standards', says the EITB.

Less than half the fine borers, drilling machines, gear hobbing, grinding and milling machines — as well as automatic lathes and power presses — in the motor industry are under ten years old.

Moreover, British investment has remained roughly static in the 1970s, and is way below European levels. Thus Volkswagen, according to *Labour Research* (Vol 67, No. 3, March 1978), invested £1,350 million in just three years to create a new model range to replace the Beetle. Investment for the whole of British Leyland was running at below £100 million per annum.

The prospect for the car industry is domination by the few multi-national giants. As the report suggests, if the present trend continues employment in the industry will fall even further.

And if there is amalgamation of the national firms, such as the mooted link-up of Leyland and Renault, the result will also be wholesale redundancies.

The only answer is for the workers to break the capitalists' logic and nationalise the whole motor industry

Birch by name and birch by...

'REG BIRCH is an extremely shrewd negotiator with a proven reputation for intervening at the key moment in nasty industrial situations to achieve a basically moderate settlement.'

So says last Saturday's *Daily Telegraph* of the Engineering Union's leading negotiator in the Ford strike. The *Torygraph* was reporting Birch's letter to

the company requesting talks. It's not the first time he has won praise from such quarters.

A year ago Victor Matthews, boss of the *Daily Express*, was commending Birch's 'responsible attitude' in persuading engineers at the newspaper to accept management's terms after being locked out.

It was a deal which conceded a hard won right to union

meetings in work time, together with talks on 'management's desire to reduce existing staffing levels'.

Ford workers may have a slightly different picture of Reg Birch. A Maoist and one of the few remaining lefts on the AUEW executive, he tried to move a censure motion against Hugh Scanlon following the deal negotiated by Scanlon and

Jones behind the backs of the negotiating committee in the 1971 Ford strike.

Unfortunately, when Scanlon disclosed his sell-out deal and insisted on a postal ballot of the strikers, Birch did not join the six executive members who voted against the deal.

He abstained. It would be foolish to give him another chance to prove his reputation.

FORD

Democracy in the strike

Ford militant says we should have mass meetings'

THE LACK of democracy in the running of the Ford strike is now hitting the strikers from all sides.

On the one hand there is the call for secret ballots from the press and the bosses; on the other, union leaders Reg Birch and Ron Todd are negotiating with the bosses over the heads of the National Joint Negotiating Committee.

Democratic mass meetings and the election of strike committees become more and more important, as Ford Dagenham worker ROB McCRAE explained to Brian Grogan.

They called the '71 strike the 'big stay at home strike'. That fits this one too.

In Dagenham there have been no mass meetings since the first day. They have held one in Halewood, but there was no discussion — just a strike report and a vote of confidence in the leadership.

PROBLEMS

People argue, even militants, that we should avoid mass meetings as they are boring and

people would vote to go back to work. But this is no answer.

A long strike throws up hundreds of problems and the media is full of red herrings — the national interest, the 'yellow peril' from Japanese competitors, that the wives are against them, and so on.

On top of this propaganda they have to face the Social Security single handed, they lack information about their own strike pay, and most of them are really feeling the

pinch.

The Ford Workers' Group (formerly the Combine) has done its best to overcome this isolation, producing a broadsheet and a regular weekly leaflet containing the latest strike news. But this is not enough.

OPEN

Democratically run mass meetings each week when everyone comes in to collect their strike pay would mean that we could counter the arguments in the bosses' press. We'd be able to discuss openly the merits and otherwise of any offer.

We could reply to officials like Reg Birch who talk about 'the ghastly mess' that 'we' are now in.

Yes, the company is in a mess. That's what we intended all along. That's the way to make them pay up.



Photo: MORNING STAR

Militants lobby talks between Ford management and unions

But without any forum in which to counter Birch's kind of talk such demoralising ideas will tend to win through.

With frustration building up, and attempts to impose a settlement on the cards, I think people would definitely come to mass meetings. Workers would see that it is of practical importance to them.

It's not too late to do something now. The national Coventry shop stewards conference could still be recalled, and a recallable strike committee elected to carry out negotiations.

As for secret ballots, we're absolutely opposed to them. They're a tactic of the bosses to

get at every worker in isolation, so that the full weight of the press and their personal situation can be brought to bear.

In a secret ballot each worker decides on their own; in mass meetings we decide together.

You only have to look at the '71 strike. On a less than 50 per cent poll, a secret ballot indicated 2 to 1 support for the sell-out. But subsequent mass meetings at Halewood rejected the deal by over 3 to 1.

It's true that the more militant workers refused to vote in the secret ballot. But the main factor is that mass meetings make workers more confident of their strength.

**Rank and File
Where's
the
action?**

RANK AND FILE national council members Fred Leplat and Claire Weingarten have called for urgent action by the council on the Ford strike.

In a letter sent on 6 October to Rank and File secretary Micky Fenn, they argued that the Ford strike offered an 'unprecedentedly good situation to defeat the Government's 5 per cent limit', and requested an emergency meeting of the national council.

ELECTED

This council was elected at a delegate conference of Rank and File held during the FBU strike last winter.

In calling for the emergency meeting, Leplat and Weingarten — both members of the International Marxist Group — suggested that the council discuss the convening of a national solidarity conference to build support for all those going into struggle against the pay norm.

Their letter emphasised that a 'big appeal should be made to the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions to co-sponsor the conference' and that similar invitations 'be extended to all class struggle groupings in the unions.'

Fred Leplat says that despite the urgency of the situation, they have not so far received a reply.

ACTION

'With all the left talk by the trade union leaders and by the Communist Party-led LCDTU', he considers, 'we've got to put real pressure on to organise action'.

'If Rank and File, which is dominated by the Socialist Workers Party, is to mean anything as an effective body, it must act — and act now.'

*Socialist Challenge hopes to be carrying an interview with Micky Fenn next week.

A request for an interview with LCDTU secretary Jim Hiles was turned down. 'I don't do interviews', he told our reporter.

Ford Belfast — divide and rule on the shop floor

FORD workers in the North of Ireland are also on strike as part of Ford [UK]. The following article, reprinted from 'Unfree Citizen', the paper of People's Democracy, examines the employment policies of management at the Ford [Autolite] plant in Andersonstown.

The Six Counties suffer from chronic unemployment. Because of discrimination the anti-Unionist population bears a disproportionate share of the burden. Although Catholics make up under a third of the workforce, they provide over half the unemployed.

It was generally assumed that the new industries set up in the 1960s, especially the subsidiaries of the big international firms, steered clear of sectarian policies, operating a fair recruitment system.

Not so the giant US-based Ford Motor Company.

JOBS

A survey of the workforce in the Ford (Autolite) factory in the Andersonstown area of Belfast shows that Autolite is discriminating against Catholics in the allocation of jobs.

The Autolite factory is a subsidiary of the giant Ford Motor Company. It produces carburetors for the whole range of Ford cars.

A few years back a major controversy blew up in Ford (Autolite) when it was discovered that the personnel officer was tearing up job application forms from Catho-

lics. Significantly, the man responsible was not dismissed, but merely shifted to another position in the factory, with the same salary and status as his previous job.

SECTARIAN

The personnel officer currently responsible for processing job applications is a sergeant in the sectarian Ulster Defence Regiment — so obviously things haven't changed.

The Andersonstown area is overwhelmingly Catholic; near at hand are the sprawling ghettos of Turf Lodge, Ballymurphy and Twinbrook, all with high unemployment rates. Yet the workforce in the factory is two thirds Protestant.

They obviously don't come from the surrounding areas.

Workers in the factory have said that for the majority of the jobs, no specialised skills are required. Local people could easily fill these positions.

LOYALISTS

Instead people are being brought in from Loyalist areas as far away as Bangor and Portadown to fill the jobs.

The survey also shows that Catholics who are employed are mainly doing the worst jobs. Thus Catholics make up 40 per cent of those in the lower grade jobs but only 20 per cent of those in the better grades.

INDICTMENT

These figures are an indictment of the Autolite management. They show that Autolite is operating a policy of discrimination, making its contribution to the oppression of the anti-Unionist population.

WARNING

The figures also illustrate the level of discrimination which has continued there even since the civil rights campaign. They are a warning of what can be expected if the Unionists ever regain control in the North.

The trade unions and the socialist movement in the North have fought shy of the issue of discrimination for far too long.

EQUAL

There can be no real unity between Catholic and Protestant working class until their positions are roughly equal.

It is those who practise discrimination who divide the working class, not those who oppose it. Discrimination must be fought wherever it raises its head.

DISCRIMINATION AT WORK IN FORD [AUTOLITE], BELFAST

Area of work	Total	Protestants	Catholics
Toilet cleaners	3	0	3
Dycast	60	24	36
Salvage crib	28	14	14
Miscellaneous machining	58	40	18
Pressing and flating	25	10	15
Sub-assembly	39	21	18
Upper body line	80	45	35
Lower body line	45	26	19
Kinsbury	88	51	37
Final build	50	39	11
Flow room and choke pull	40	29	11
Chukker	61	45	16
183 distributors	135	75	60
P P & C	45	33	12
TOTAL	757	452	305

Percentage of total that is Catholic, 40.2 per cent

The following are regarded as the better jobs in the factory:

	Total	Protestants	Catholics
Toolroom	36	32	4
Maintenance	80	70	10
Canteen staff	26	18	8
Security	20	16	4
Quality control	57	44	13
Women operators	28	24	4
Salaried staff	100	80	20
TOTAL	379	306	73

OVERALL TOTAL 1136 758 378

Percentage of total that is Catholic, 19.3 per cent

Percentage of overall total that is Catholic, 33.2 per cent

Low paid can win, troops or no troops

WITH THE 5 per cent pay limit cracking in the private sector under blows from the Ford and Vauxhall workers, the Government will aim to re-assert its policy in the public sector in the hope of keeping average increases under 10 per cent.

First in line are the low paid — refuse collectors, water workers, local government manual workers and hospital workers.

If the Government can't buy them off with promises for the future, as they tried last year with the fire fighters, the troops could well be on the streets again, writes RICH PALSER, who argues that these public sector workers can win — troops or no troops.

It is estimated that within two days of water workers taking strike action, sewerage would be forcing its way up on to the streets, and within a week of a garbage strike 'undigested' refuse would be piling up alongside it.

Under the guise of 'public health and safety', we can expect the Government to put still more trash on the streets — the troops.

LEGAL

There are two legal means that can be employed to do this.

One is under the 1920 Emergency Powers Act, brought in to extend war-time provisions which empowered the government to 'make exceptional provisions for the protection of the community in case of emergency'.

This applies where fuel, water, food, light or means of locomotion are threatened. For a state of emergency to be declared under these provisions, Parliament's authorisation is required for each month of the emergency.

The 'Raglan Operation', a plan to use troops to break the

threatened oil tanker drivers' strike last year, would most likely have been put into effect through this Act.

ADVANTAGE

But there is also the 1964 Emergency Powers Act, which for Callaghan has the advantage that he does not have to consult Parliament at all. It was this Act that was used during the FBU strike.

Originally proposed as a means of authorising the use of troops in floods and other 'disasters', it has been employed to bring troops into the 1970 Tower Hamlets refuse collectors' strike, the 1973 Glasgow fire fighters' strike, and the 1975 Glasgow refuse collectors' strike.

FIRST

When the troops were brought to fight fires last Xmas, it was the first use of the Act in a national strike — despite the 1975 Queens Regulations for the Army.

These state that the Defence Council can authorise the use of troops under the 1964 Act



TROOPS at work during the Glasgow refuse collectors' strike in 1975

Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

only in cases of a 'limited and local' character.

It seems that the Ministry of Defence, without recourse to anyone but themselves, is re-writing Queens Regulations to remove this little embarrassment.

DECISION

This way the decision to use troops will lie in the hands of the Defence Council of the Ministry of Defence — a body made up of five Government Ministers, five leading military officers, and three senior civil servants.

But the probable use of troops should not make us think that a defeat similar to that of the fire fighters is inevitable. The public sector claims can be won — troops or no troops.

It's true that the troops are not trained to run the water and sewage works, but then they weren't exactly effective at fighting fires.

The main reason for confidence is that it is possible to counter the attempt by Callaghan to demoralise public sector strikers and isolate them from winning broader support.

In the FBU strike, Callaghan brought in the Army to show them the Government was determined and to demoralise strikers, who saw troops doing their jobs and felt they could do nothing about it.

SUPPORT

It made winning active support from other workers more difficult because the fire fighters felt the strike to be a lost cause. Yet it was the refusal

of the TUC to lend its support which made the Prime Minister's tactics successful.

CAMPAIGN

Len Murray has already made it clear that he does not feel mandated to wage a campaign against the 5 per cent. He and the TUC will happily leave the low-paid public sector workers to fight alone.

Unlike the FBU leadership, Alan Fisher of NUPE and the other union leaders must not be allowed to accept defeat at the hands of the TUC General Council.

How can the public sector workers force their union leaders to appeal for support from the rest of the labour movement over the heads of the

TUC? By:

*Striking now alongside the Ford workers.

*Organising flying pickets to go out to the factories and gain a commitment to solidarity action.

*Calling a national demonstration for all workers to march against the cash limits in the public sector, demanding an end to Government cuts and decent wages for the low paid.

ISOLATE

It is by organising to show that it is Callaghan who will be responsible for sewerage and garbage in the streets, just as he is responsible for the cuts in essential services, that public sector workers can isolate the Government — and the troops.

Beefing up the pay fight

THE CLAIM by hospital ancillary workers for a £60 minimum wage will be presented to the employers this Friday.

Their pay demands join those of the nurses, refuse collectors, and other public sector workers now up against the 5 per cent.

PAT SIKORSKI, a hospital shop steward in Birmingham, argues that joint union pay action committees can play an important role in the struggle for the full claims.

With militancy fired by the Ford strike all the evidence points to the fact that public sector workers are prepared for a fight.

Birmingham refuse collectors earlier this month rejected — by seven depots to two — an attempt by the Transport Union to impose a bonus scheme involving 165 redundancies before the settlement of their national claim.

The West Midlands and South-east regional councils of the health workers' union COHSE have voted to set up regional pay action committees to fight for their claim.

CONFERENCE

On 7 October, 700 people attended the West Midlands joint union conference of the low paid held in Birmingham.

At this conference, however, left officials in the public employees' union NUPE, such as CP member Roger Poole, tried to prevent discussion of a resolution calling for a joint union co-ordinating committee to organise for the full public

sector claims.

The Birmingham refuse workers rejected the bonus scheme offer, encouraged by a Rank and File leaflet. But unless there are organisational structures to launch a real fight they will have no option but to accept when the union officials come back with a revised deal.

PROBLEM

This problem is faced by the whole public sector.

Reliance on the routine meetings of the unions, or on the local officials, like Poole, would fail to place public sector workers on a fighting footing.

The shop stewards' structures in these unions, being a relatively new development in the public sector, are usually too weak to take on the task.

The way out of this deadlock can be through joint union pay action committees, elected from, and recallable by, mass meetings of the entire workforce.

They could organise and co-ordinate the fight for the full



PAT SIKORSKI

claim. They are needed at workplace, area and regional levels.

Effective joint shop stewards committees, where they do exist, are ideally placed to set up joint union committees.

Without such favourable conditions, the first step can be single union committees, which

can lead on to joint work and fusion in the organisation of the struggle.

Public sector workers can begin the fight to build and establish these committees now, and thus prepare the ground for a militant fight for the full claim.

Unity moves among teacher militants

THE EXECUTIVE of the National Union of Teachers recently made two statements which accurately reveal its response to the current situation, reports KEN JONES of the Socialist Teachers Alliance.

It condemned NUT associations that had supported the Teachers Against the Nazis conference against union instructions.

But it also approved the action of teachers in refusing to 'cover' for absent or insufficient staff.

The executive's position against the Anti Nazi League is part of its attempt to reduce the influence of the left in the union (though it has problems — over 20 associations support the ANL).

But at the same time it is under pressure from the membership to do something about the worsening situation in schools. The executive knows that another round of government cuts is in the offing, and hopes that a gesture of militancy will divert the axe to other sectors.

But its sanctioning of 'no-cover' will make it easier for the left's policies to win a hearing. One major campaign discussed at the STA's conference on 14/15 October was for action to decrease class sizes and increase the number of teachers.

The conference also voted to

prioritise anti-racism and anti-sexism, and to develop an educational strategy to counter the right's offensive in this field.

The possibility of united left rank-and-file action on these questions was given a boost at the conference by the participation of representatives from Rank & File Teacher in a discussion on left unity.

You're sick, Mr Ennals

'THEY are playing with people's lives', Health Minister David Ennals said last week about the 3,500 hospital maintenance supervisors taking industrial action over their regrading scheme.

But just who is putting lives at risk, Mr Ennals? Why, after 4½ years of negotiations, have the supervisors' justified claims not been met, which would thereby remove the cause of the dispute?

Who was it, Mr Ennals, who put the waiting lists for hospital admissions up to 600,000 and continues to cut expenditure on the health service? Just how many lives have been put at risk because of the Labour Government's policies?

Photo: CHRIS BAVIES (Report)

Crisis in the cities

Social workers occupy union HQ

JUST WHAT does a union leadership do when social workers are so insistent that their pay should correspond to their work requirements?

National talks on the demand for local negotiations begin as we go to press, but a deal already reached in Brent is a sign of ominous things to come, argues **PETE CRESSWELL**, secretary of the social workers' strike committee in Liverpool.

Social workers on strike in Liverpool, Newcastle, and three London boroughs have shown an unprecedented determination to hold out for our demand to negotiate local agreements, in spite of the failure of our union, NALGO, to lift a finger to build the strike.

The anger which has built up during nine weeks of strike action spilled over last Thursday when social workers picketed a meeting of NALGO's strike operations committee demanding an assurance that we would be fully consulted before any agreement is reached.

In keeping with the kind of union democracy we have come to know well, the committee refused to speak to any representatives of the strikers

outside the NALGO HQ.

So there was a three-hour occupation of the building. The demand of our standing conference of strike committees is for representation on the union's official strike body.

The union met with the employers for the first time on a national basis on this issue yesterday, when another picket was held. An offer is expected.

SIMMERING

Why all the militancy? The issue has been simmering for a number of years now.

Since 1971, when the pay scales for social workers were last re-examined, Parliament has put through 20 Acts of social legislation, at least five of which have had a major impact on social workers.

At the same time, we have seen a drastic increase in unemployment, a fall in living standards, and the effects of the cuts, the social results of which we are meant to patch up.

We already have many extra responsibilities. We are demanding payment for this, through local negotiations.

But the employers know that if we bust through the national scales, it could well lead to local demands from other local authority workers, such as librarians, environmental health inspectors, and typists.

Hence their firm resistance to our claim. But instead of spreading the strike action, which is what social workers in hundreds of areas are demanding, NALGO is doing its best to contain the action.

Worse still, a deal has been swung in the NW London borough of Brent which shows ominous signs of being used as the basis for other settlements.

When Brent council refused their social workers' claim to be job-evaluated in common with the rest of the council's employees, the social workers

applied to NALGO to take strike action, with a branch vote of 107 to 30 in favour of this action.

Union leaders moved at once — by telling certain members of the local branch to re-open negotiations. The new offer, involving the same amount of cash as before, was to put a third of the social workers on higher grades by promotion.

This divisive offer was unanimously rejected by the Brent social workers, but the union leaders got round this.

SHUT UP

A branch meeting was held during the day, with the Brent council agreeing to shut up shop. Needless to say, the union had never attempted to involve so many members before.

After a belligerent speech from the senior district organisation officer, Andrew Jack, the offer was accepted by 728 votes to 373.

Brent social workers handed out leaflets on the picket of NALGO HQ condemning these manoeuvres and calling on us



Government public spending cuts, rising unemployment and falling living standards all mean more stress and difficulties

not to be influenced by the Brent settlement.

We won't be, although this is no doubt what our leaders

would like to achieve. Plans are now being considered for a national meeting of all social services shop stewards.

First national conference

Feminists confer on rape

THE FIRST national women's liberation movement conference against rape took place on 14 and 15 October.

Nearly two hundred women came together to organise around this aspect of the seventh demand of the movement.

WENDY FORREST discusses what happened at the conference.

Feminists gathered in Bristol from many sections of the movement — women's aid, pornography groups, abortion campaigns, women against racism and fascism, consciousness-raising groups — as well as those already active in rape campaigns.

Workshops looked at the relationship between rape and race, prostitution, sexuality and the family.

Others discussed the politics and organisation of the rape crisis centres, the limitations of law reform, and ways of dealing with the media.

Workshops on radical feminist and socialist feminist

analyses of rape led to a lively debate rather than an exclusive polarisation of positions.

We started with some general agreement.

Although rape is an act of violence, degradation, and humiliation — rather than a sexual act — it is difficult to draw a line between rape and coercive sexual relations which are considered 'normal'.

The question of consent, on which the law rests, is questionable, we considered, since it implies agreement between free and equal individuals.

The brutality of rape is followed by degradation in

police and court procedures, where the woman is put on trial for being out without a male protector or for not staying at home in 'her place'.

We agreed that there can be no reliance on the forces of the state to protect us — we must defend ourselves.

Finally, men do have, in an immediate sense at least, an interest in maintaining the subordination of women, at whose expense they gain some sexual, social and economic privileges.

On these points we could reach some agreement — but there were differences as to how we find ourselves in this situation and how we begin to fight back.

All the ideas put forward were fairly tentative, but many women were glad that the discussion has begun.

What do we do while the debate goes on?

Pickets and court demonstrations have highlighted



'This is a crime against women' reads the slogan painted on this hoarding. This kind of advertising encourages the view that women enjoy rape.

particularly gross judicial rulings. Rape crisis centres are opening outside London; they must receive state aid without strings.

Speakers from these centres can be invited to community, student, and labour movement meetings, to discuss the issues and encourage women to organise to defend themselves.

Schools need to give women the information and physical skills to do this.

We need a concerted campaign against media distortion and titillation — a rape report to spice up page 3. We need to monitor treatment of rape in the local as well as the national press.

We want better street

lighting, more public phones, late public transport. Small changes maybe, but we are beginning to fight back.

The conference agreed to set up a special rape newsletter to exchange experience and coordinate activity. For further information contact: London Rape Crisis Centre, tel. 01-340 6913.

WHAT'S LEFT

5p per word. Display £2 per column inch. Deadline: 3pm Saturday before publication. Payment in advance.

TYPIST WANTED
Comrade with fast, accurate typing needed immediately for full-time position. Be part of the Socialist Challenge team. Wages £55 a week. Send applications to FI Litho, 328 Upper St., London N1 2XP stating experience, etc.

THE NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN needs a new office worker to coordinate the campaign's work, run the office, organise activities, demos, etc. Office experience useful, commitment to women's liberation essential. Hours 10-5 with some evening and weekend meetings. Salary approx £160 per month after tax. Please apply in writing giving previous work and other experience to: NAC, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1.

PICKET GARNERS: Main pickets every day, noon to 3pm and 5.30 to 11 pm at 399 Oxford St., London W1 (opp. Selfridges); 243 Oxford St. (Oxford Circus); 40-41 Haymarket; 56 Whitcombe St. (Leicester Sq.). Mass picket every Saturday at noon, 399 Oxford St. Donations urgently needed as strike pay is only £6. All donations to Garners Strike Fund, c/o TGWU, Rm 84, 12-13 Henrietta St., London WC2. 01-240 1056.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S Forum on a woman's right to contraception and abortion, no forced sterilisation. Fri 27 Oct., 7.30pm at the University of London Union, Malet St, London W1. Speakers include Anne Connolly, Bianca Ventura, Marta Ramirez. Organised by the International Campaign for Abortion Rights.

CARIBBEAN Labour Solidarity is sending a delegate to Jamaica. Cash urgently needed. Social, 8 till late, 28 Oct. at 10 Leigh Rd., London N5. £1 admittance covers food. All welcome.

BOP for Abortion Rights. Women only benefit to help NAC overcome its present money crisis. Sat 28 Oct., 8pm, Waterloo Action Centre, 14 Baylis Rd., SE1 (nr Old Vic). Disco, drinks (real ale, wine) and band (Quality Street). Entrance £1. Enjoy yourself and give us your support!

PARTISANS: North West Spanner's new show set in a small Chrysler subsidiary threatened by the Peugeot takeover. 27 Oct 8pm: Kinsley Labour Club, Scunthorpe. 28 Oct 8pm: Hull University.

LEICESTER National Abortion Campaign demonstration for a woman's right to choose. Sat 4 Nov, 2pm, assemble Victoria Park, Leicester.

WOMEN, THE FAMILY AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT.

A series of meetings organised by Tyneside Socialist Centre.
Mon 13 Nov: Children — future labour force, future labour movement? Speakers: Brian Haddow, ex Tyndal School, two women from Leeds involved in alternative forms of childcare.

Mon 4 Dec: Towards a socialist way of living. Speaker: Sheila Rowbotham. The meetings will all take place at 7.30pm at Tyneside Cinema (rooms upstairs), 10/12 Pilgrim St.

ARGENTINE EVENING, Fri 27 Oct., 6.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., London WC1. First British showing of new documentary, 'Resistance leads to victory', plus Latin American music (live), food and drink, to raise money for Argentine resistance. Organised by Peronist Montonero Movement support group in London. Entrance £1 (claimants 75p).

REVOLUTIONARY Communist Tendency public meeting: Who needs the Labour Party? Speaker Mike Freeman. Fri 27 Oct 7.30pm. Holborn Library Hall, 32/38 Theobalds Rd, London WC1. Adm 20p.

'NO NAZIS in North Ealing' — ANL public meeting, Mon. 30 Oct., 8pm, Greenford Hall, Greenford. Speakers: Bill Molloy MP, Paul Holborrow (ANL), Alok Biswas (Sec., Hackney Asian Association).

WANTED for subversive youth theatre group and good time: 1 West Indian boy 15-20; 1 girl capable of playing reactionary character 15-20; 1 mean looking boy 15-20 to play racist and policeman. Auditions: ring Dom 289 1607.

ISLINGTON Women's Voice group present the film 'Shirin's Wedding' at north London Poly film room, Holloway Rd. Mon 30 Oct 8pm. Adm 60p.

SPARTACIST League public meeting. Derry 68: how the left failed. Speaker: Paul Lannigan. Fri 27 Oct, 7.30pm at Conway Hall, London WC1 (Holborn tube).

REVOLUTIONARY Communist Tendency — first of a series of public forums: The crisis and the working class. Speaker: Frank Richards. Fri 3 Nov 7.30pm at The Roebuck, 108a Tottenham Court Rd, London W1.

HARLAN County USA — film show and book sale benefit for Leeds action on Health and Safety. Wed 1 Nov, 8pm at Trades Club concert hall. Also Fri 3 Nov 7pm at Univ. Lecture Theatre, block 22, for Leeds Univ Communist Party. Tickets: 70p and 50p.

WEDGE 3 — out at last! ANL psychoanalysed, demos de-constructed, how TV uses the left, socialist centres, the left press, Goya and Cormac. All for 75p from left bookshops or 90p from 44 Eccles Rd, London SW11.

BELT and Braces present Red Rock Revue — benefit for Deptford Socialist Unity — 28 Oct 8pm. Adm £1 (80p with unemployed card). Goldsmith's College, Lewisham Way, SE8.

ISLINGTON Big Flame open educational meeting. First of a series. Paul Thompson on 'Problems of Trotskyism and revolutionary organisation'. Hemingford Arms, Offord Rd. N1. Fri 27 Oct 8pm.

CONFERENCE on 'Value theory and contemporary capitalism'. 3, 4 and 5 Nov. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1 (3 Nov), Middlesex Hosp. Medical School, Arthur Lewis Theatre, Cleveland St, London N1 (4 and 5 Nov). Sponsored by: NLR, Cambridge Journal of Economics and Conference of Socialist Economists. Advance registration: £5 to NLRE (economics conference), 15 Greek St, London W1.

SOCIAL for Chile. Sat 28 Oct at Basement Flat, 24 Powis Sq, London W11. 9.30pm. Adm: 30p, cheap, late bar. Chile Solidarity Campaign.

WATFORD RAR and Foundation Club: Crisis and Osama. Casey Place (behind Sainsbury's). Sat 28 Oct 8pm. Adm: 80p advance, £1 on door.

ABC TRIAL TWO: Drop it! Pickets of the Old Bailey every Tuesday 12.30 to 2pm. Defence committee meets every Tuesday 6.30pm at the General Picton, Wharfedale Road, London N1 (Kings X tube). Tel 01-278 1976.

BIG FLAME BOP — 8-12pm Fri 27 Oct. Gale Force Reality & The Cords (Reggae and New Wave), Waterloo Action Centre, 14 Bayliss Road, SE1 (nr Waterloo stn) £1; claimants/students with card 75p.

BIG FLAME public meetings: The Future of the Left — speaker, Paul Thompson, 2.30pm Sunday Oct 29. Lucas Workers' Alternative Plan — speaker, Mike Cooley (Lucas speaker, Aerospace Stewards Combine Committee) 8pm Wed 1 Nov. Both at: St Matthew's Meeting Place, Brixton SW9 (opposite Ace Cinema). Organised by Big Flame.

NEWSREEL FILM 'Divide and Rule — Never!' just out. Showings by Revolution in Scotland, 9-11 November. Film available from: Other Cinema Distribution, 12-13 Little Newport St, London WC2. Tel 01-734 8508/9. Or from: Concord Films, Nacton, Ipswich, Suffolk. Tel 0473 76012. Hire fee £15.

BETHNAL GREEN & Stepney Trades Council week of action against apartheid: Mon. 30 Oct, public meeting 7.30pm, Queen Mary College SU, Mile end Rd., E3; Thur 2 Nov, 4.30-6pm, picket of Barclays Bank, 568 Mile End Rd, E3; 3 Nov, 5-8pm, picket of Sainsbury's, Watney Market, Commercial Rd, E1. Planning meeting: Thur 26 Oct, 7.30pm, Bow Mission, Bow Rd/Merchant 1, E3.

PAUL JOHNSON AND

BY ROBIN BLACKBURN

IN THE 1930s, David Low's cartoon reactionary, 'Colonel Blimp', insisted that the middle classes were the backbone of the country and attributed all national woes to the bone-idle British worker, the long haired Bolshevik intellectual, and the anarchist conspirator with a bomb in his pocket.

The message of the modern Blimp is essentially the same, though today there are some new targets: the almighty trade union boss, the woman terrorist, the Marxist Polytechnic lecturer, the welfare scrounger, the punk artist with a subsidy, the football hooligan, and many more swell the insidious conspiracy undermining all that is best in Britain.

But the real change is not a multiplication of the supposed enemies of society — they were in any case always a motley and numerous crew — but a multiplication of Blimps.

Instead of simply a Colonel on the retired list we now have Prince Blimp, the Queen's husband; Bernard Blimp, the *Times* columnist; Woodrow Blimp, the millionaire ex-Labour MP; Mary Blimp, the censor of public morals; Reginald Blimp, another ex-Labour MP, who has now joined the Tories; and Paul Blimp, the former editor of the *New Statesman*.

What sense or substance is there in this new right-wing trend among the arbiters of public opinion? As in the past they seek to reaffirm traditional truths and to confound all heretical movements of social criticism and revolt. But these days the task is a more difficult one.

In the past, British conservatism had such confidence in the established institutions that it scarcely saw the need to justify them. Conservatism exalted tradition, reverence for precedent, the sufficiency of British culture and custom, the market as the basis of all human activity.

But now the market itself seems to condemn British industry, and authoritative institutions like the House of Lords and judiciary seem to be losing their magic.

A pervasive sense of social paralysis and national crisis destroys the old passive self-respect. Conservatism also needs reformulation because it confronts some new and puzzling opponents.

In the last decade the established order felt threatened as never before by populist trade union militancy, a deep shift in cultural sensibilities, and the diffusion of the unfamiliar doctrines associated with women's liberation, the ecological movement, and the competing schools of continental Marxism.

AMBITIOUS

Paul Johnson, who is probably the most ambitious of the new pundits, has tried to meet these antagonists head-on and to restate conservatism on the high ground of social theory.

Ten years ago, as editor of the *New Statesman*, he was celebrating the May revolt in France as the dawn of a new age. In 1978, he has established himself as the most prolific and acclaimed literary champion of reaction.

Johnson's widely praised book, *Enemies of Society*, summed up the neo-Conservative world view and is thus a convenient reference point for examining its quality. Johnson has pretensions to be more than just a cartoon reactionary: are they justified?

The principle themes of *Enemies of Society* run as follows. Since the days of antiquity the middle class has been the vital custodian of civilised values — those who are accused of being 'bourgeois' should feel proud of the accusation.

But it is not enough simply to

proclaim that bourgeois is beautiful. Western civilisation is now threatened by a noxious combination of enemies, some reflecting the decadence of bourgeois society, others eager to write out its death warrant.

Among these 'enemies of society' are trade unions, the unscientific cults associated with Marx and Freud, the demagogy of social critics like Ivan Illich, R.D. Laing and Herbert Marcuse; the mystagogy of Marshall McLuhan and Teilhard de Chardin, the mass expectations aroused by the welfare state and Keynesian economics, the irrational fears played upon by the 'eco-lobby', the moral apathy reflected by Francis Bacon and Tom Stoppard, and, last but not least, the dangerous egalitarianism of those who feel oppressed or discriminated against by bourgeois society.

Johnson insists that such threats to Western values must be stamped out by a stern restoration of law and order in the intellectual sphere.

He calls for a reaffirmation of traditional religion, not on the grounds that it is valid, but because the old priests are better than the new witch-doctors. Without any apparent sense of contradiction he also calls for a new commitment to Truth and Science.

FREEDOM

Finally, the supreme good is the freedom (often confused with the privileges) of the cultivated individual. Everything suggests that the individual in question is predominantly white, male and middle class.

In England, as elsewhere, the social movements of the Sixties and early Seventies were better at identifying particular wrongs and injustices than in proposing adequate and coherent solutions.

Facile slogans like 'Power to the People' implied that a worked-out programme, and harmonious social alliance, already existed and that all that was needed was to smash the old order.

Even today the left is neither united enough nor practical enough to be much more than an irritant to the body politic.

The gurus of radical revolt suffered from an analogous weakness. They could offer valuable insights into particular defects in prevailing institutions and ideologies, but the world views they had to offer were frequently naive and fantastic.

RESERVE

Much can be learnt from R.D. Laing or even Illich so long as their over-ambitious cosmologies are treated with reserve. Likewise the ecological critique of contemporary industrialism points to many particular dangers, but it does not constitute a self-sufficient programme for the economy.

Paul Johnson does not seek to separate the wheat from the chaff in contemporary social criticism but contents himself with a blanket assault. Moreover he delights to discover (witting or unwitting) conspiracy between his various enemies.

Confronted with any sign of social revolt or criticism, Johnson reaches for his blunderbuss. He continually over-estimates the unity and coherence of his 'enemies'.

Abusive amalgamation is essential to Johnson's polemical style. Consider the following representative example of his free association style of argument:

'...there is also a certain element of crude Marxist-egalitarian analysis in the black power movement, which reflects the use made of confusion of categories and the inversions of terms worked out by social scientists like Laing, Lévi-Strauss and others we have mentioned.' (page 239)

Whatever was wrong with the black power movement, we may doubt that it owed much to Lévi-Strauss or Laing. The indexer of this volume has been so befuddled by Johnson's amalgamation technique that the entry for Ivan Illich simply reads 'see Lenin'.

TRUTH

A recurrent theme of *Enemies of Society* is the importance of truth, respect for language and scientific procedure, yet the author has a reckless and uncomprehending way with all three. Thus the repeated injunction to 'trust science' (my emphasis) reveals the author's own distance from the critical scientific spirit.

Johnson's longing for certitude is as evident in his cultural digressions as his discussion of science. The kernel of Johnsonian aesthetics is simply stated:

'Art is a source not only of pleasure but of reassurance; it is not a luxury of civilisation but a necessity. If art undermines the common certitudes, it lowers morale and makes external assault more deadly' (page 226).

Just as all the enemies of society are orchestrated by some subversive hidden hand, so the positive values merge and intermingle with one another in a mystical unity like that of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

The most significant thing about Truth, Religion, Science and Art is that they all help to reinforce the 'common certitudes'. That is why the basis of truth is what Johnson calls 'Christian truth', and that is why science must promote trust, and art reassurance.

Johnson's crusading simplifications and philistinism are animated by a barely concealed hatred of foreigners in general, and foreign ideas in particular. Just as the essence of Truth is Christ's truth, so the most precious component of Western bourgeois civilisation is English.

DOUBT

Any historical evidence that might cast doubt on the beneficent English genius is rapidly passed over. When Johnson is combining apologetics for capitalism with celebration of England he can produce real gems of sophistry:

'Those who criticise the industrialists for exploiting child labour overlook the fact that the central problem of the age was how to feed, clothe and employ generations of children, outnumbering by far those of any other time in history. It was not capitalism which produced these children. What it did was to enable England to avoid an Irish solution of mass starvation and emigration.' (pp. 71-2.)

It does not apparently occur to Johnson that both capitalism and England bear some responsibility in the matter of the 'Irish' solution, since it was the London government which insisted that millions of Irish peasants must starve in order to allow the grain market to find its own level.

He has no doubt that alien cultural imports are to blame for much contemporary social malaise. He roundly declares: 'Frenchmen, as we are seeing, play a notable part in all pseudo-intellectual and pseudo-scientific movements, and are exceedingly active in assaulting the civilisation they helped so notably to create.' (p.220).

Or again he writes: 'Teilhard is a classic case not only of a pseudo-intellectual, but of a French pseudo-intellectual.'

Such fine scorn would be more impressive if Johnson showed any

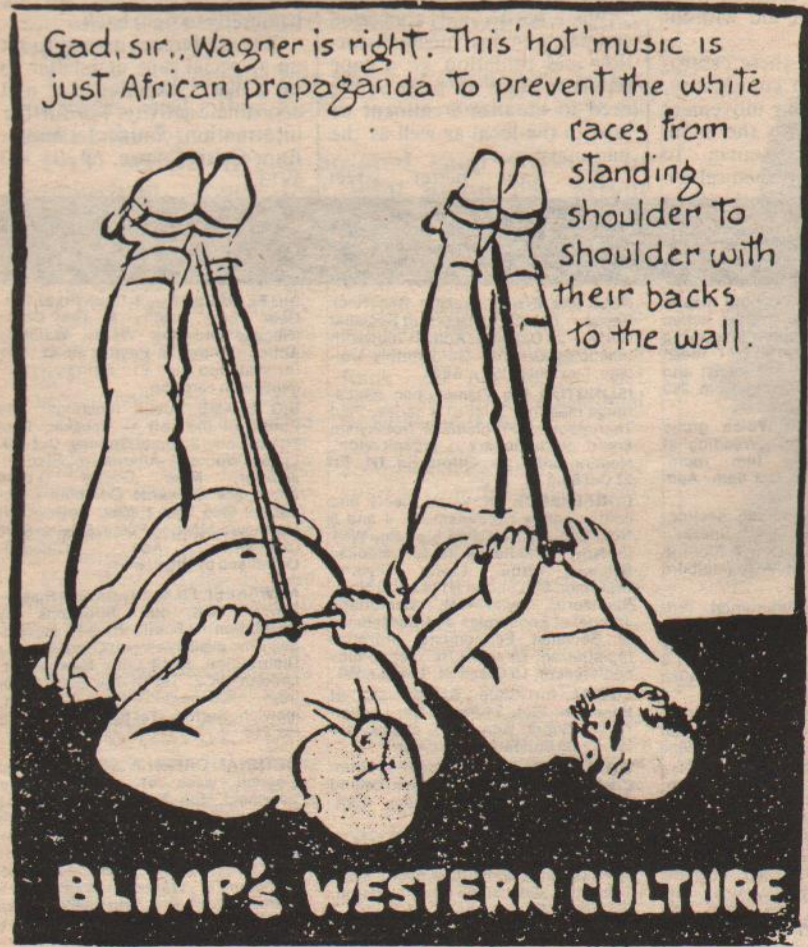


ability to detect the pseudo-intellectual or pseudo-scientific component in British culture; instead he naively endorses the scientific claims of Eysenck and the Hegel-scholarship of Popper.

Confidence in Johnson as an upholder of intellectual standards is not enhanced by the inaccuracy of his own tirades. For someone who has supposedly made a close study of contemporary social thought he makes odd blunders.

Since he disdains footnotes it is often difficult to check his quotations and criticisms. Thus he speaks knowledgeably of Marcuse, but has he read him?

No work by Marcuse appears in the bibliography, though we are offered several quotations from him. Key terms used by Marcuse are erroneously rendered: thus Johnson writes of Marcuse's concept of 'oppressive permissiveness' (page 239) when the



AND THE NEW RIGHT



government was embarked.

In an earlier article he had described Shirley Williams and her friends as 'a very thin slice of democratic meat in a very thick totalitarian sandwich' (i.e. the Labour Party). Compare this with the following from a *New Statesman* article written in June 1970:

'To look down from the galleries onto a crowded House of Commons is to me a moving experience. There are plenty of good men on the Tory benches; but it is the solid ranks of Labour men and women, sitting behind their ministers, which to me is ocular and indisputable proof that — so long as they remain there — the country will not go far astray, that we will continue to seek to combine justice with freedom, that somewhere in a chaotic world there will still be a major nation, of great influence and potentiality, to uphold civilised principles....

'...the truth is that there is no greater guarantee of this country's internal stability and security than a solid Labour majority in the House of Commons. It is not a formula for instant socialism; it does not necessarily mean that the objectives of social justice will, on all occasions and in every issue, be pursued. But it is an absolute and cast-iron defence against adventurism.'

OBSESSION

Evidently Johnson has moved all the way from being a reactionary radical to being a radical reactionary.

Thus Johnson's obsession with 'internal stability and security' was already evident, along with the overblown style and patriotic blather, long before his conversion to the official right wing of British politics. Before becoming a neo-Conservative Blimp, he was a Fabian socialist Blimp.

In both guises it has been a characteristic of his prose that he places his own person in direct juxtaposition to the great questions of the day, whether moved by the sight from the gallery of the House of Commons or refusing to travel even one miserable inch to Auschwitz and Gulag.

For Johnson politics and social philosophy are there to reflect and express his emotions. His longing for absolute guarantees of order seems designed to ward off a chaos he feels all about him.

Unfortunately for the rest of us, the doses of authority required to protect Johnson's concept of freedom are becoming progressively stiffer. The moderate illiberality of James Callaghan and Merlyn Rees no longer suffices and is jettisoned in favour of the vigilantes of the National Association for Freedom.

The ostensible unifying theme of *Enemies of Society*, that of the historical and social conditions which support freedom, is entirely dissipated by the scattered polemic of the latter half of the book.

There is no examination of what contemporary socialist writers like C.B. MacPherson, Steven Lukes or George Novack have had to say about the relationship between capitalism and democracy.

GUARANTEE

There is no attempt to prove that either capitalism or a propertied middle class represents a sure guarantee of liberty. It is simply asserted. Evidence which suggests that, in certain conditions, capitalism fosters powerful anti-democratic forces is simply ignored; for example, the fate of Europe in the Thirties or of South America today.

The importance of a lively and independent labour movement for any democratic political order is not even considered. The freedoms we now

enjoy were in large part the fruit of intellectual dissidence and popular struggle, leading to rejection of an established ideology which systematically identified liberty with property.

Yet Johnson appears to believe that freedom can be protected by returning to this identification, browbeating the more troublesome social critics, tethering the labour movement to the state, and strengthening the powers of the police and courts.

UTOPIA

This is a recipe not for conserving or extending freedom but for confining it to a comfortable and intolerant elite, suspended above a docile, atomised and demoralised mass. It is the sort of reactionary utopia which could only be realised at the expense of drastic social surgery.

Attempts to give right-wing politics a contemporary philosophical basis are not in themselves to be despised. The left needs a certain body of conservative thought, against which it can develop its own ideas — think of Marx's debt to Hegel, or, to take a more recent British example, Raymond Williams's debt to English conservative traditions.

But in Johnson the left has not found an antagonist it can take very seriously. The knee-jerk illiberalism that Johnson represents has a strident, paranoid style that muddies the waters of political argument.

It is the intellectual counterpart of the red-baiting and McCarthyism that is returning to fashion in some Western European states.

It springs not from the intuitions of the older school of conservative thought, with its concern for community and the particular, but from panic at the threat that is perceived from an awakened labour movement and a heterodox younger generation.

There is a further moral to all this. In the long departed days of radical chic a wide public was suddenly opened up for critical ideas which had led a long

subterranean existence.

Movements developed which had a major impact on the way people lived their lives. Whatever the excesses of those days they have left a lasting impact on society.

Today, the new right enjoys the modishness that once attached to the left. Reactionary pundits now have the ear of a sizable public, in France and in the United States as well as in Britain.

But on the evidence we have seen so far their message seems likely to be a negative and barren one. Rarely do they transcend the limitations we have identified in Johnson's writings.

In intellectual terms Johnson's work may be shoddy, but that does not deprive it of political impact.

In the last few years the Labour Party has lost much of its following among academics, professionals and executives, whose living standards have been ravaged by inflation, who resent paying for welfare services which they have deserted for the private sector, and who fear the symptoms of social disintegration they see about them.

Johnson argues that these plagues are the responsibility of a Labour government which is infiltrated by Marxists and subservient to the union bosses.

He pitches his argument at a level which is unlikely to interest the mass of voters — though his articles are frequently reprinted in the popular tabloids — but even if he only helps to exacerbate the disaffection of the liberal middle classes, Johnson will have made an important contribution to preparing a possible Conservative victory in the near future.

For it remains the case that Conservatism in Britain is on the attack, and that there is a dynamic union on the right between ideologists like Johnson and the leadership of the Conservative Party.

Labour's weakness is that its leadership is alienated from socialist activists and is devoid of any convincing political vision. Thus it is the Conservatives who profit from the polarised public opinion adeptly exploited by the Blimp pundits.

term actually used by Marcuse is 'repressive tolerance'.

Many of Johnson's critical barbs seem to have been culled at second hand — mostly, one would guess, from the Fontana Modern Masters series. Since Johnson's book is selling at four times the price of a Modern Master this seems bad value, even where he manages to get his quotes straight.

ANIMOSITY

His inaccuracy seems to be the product of a generally distempered view of the world rather than of a special animosity against the left. Casual mistakes or misattributions like 'Madam Blavatsky's Scientology' (page 124) or 'Freud's melancholy posthumous book *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930)' are washed down the reader's gullet by the free-flowing polemic.

Johnson's methylated cocktail is likely to give a bad hangover to those who have become intoxicated by it. When his history of the Catholic Church was noticed in the *Times Literary Supplement*, the expert reviewer thought it wise to caution the reader by citing a sample of the howlers that work contains.

For some reason such critical standards have not been thought necessary by those who have acclaimed *Enemies of Society*.

Both in his days as Labour editor of the *New Statesman*, and now as a palladin of Tory freedom, he has displayed a similar talent for rhetorical excess and false bathos.

Last year he resigned with a flourish from the Labour Party on the grounds that he would not travel one miserable inch down the path towards Auschwitz and Gulag upon which the Callaghan

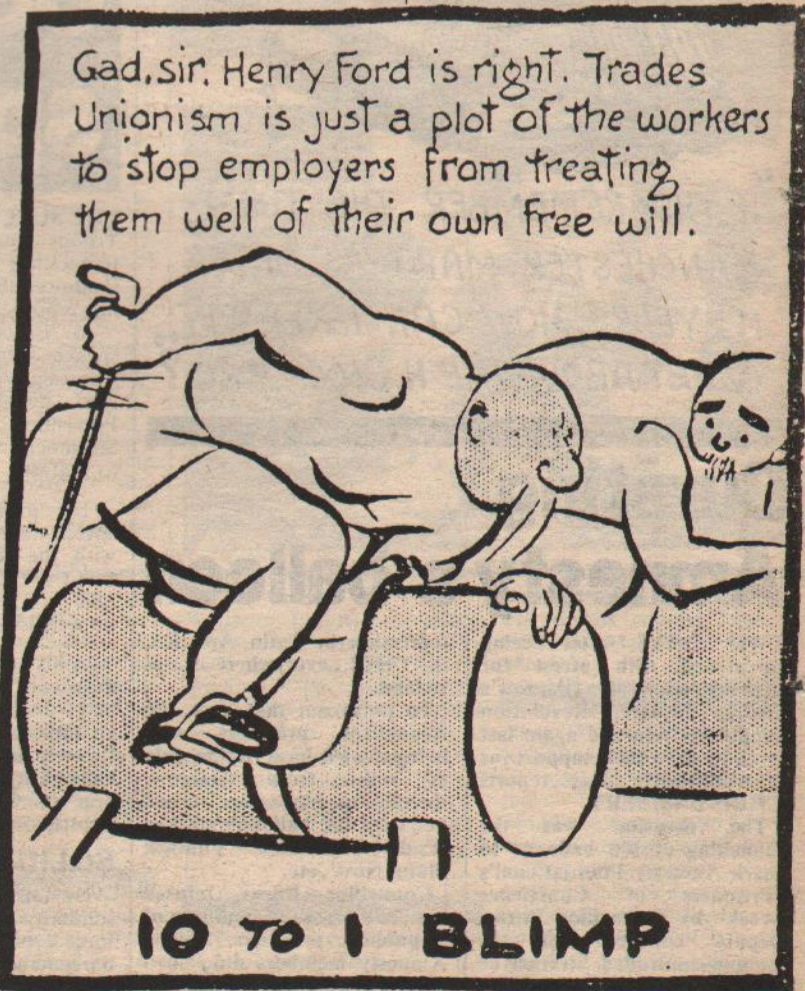


Photo: G.M. COOKSON [Socialist Challenge]



"IF THEY REMEMBER THE THREE MANCHESTER MARTYRS AFTER 111 YEARS, HOW CAN I KEEP IT QUIET ABOUT THE H. BLOCK 1380?"

Bursting Amnesty's balloon

TWO DAYS after being threatened with arrest for demonstrating in Glasgow's George Square, Revolution supporters returned again last week to show their support for Irish political prisoners, reports CHRIS BAMBERY.

The occasion was the launching of 100 balloons to mark Amnesty International's 'Prisoners of Conscience Week' by Councillor Burns, deputy convenor of the Labour-controlled Strathclyde Regional Council.

Amnesty was highlighting

repression in Latin America, the USSR...everywhere except Ireland.

To point out that over 300 Republican prisoners were being denied basic rights only 80 miles from Glasgow, Revolution supporters turned out with 100 balloons marked 'End H Block Hell', 'Political Status Now', etc.

Councillor Burns refused even to discuss the condition of Republican prisoners. Several Amnesty members did, however, sign a petition for political status.

Visit to Long Kesh 'We trembled as we left'

WE assembled outside the Prisoners' Welfare Office in the Falls Road, writes LIZ CURTIS.

The building looks disused, with all its windows bricked up. Only a perpetual knot of people round the doorway betrays the fact that it is in use.

It was drizzling as, along with a growing crowd, we waited for a minibus.

The minibuses on the run to the Kesh [for the 'Lazy K' as some call it] are somewhat dilapidated. They are worked hard six days a week, every week.

There weren't enough buses to take us on the first run, so we waited for one to get back from the Kesh. Finally it arrived.

We drove off through the decaying streets of West Belfast, past the jerry-built housing estates on the outskirts and into the gentle green countryside.

The only untoward sight along the road was a small old farmhouse painted red, white and blue with a Union Jack flying from a giant pole in front.

Otherwise the hills rolled away from us on either side, marked out by neat green hedges. For all the world we might have been in the Home Counties.

It was a real shock to arrive at Long Kesh.

The entire camp is surrounded by a high fence of corrugated iron topped with rolls of barbed wire.

The bus left us off outside the fence and we went to hand in our visiting docket at a hatch in

the wall. Many visitors gave dole cards as identification.

Then it was into the first of a series of prefabricated waiting-rooms with cream-painted walls scrawled with graffiti.

After waiting in the queue, you go one by one into a small room to be searched by two screws. Women go through one door, men through another.

You are allowed only four safety matches, and no silver paper in your cigarette packet. The heels of your shoes are examined and a screw feels you literally all over.

Any forbidden objects are removed and placed in an envelope to be collected later. You sign for them. Then you are let out of the far door into another waiting-room.

A tatty coach arrived to take us round the bumpy perimeter. We were through the corrugated iron fence now.

Above us loomed the camp walls: massive grey concrete walls topped with the modern-style barbed wire that is edged with razor-sharp rectangles.

Watch towers containing machine-guns stood at intervals, with camouflage netting hanging like filthy cobwebs.

The coach halted at the final waiting-room. 'No Photographs', said the notices. 'No Overseas Visitors'.

A soldier in battledress held back a huge, growling alsatian that was trying to attack a screw.

The waiting-room was full of people, mainly women and children. We met a family who had come up on one of the first

minibuses. They had been there for two hours.

All visitors to men 'on the blanket' for political status were being kept till the last, so that visitors to remand prisoners would not be able to see — and cheer — the blanket men.

Finally the name of the remand prisoner we were going to visit was called out, along with the list of others. We went outside, then filed into a glass corridor that goes through the wall.

It was lined with screws. The door was locked behind us. We were checked off by a screw, then the door at the far end was unlocked.

We went into a waste of corrugated iron and barbed wire, then into another prefabricated hut. At no time could we see the compound.

The first part of the visiting hut is lined on each side with tiny rooms known as 'boxes' where the blanket men have their visits, one screw per room. The blanket men get one half-hour visit per month.

Many of them are now appealing against their sentences, and they get one 15-minute visit per day.

But they are only allowed to talk about their appeal — which the presence of a screw anyway makes impossible — and if they talk about anything else the visit is stopped.

This is a way of harassing the visitors — but the visitors keep on making the journey.

At the end of the hut is a long room lined with numbered

cubicles. A screw overseer sits on a pedestal at one end, and other screws walk up and down. We sat down in our cubicle to wait.

The remand prisoners came in at irregular intervals. Some visitors had to wait as long as half-an-hour because the screws did not bother to call the person they were visiting.

At last Gerry came. He was greasy-haired like the rest.

They had not washed for a month in solidarity with the blanket men. Yet his hands were surprisingly clean, very white with uncut nails.

Gerry said he thought he would end up joining the men on the blanket. He was savagely beaten in Castlereagh and signed a statement.

He will be tried in a no-jury court, so the doctor's evidence that he was badly bruised during interrogation will make no difference.

He has been 10 months on remand already. He is 20 years old.

He was anxious to know what we were doing in England to get the Brits out. What did we think of the Daily Mirror's 'troops out' editorial? Who did we think would win the next election?

Unlike the blanket men, who are completely isolated from the outside world with not even a clock, the remand prisoners have radios.

But their parcels have now been stopped so they get no books, and they are not allowed newspapers. From time to time Loyalist prisoners give them their old newspapers.

Gerry told us that the prisoners organise educational sessions — learning, for example, about the nature of British involvement in Ireland and the dangers of a neo-colonial settlement.

It is hard to imagine how these sessions are arranged, since the prisoners are locked in their cells all day save for an hour's exercise and meals.

'Time's up!', shouted a screw. Our half-hour was over. We shook hands, then Gerry was hurried off, a small figure beside the huge screws.

We went back past the screw on the pedestal. Our visit was one of the last, and the blanket men had already been brought over from H Block about half-a-mile away.

A blanket man was just ahead of us. He was being hustled out of the door, his visit stopped after a couple of minutes because they were not talking about the appeal.

No warning was given, his relative told us. The visit was stopped, just like that.

He was an almost unearthly sight. Tall and very thin, very white. His long hair hung greasily onto his ill-fitting grey denim uniform, put out for the visit. There were septic yellow sores on his hands.

He was very unsteady on his feet and he put his hands on the walls to steady himself. Every so often he stopped to smile and wave as visitors in other boxes cheered him.

We were trembling as we left.

Cops prove UTOM speaker's point

THE SUCCESS of the United Troops Out Movement conference last weekend was overshadowed the following morning, reports RONAN BRADY.

Jo Edwards, the invited speaker from the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression, was detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Stranraer on his return journey to Belfast.

The irony was that Jo's speech mainly concerned itself with the level of repression faced by trade unionists who take a stand against imperialism!

In his speech Jo mentioned the case of Brian Maguire, who had worked with him to build an important Belfast demonstration and who was found hanged in his cell earlier this year in Castlereagh Torture Centre.

SOLIDARITY

He also underlined how solidarity action had been forced on the trade union bureaucracy in the case of the dockers held a few months ago in Liverpool. In fact over 3,000

people have been held under the PTA since 1974.

The Act has been constantly used to discourage contact between Irish trade unionists and their British comrades. A press statement from the UTOM on Monday pointed out that this harassment was aimed at 'preventing a free flow of information between Irish and British people as to the true situation obtaining in Occupied Ireland'.

The UTOM conference itself was an undoubted success. Over 150 people attended and note was taken of the new ground broken in the UTOM's 15 months of existence, so that

it is now the major national focus for work against the presence of the British troops in Ireland.

At the conference delegates from the Socialist Workers Party and other left groups pledged their support for building the movement.

The conference decided among other things to build for the 26 November demonstration in support of the prisoners-of-war held in Britain and Ireland, to support the rally in January for the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland, and to give a new national structure to UTOM.

DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH IRISH POWS NOVEMBER 26

Called for by the Prisoners Aid Committee

- *Solidarity with Irish POWs
- *POW status and amnesty for all Irish political prisoners
- *Troops out of Ireland now

NATIONAL MARCH IN LONDON
To Clerkenwell Green from Speakers Corner
Assemble 2.30

Racism and the courts

White justice

British style



JUDGE MICHAEL ARGYLE on 19 July sentenced Joginder Singh Virk to seven years' imprisonment, Mohinder Singh Virk to three years, Balvinder Singh Virk to two years, and Sukhvinder Singh Virk to three months for allegedly causing serious bodily harm to three white youths.

Not only were the sentences savage, but the whole case rested on the police version of events, said A. SIVANANDAN, director of the Institute of Race Relations, at a meeting of the Steering Committee of Asian Organisations Against Racism held on Saturday.

Here we publish the dossier on the 'pathology of victimisation' presented by Sivanandan.

The Virk brothers had in fact been the victims of racist attacks and racial abuse. They had defended themselves under severe provocation.

The police arrived and arrested the Virk brothers while the real attackers went free. Judge Argyle not only accepted the police version of events but went on to condemn as 'irrelevant' the introduction by the defence of 'racial prejudice' as a motivation — and rebuked them for asking the white attackers whether they belonged to the National Front.

BIAS

In ruling 'out of court' the whole social context of the 'crime' the judge was in effect reflecting and reinforcing the racial bias of the police and denying justice to the black defendants.

This case raises fundamental issues. For black people in Britain the police and the state afford no protection from racial abuse and racial violence.

Judge Argyle's ruling is not an isolated instance. But it is difficult to glean examples from press reports of similar court proceedings because the police, and, subsequently the magistrates or judges, have already defined for the reporters who is the victim and who the aggressor — thereby precluding once again the articulation of the black experience.

The researches of the Institute of Race Relations, however, reveal a disconcerting pattern in recent judicial opinions and decisions:

In December 1977 an 18-year-old black youth who accidentally stabbed to death a white attacker was jailed for 18 months. He carried a knife for self-protection. A gang of youths who had been put off a bus for insulting a black conductor attacked him and he defended himself.

The judge, Melford Stephenson, who accepted that the whites had been responsible for the incident, went on to say:

'I have got to make it clear that people of any race and colour who carry the kind of horrible weapon that you used must learn that the consequences must be grave.' (South London Press, 9.12.77).

In April, Issa Ahmodu, a Nigerian businessman who 'lived in fear of mugging', was pounced on by plain clothes officers and pursued. Ahmodu pulled a penknife in fear and ran to his hotel.

He was later charged and

fined £40. (South Kensington News, 14.4.78).

In a 'Sus' case where two youths were found guilty, the woman from whom they were alleged to have attempted to steal told police that she had noticed nothing of the sort.

The magistrate told the police in court: 'I hope you told her to get out of the way and mind her own business.'

The police officer replied: 'In no uncertain terms, Sir'. The magistrate added: 'Quite right, I don't approve of that kind of person'. (Wandsworth Community, October '78).

In cases where judges do accept a racial motivation for a crime (unlike Judge Argyle), the sentence on whites and the apprehension of whites is quite out of line with those relating to black people.

The murderers of Gurdip Singh Chagger had the murder charge commuted to manslaughter and got a sentence of four years. Of the 150 white racists who rampaged through Brick Lane on 11 June, 20 were arrested and only three were actually charged.

Two Norwich men involved in repeated assaults on black students at East Anglia University convinced the judge that the victims were chosen because of their colour.

But the judge did not want to 'deprive them of their liberty' and 'affect their employment' prospects, so he fined them £100 each. (Eastern Daily Press, 13.12.77.)

CONTRAST

Compare the sentences on the Virk brothers with those of two white racists at Wolverhampton who pleaded guilty to wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm and possessing an offensive weapon.

One was jailed for 2½ years for a 'deliberate and unprovoked' racial attack on a West Indian; the other had a six months suspended sentence. (Belfast Telegraph, 9.8.78).

There is also a remarkable contrast in the bail conditions being handed out to blacks and whites.

On 7 June, three youths (two Asian, one white) came up before Old Street magistrate Nichols, charged with using threatening behaviour in Brick Lane.

All were given bail, but the two Asians, Rahman and Haque, were ordered to stay indoors every Sunday from 7am to 7pm. (Hackney Gazette, 27.6.78).

Contrast this with the fact that the accused murderers of Ishaq Ali were allowed bail on 7 July on the condition that they live in Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool for their own safety. At their second court appearance on 6 September, this condition was revoked and they returned to London.

Also on 7 July, at the same court, three Nigerians who had 'overstayed' their visa conditions were remanded in custody. And now for the police offensive — which the judiciary tends to underpin:

At 12.15 on the morning of 3 July, seven plainclothes men broke into the home of an Asian family in Longsight, Manchester. They terrified the entire family, broke up the house and pulled out the telephone.

All the family thought they were members of the National Front; one son, Munir, had even tried to call the police for help! Nazir, the father, was beaten up and had to go to hospital.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS on this page are from 'Divide and Rule — Never!', a superb new film from the Newsreel collective featuring and aimed at young people. White and black young women and men talk about racism, the fascists, their experience of discrimination, and their views on its causes. It's direct, engaging, and very militant. See What's Left for hire details.



TWO ANL activists in Waltham Forest, one unemployed and the other on £41 a week, have been fined £140 and ordered to pay compensation of £250 for painting anti-NF slogans on a subway. Donations are urgently needed if they are to avoid going to jail for non-payment — please send to: Walthamstow ANL, c/o CRC, 25 Church Hill, Walthamstow E17.

THE Hackney Council for Racial Equality is among the sponsors of a conference on 'The Law and Race Relations in Hackney' on 4 November from 10.30am to 3.30pm at the John Scott Health Centre, Wood-

berry Down, Green Lanes, N4. For details contact Hackney CRE, 247 Mare Street, E8 [tel. 986 4121].

NF ACTIVIST Keith Squire, a self-employed scrap dealer with six previous convictions, was jailed for six months on Monday for putting up a poster with intent to stir racial hatred against black people.

The poster claimed that most mugging incidents were carried out by black people against whites. Commented the judge: 'There seems something ironic about you, with your record of violence, being socially concerned about other people's violence.'

IN BRIEF

TEACHERS and journalists were among those who picketed the National Front's new headquarters in Hackney as the NF held a press conference to launch its new pamphlet, *Lifting the Lid off the 'Anti Nazi League'*. Pickets also greeted similar press conferences in Birmingham and Stockport.

Lifting the Lid turns out to be a straight return to the Jewish conspiracy theory, claiming that the ANL was begun by the Board of Deputies of British Jews (in fact, as we detailed last week, the Board has refused to support the ANL).

There is the usual talk about 'the sinister Russian-Jewish City bankers and their offspring who own the assets of the SWP', emphasis on 'Jewish' or 'Zionist' backgrounds, and finally the accusation that the ANL is run by 'people who don't have very deep roots in Britain'. Asked if he meant Jewish people, NF leader Webster said he did.

Most of the press either ignored these Nazi-style ravings or treated them with the contempt they deserve. But not so *The Times*. Its correspondent Robert Parker seemingly didn't notice the anti-semitism: 'The Front booklet... alleges about the league exactly what the league alleges of the Front.'

Some people will believe anything!

EIGHT journalists on the South Kent Gazette went on strike on Monday after the editor decided to print an apology to the NF for calling them 'Nazis' without any reply by the journalists who wrote the original story.

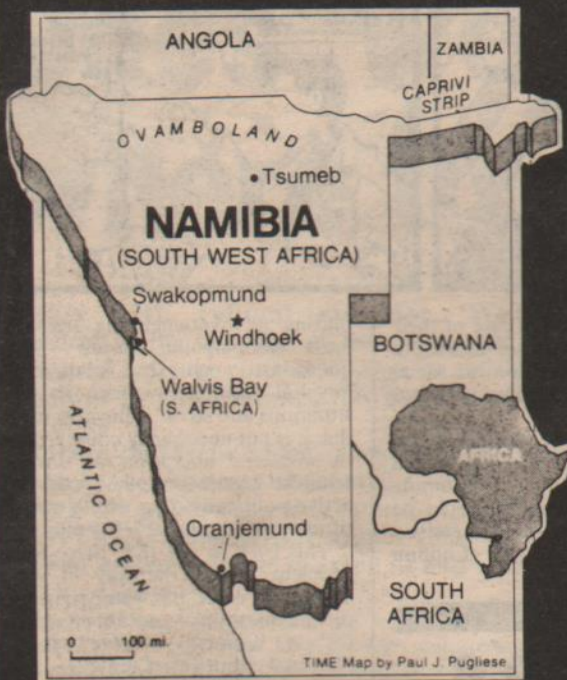
WOMEN and Ireland, North London Women Against Racism and Fascism, North London Black Women's Group, and women involved in struggles in various third world countries have got together to organise two one-day women

only educational on imperialism, immigration and racism.

The first is on Sunday 29 October and the second on Saturday 11 November. Both start at 10.30am at the Methodist Church Hall, Lancaster Road, W11. Cost: both days £1.50 (unemployed 75p), one day £1 (unemployed 50p). Cost includes papers. Creche provided.

FOUR NF members have been charged with making an affray and unlawfully fighting in Great Eastern Street after incidents outside the NF's new headquarters last Thursday night. James O'Keefe [39] was refused bail.

Namibia talks West buckles before the Bothas



SOUTH African military occupation of Namibia will continue after the major imperialist powers caved in to South African demands in Pretoria last week.
RICHARD CARVER reports.

The agreement drawn up by the five Western foreign ministers and the clutch of Bothas has generally been presented as a compromise. It is nothing of the sort.

Crucially, the 'five' have allowed South Africa to maintain its military presence in Namibia during two sets of forthcoming elections.

The only South African 'concession' is an agreement to United Nations supervised elections in the new year. But even then the South African army will remain to intimidate the population.

And Pretoria has insisted that it vet the countries who provide UN supervision of the elections. It has already named a number of the more radical African countries who will not be allowed to take part in the UN team!

VICTORY

To support their assessment of the meeting, the 'five' have stressed that South African Prime Minister Pieter Botha has said that he would accept an electoral victory by the nationalist South West Africa People's Organisation.

But there are two reasons why he can confidently do this. First, the presence of South African troops lessens the possibility of a SWAPO victory, even though it is generally acknowledged that it has the sympathy of a majority of the population.

VAGUE

And secondly, last week's agreement is suitably vague about what bodies will come out of the two sets of elections — South African and UN supervised — and what will be the relation between the two.

In other words, the second election, which will not be democratic anyway, will count for nothing.

Namibia is a former German colony placed under South African mandate by the League of Nations in 1919. It has been ruled by South Africa as if it were a province — with all the apparatus of apartheid and repression.

The UN has revoked the South African mandate and set up its own administration-in-exile, but this has made little impression on Pretoria and its backers — the giant multinationals — who are more interested in the country's vast mineral reserves than small questions of international legitimacy.

TOYED

For a time, when he was adopting a more conciliatory attitude towards black Africa, former Prime Minister John Vorster toyed with the idea of allowing some kind of genuine Namibian independence (so long as he could still get his hands on aforesaid resources).

The collapse of the Portuguese colonial regime in Angola and the disaster of the South African invasion put paid to that. Although SWAPO is not made of the same stuff as the Angolan MPLA it would still pose a massive security problem for the apartheid regime.

So the preferred solution is a unilateral declaration of 'independence' for Namibia.

Pretoria's stooges of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance would be left in charge and South African troops would have free passage to deal with the 'terrorists'.

RESISTANCE

The obstacles to such a way out have been the attitude of other African states, the sporadic guerilla campaign and Namibian working class resistance.

The five powers represented in Pretoria last week would probably prefer a more diplomatic solution but faced with a choice between South Africa and democracy they have consistently gone for the former.

That being the case, UN decisions and expressions of righteous indignation will achieve nothing. International solidarity to kick out the South Africans can.

'Connections — Britain and South Africa'

THE dramatic events in southern Africa are having a powerful impact on British politics. The trouble is that there has been very little discussion on the left about the issues at stake in southern Africa, and how best to campaign on them, writes JOHN HUNT.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement's national committee and annual general meeting are not much help because they are heavily weighted against local activists.

The AAM does hold local group meetings, but these have no power and exclude those who aren't paid up AAM members.

So it's very much to be welcomed that Manchester AAM have called a conference which should provide an opportunity for the broadest range of activists to discuss solidarity and plan new activities.

The conference, entitled 'Connections — Britain and Southern Africa', is sponsored by the North West TUC and aimed particularly at trade unionists and youth, but is open to every type of organisation.

It has a workshop structure, with discussion on well-chosen topics — action in the workplace, action in the Labour Party, Soweto and youth, women under apar-

theid, and the media. Socialist Challenge supporters should try to get their trade union or Labour Party branch, anti-racist body, women's group, student union or youth group to send them along.

We would like to see the conference fighting for:

- a rank and file contact network for militants working on southern Africa in the unions and initiatives to publicise the solidarity actions in firms like British Leyland and ICL with South African links.

- an informal information network among activists to link militants inside and outside the AAM.

- a media campaign for press and television to give time and space to the views of the liberation movements.

- an elected working party to organise a labour movement inquiry into the Shell/BP scandal.

- conference should condemn the possible use of British troops in Zimbabwe and call actions in solidarity with the Zimbabwean people.

For details contact: Manchester AAM, 59 Tintern Avenue, Manchester M20 8ND.

Venue: Abraham Moss Centre, Crumpsall, Manchester. Saturday 11 November, 10-6.



5000 on Anti Apartheid demonstration

SEVERAL thousand people marched through London last Saturday on the demonstration organised by the Anti-Apartheid Movement, reports MARTIN METEYARD.

Contingents from as far away as Aberdeen and Dundee, and apart from many student unions there were also banners from several Labour parties and trades councils and a number of trade unions — including engineers, public employees, civil servants, Inland Revenue staff, Corby steelworkers, London sheet metal workers, and East London teachers.

Unfortunately the turn-out from most of the far left, which for so long has kept the flag of internationalism flying in Britain, was extremely disappointing. The Socialist Workers Party did not even have a contingent on the demonstration, while that of the International Marxist Group was very small.

This situation is rather serious at a time when the Labour government's manoeuvres over Zimbabwe are reaching a climax with the threat to send British troops to southern Africa under the United

Nations flag.

The responsibilities of the far left were underlined when the IMG contingent raised slogans in relation to this: a section of Communist Party supporters started to chant 'Smith out, Nkomo in' — a slogan with which Dr Owen for one would surely agree!

The crucial question is under what conditions Smith will be ousted, and whether the freedom fighters themselves will be able to determine the future leadership of an independent Zimbabwe free from imperialist interference.

Swedish car strike — 41 face sack at Volvo

THE fall of the Swedish government has been in the news recently. What hasn't is that there — as in Britain — car workers are in the front line of the fight to defend living standards.

KARIN PETTERSON reports. At the Volvo-owned Bil and Traktor repair shop at Boden, 41 workers have been on strike for more than 100 days against the employer's threat to reintroduce piece rates.

The strike is seen as a test case by both sides. Like nearly all strikes in Sweden the Bil and

Traktor action is illegal. In law a strike is only legal when it is recognised by the central trade union leadership and when there is no signed agreement between management and union. Such a situation rarely occurs.

Before 1977 the maximum penalty for an illegal striker was 200 S.kr (£23), but now the fine is unlimited. Several high fines have been imposed by the labour court — a body with representatives from employers, union and 'neutrals'.

Several times union repre-

sentatives have suggested fines higher than the old 200 S.kr limit and have participated in judging the Bil and Traktor workers twice for the same strike.

Now the management threatens to sack all 41 workers — again with no opposition from the union representatives.

But if the bureaucracy do not support the strike, large sections of the working class do. Support committees have been set up all over the country; money is collected to pay fines and boost the strike fund; and

many unions have pledged support.

There is growing opposition to the anti-strike laws. A nationwide petition against unlimited strike fines is supported by many unions.

The Social Democrats have presented a motion to parliament demanding the reintroduction of the 200 S.kr limit.

This shows the opportunism of the Social Democratic leaders: they ask for a partial change to an anti-labour law that they themselves helped

pass and that they participate in implementing without protests.

KAF, the Swedish section of the Fourth International, opposes all strike fines and the other aspects of the anti-labour laws. But it would still be an advance if strikers no longer had to face unlimited fines.

Therefore, and because there is a huge working class mobilisation behind the demand, KAF supports and participates in the collection of names.

The Bil and Traktor workers are not the only ones to be

threatened with the sack. At the big Volvo factory in Gothenburg there was a short strike a couple of weeks ago, after which the company threatened the immediate sacking of six workers.

But the Volvo workers united behind them. One leaflet said that if the six were sacked, 'it would be every worker's duty to see that the quality of the cars leaving the factory would correspond to the quality of the Volvo management'.

The company backed down.

Photo: MORNING STAR

Iran—on the 40th day...

MONDAY 16 October was the fortieth day after Black Friday, the day on which thousands of demonstrators were massacred in Tehran. As expected this traditional day of mourning was marked by another massive show of opposition to the Shah.

The Moslem clergy and most of the opposition groups had called for a one day general strike. In response millions of people throughout the country stopped work.

Normal life in all major cities ground to a halt as factories, offices, shops and bazaars remained closed for the day.

In several major cities response to the general strike is reported to have been almost total.

In Tehran the poorer southern half of the city, where the bloody massacres of Black Friday had occurred, was completely closed down.

Thousands of troops backed with British manufactured Scorpion tanks had been moved into the capital overnight and stationed at all strategic points.

Despite the threatening presence of troops and the advice of the moderate wing of the clergy and bourgeois oppositionists to stay at home, tens of thousands of people gathered for a mass meeting at Tehran's main cemetery where the martyrs of Black Friday have been buried.

After the meeting they began to march towards the city chanting 'death to the Shah'. The demonstrators were at-

tacked by troops and forced to disperse as they entered the working class districts of south Tehran.

In several provincial towns demonstrations led to violent clashes with police and troops. According to government sources 16 people were killed and more than a hundred injured, but the real number of casualties is believed to be higher.

KILLED

There have also been a number of other major demonstrations since the general strike particularly in Mashad, Zanjan and Hamadan.

In Hamadan ten people are reported to have been killed and many injured when police opened fire on a demonstration organised by striking teachers and students.

In Tehran students have organised several large demonstrations on the city's main campuses calling for an end to martial law and the release of all political prisoners.

Meanwhile the wave of workers' strikes which began several weeks ago is continuing. Almost the entire public sector has so far been affected, and now strikes are rapidly



Tens of thousands of people gathered on 16 October at Tehran's main cemetery, where the martyrs of Black Friday forty days earlier have been buried.

spreading in private industries.

The newspaper workers' strike, which began when army officers moved into the offices of the two main Tehran dailies and tried to impose military censorship, ended after four days on 15 October when the government gave a public undertaking to end press censorship.

The strike had won widespread support throughout the country because of its political

importance. Its success is without doubt an important victory in the struggle for freedom of expression in Iran.

The Government's promises of ending press censorship do not of course mean that there is freedom of press in Iran. Opposition papers and particularly left wing papers are still banned.

Journalists were warned to act 'responsibly' — in other words to censor themselves —

and while the regime's machinery of repression exists they have little choice.

Nevertheless when the papers reappeared after the strike there was a noticeable change in them, showing that the regime had been forced to make some real concessions.

The changes were enough to confuse the police in Ahvaz who decided to confiscate all copies of the Tehran daily *Ettala'at* because they thought

it was subversive.

Universities which were supposed to open a month ago have remained closed because of government fears of student protests. There are rumours now that the current academic year may be completely cancelled.

Many schools have also been closed because either the teachers or the pupils or both have been on strike.

Puerto Rican woman talks on sterilisation

'Certainly there's a racist undercurrent'

PUERTO RICO is an example of how population programmes are used by the USA to maintain control over another country.

In the last 10 years oil refining and petro-chemical industries have come to dominate the economy of the US colony. These need a relatively small workforce.

A recent US government document said that in order to reduce high unemployment in Puerto Rico it was necessary to reduce the growth of the working class.

It mapped out a strategy: 1 million Puerto Ricans are to be forced to migrate to the USA — 2 million have gone already — and more funds are to be put into a sterilisation programme aimed at all women of child-bearing age not yet sterilised.

Socialist Challenge talked to Zulma Rivera, of the Committee for Puerto Rican Independence in London.



ZULMA RIVERA

unobtainable. Abortions can only be got in private hospitals if you can find a doctor willing to perform one and pay the £200-£300 costs.

Contraceptives also have to be bought, and there isn't much information available to the masses of people. Sterilisation however is very available through the state health organisations and is usually free.

We have heard that 35 per cent of all Puerto Rican women of childbearing age have been sterilised. Can you explain how this situation came about?

The American government started population control programmes in the '30s. When they took over the island it was a multi-crop agricultural economy which they quickly dismantled in favour of a mono-crop sugar economy.

When they found they could obtain sugar more cheaply from Cuba, they withdrew their capital, creating massive unemployment. It wasn't in their interests to produce more jobs, so they resolved the problem by putting Federal Aid into sterilisation programmes.

Sterilisation was first carried out purely for health reasons, and because it was attached to a Health Programme, it became the most acceptable form of birth control for women to use.

Was there a racist element in this?

I think so. You can see the attitude developing in people like Paul Ehrlich who wrote the *Population Bomb* when he said the idea for the book came to him when he was driving through Delhi on a hot summer's night and hordes of people came round his car and he felt swamped by them.

You get the same sort of feeling when you drive through central London or New York, but you wouldn't think in terms

of a population explosion.

Obviously, it's not just the number of people, but the kind of people that matters, and there's certainly this racist undercurrent in American plans to sterilise the women of Latin America, Africa and India.

Puerto Rican women are the youngest women in the world to be sterilised. Are they told that it's an irreversible operation?

Yes, but the pressures put upon them are very subtle.

The head of the FPA, Dr Samuel Lugo talks about the 'optimum' moment to convince women they need sterilisation: when a woman goes to hospital to have a baby, that's when

she's most receptive to birth control advice — and by that he means sterilisation.

It might be the optimum time for populationists, but it certainly isn't the best time for a woman to make a decision, particularly one that's irreversible.

The other pressure women undergo is from the 'orientation' programmes carried out by the Welfare and Housing Departments, who combine birth control advice with food stamps and housing offers.

I don't think many young women realise that sterilisation takes the right to choose again in the future completely out of their hands.

The International Campaign for Abortion Rights has as one of its central slogans the demand for an end to all forced

sterilisation. Do you think that an international campaign like this, and the International Day of Action planned for 31 March 1979, will actually help the struggle of Puerto Rican women?

I think it will be a tremendous help. It's only just now that women are becoming aware of the population control mechanisms they have been subjected to, and the fact that their fertility has been manipulated to fulfil the imperialist needs of the USA.

Zulma will be one of the three speakers at the first International Women's Forum organised by ICAR [International Campaign for Abortion Rights] on Friday 27 October, 7.30 at ULU, Malet Street, WC1.



A slum in Puerto Rico

IN BRIEF

US gays

CALIFORNIANS will vote next Wednesday on a referendum which seeks to outlaw as teachers or other school workers all gays and all those who support gay liberation.

This proposition has been introduced by Senator Briggs, who has continued the theme of Anita Bryant's crusade: that gays are 'corrupters of youth'.

While Briggs' campaign is extremely demagogic, it reflects the real erosion of traditional sexual morality in the United States.

His proposition is one of the most severe attacks on democratic rights so far, and polls show it is likely to win. International solidarity is

badly needed. A demonstration has been called by the London Gay Activists Alliance, at the US Embassy, Grosvenor Square, London W1, at 3pm, Saturday, 4 November.

Chile arrests

THE Chilean junta has hit back against the rise in workplace struggles by outlawing the trade union federation responsible for leading them.

Six leaders of the Co-ordinadora were arrested when security forces occupied its offices at the end of last week.

The Chile Solidarity Campaign has called a picket this Thursday in protest at the banning and arrest, at the Chilean Embassy, 12 Devonshire Street, London W1, 12.30-2pm.

What are SC groups?

WHAT are Socialist Challenge groups? It seems a strange question to ask in view of the fact that the paper is now well into its second year. However, as a Socialist Challenge reader since June 1977, I don't think it is one which has been adequately answered. This, in my opinion, is because it has never been adequately discussed in the pages of the paper.

There seem to me to be a number of terms that Socialist Challenge groups can take. First, they can be more or less a front organisation of the International Marxist Group, involving the local periphery of the IMG in political activities of varying degrees of commitment with a view to eventual recruitment.

Second, in areas where the Socialist Workers Party is sympathetic to joint work with the IMG, a series of joint meetings can be held with a view to planning joint interventions into the class struggle locally.

Third, Socialist Challenge groups can be launched as autonomous groupings of independents, IMG members, and other aligned militants who read Socialist Challenge and sympathise with its aims. I believe that autonomous groups hold the best hope for the future. This is consistent with the call for a new unified revolutionary organisation.

For autonomy to be achieved it would be necessary to have a committee elected with the responsibility of implementing the decisions of Socialist Challenge supporters. However, if such a committee was composed solely or with a majority of IMG members there would be a danger of losing the sought-for autonomy.

Also, IMG members in a Socialist Challenge group should be prepared on occasions to take a back seat during discussions, otherwise the politically inexperienced will just clam-up and eventually lose interest. Although SWP members, for example, should not be excluded from Socialist Challenge groups, it is unlikely that their concrete support can be relied upon. This is because of their (in my opinion misguided) view of themselves as 'the revolutionary party'.

Finally, I'm not trying to suggest that Socialist Challenge supporters should not join the IMG, only that these groups should not be used as an IMG front.

STEVE ROSE (Preston group organiser — in personal capacity)

THE LENGTH of letters printed will usually be kept down to 400 words in order to encourage as wide a range of contributions as possible. All letters may be cut at the Editor's discretion. Unsigned letters will not normally be published, although we will withhold real names from publication on request.



Inspiring thousands

GREETINGS to all who today hold high the banner of international Trotskyism. How happy it is to reflect that today the programme of revolutionary Marxism inspires thousands.

Forty-seven years ago, when the Left Opposition raised its voice in this country, Trotsky's message reached only dozens. Then the workers movement here in Britain and internationally was reeling from the impact of great defeats. Stalinism was in the ascendant, preparing itself for fresh betrayals in Germany and Spain.

Today there stands in the arena of class struggle a new generation that has learnt the lessons from the reformist and Stalinist treachery. This significant force of revolutionary militants represents a great capital accumulation for our movement.

The revolutionary left is today better positioned, better equipped to greet the rising tide of class struggle. What remains to be achieved is to reach a more unified compact presence. Even on that field some steps forward have been made. In my view Socialist Challenge has made a notable contribution in arming militants for the tasks ahead.

HARRY WICKS (East Twickenham)

After the Shah

YOUR interview with Iranian Trotskyists (12 October) was very interesting but left a number of questions unanswered.

A section of the masses in Iran have clearly decided to overthrow the Shah by insurrectionary means. In early September they approached the soldiers with great intelligence, one day throwing stones, another flowers, refusing to disperse, calling on them not to fire on the people.

Some soldiers mutinied and shot

their officers. The insurrection was only broken by the shock of the massacre. But that will not be the end of the story.

We might disagree on this assessment. But we must certainly be clear on our political orientation. It is not enough just to call for a constituent assembly following the overthrow of the monarchy.

The purpose of a constituent assembly is to decide on the constitution, in other words the form of state. But it may take many months to arrange. Besides, any such assembly has several conceivable options. Should it give Iran a constitutional monarchy, a republic, a bourgeois democracy, a soviet republic? We must know what we intend to fight for.

It is good to outline the tasks which have to be solved in Iran — the national question, women's oppression, the land question, the expropriation of industry. But who is going to solve these tasks? Indeed, who is going to arrange the constituent assembly? We must give an answer here as well.

In the heat of the uprising, while the insurgent masses and mutinous soldiers are liberating Tehran from the Shah and his agents, the clerics will seek to give the power which the masses win to the liberal bourgeoisie. We must warn the movement against this.

We must call on the insurgents to create a soviet, a council of deputies from among the armed people, that is a workers and farmers government. That should be the power. If the bourgeoisie get into the saddle, then they will solve nothing and only return the country to monarchy or fascism at a later date.

Of course, an immediate victory of the soviet may be unlikely. The workers parties may be too weak. A period of dual power may open up in Iran, leading to further convulsions. We cannot speculate. Something also depends on us. But we must be clear what we want in Iran and steer openly towards that goal from the very beginning.

DAVE BAILEY (London)

NF plugs

THE director-general of the BBC considers the National Front have a

right to broadcast. It is a case of their freedom to broadcast set against a diminution of the freedom of racial minorities to exist without political harassment.

It is not an issue of freedom but a simple question of censorship, which in the case of any other programme which disgusted or harmed people the BBC would not hesitate to exercise.

Rev. MICHAEL HAYES (London W11)

Women's Voice — success

I AGREE with Celia Pugh (19 October) that Women's Voice cannot both be 'independent' and 'a sister organisation of the Socialist Workers Party', and that it should be up to all supporters of Women's Voice to decide its role and relationship to the SWP. But I don't think this gives the whole picture.

In particular, I think we can learn something from the debate on the Anti Nazi League, even though there is no direct parallel between the two organisations. When the ANL was first launched, much of the far left (including Socialist Challenge initially) similarly tended to concentrate on its lack of democratic structures and domination by the SWP rather than realising the real campaigning potential it embodied.

I think two aspects of Women's Voice need especially to be acknowledged. First, it produces a monthly journal whose large circulation is completely deserved. It is one of the liveliest campaigning journals the left has yet produced in this country, and one which the women's movement would be a lot poorer without.

This relates to the second point. Through its 40 local groups, Women's Voice is attempting — with a certain amount of success — to deal with a very real problem whose solution has hitherto escaped the women's liberation movement: how to forge a link with the daily concerns of working women both in the workplace and in the home.

It has done this precisely through

putting its overwhelming stress on mass campaigning action — on questions such as playgroups, hospital facilities, women in work situations and so on. This also means that it is not necessarily counterposed to women's liberation or socialist feminist groups, which are already active politically on a whole number of aspects of general left politics.

This isn't to say that there aren't problems about the way in which Women's Voice has campaigned on certain questions — notably its failure to get seriously involved in the National Abortion Campaign, even counterposing itself to it. But it nevertheless remains true that Women's Voice has posed important questions which the rest of the left and women's movement will ignore at its peril.

PAT MASTERS (East London)

'Ladies' sent home

TOWARDS the end of the Bradford Carnival on 14 October a singer appeared on stage and started to tell a joke about rape.

Four women climbed on the stage to object, saying jokes about rape weren't funny. The singer agreed to apologise. Then the PA system was switched off and some men got on the stage to throw the women off. Confusion reigned and then the police marched in and cleared the stage.

The Anti Nazi League organiser, Geoff Robinson, then got a loud hailer and said: 'Why don't you go home ladies, we don't want trouble, why do you want to spoil the fun?' The women ran towards the stage, the police moved in and arrested people for 'obstruction' and a 'breach of the peace'.

This incident raises a number of questions:

*Why are sexist singers invited to ANL carnivals?

*Why were the police allowed to move in against people objecting to sexism?

*Why did the ANL organiser turn off the PA when the women were making their protests?

*Why is the fight against sexism secondary in the anti-fascist movement?

JENNY TIZARD (Bradford)

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

NORTH WEST

WARRINGTON Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-236 2352.

GREATER MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge. School students who support the paper and would like to get involved in anti-fascist activity, please contact Chris (273 5947, day) or Steve (226 4287, evening), or write to Manchester SC Centre, 14 Piccadilly.

SALFORD Socialist Challenge supporters can be contacted at the Manchester Socialist Challenge offices, Tel 061-236 2352 or, by writing to Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre, c/o 14 Piccadilly, Manchester with a view to forming a Salford Socialist Challenge group.

SOUTH MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge group meets every other Thursday at the Albert Inn off Wilmslow Rd. Help sell Socialist Challenge between 11.30am and 1pm at Moss Side shopping centre or Longsight Market, Dickenson Rd.

LEIGH Socialist Challenge group will be holding regular meetings shortly. For details ring Roy on Atherton 88 2830.

NW REGION Socialist Challenge Group organisers meet next on Sunday 12 November at Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre, 14 Piccadilly.

2-6pm. Agenda includes: report back from National Policy Committee; sales and subscription drive progress report; a North-West bulletin.

NORTH EAST

NEWCASTLE Socialist Challenge local supporters are active! If you want to join them, phone Pete on (0632) 29057.

DURHAM Socialist Challenge Supporters Group. For details contact: Dave Brown, 2 Pioneer Cottages, Low Pittington, Durham.

LONDON
HARROW Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly, details from Box 50, London N1 2XP.

WALTHAM FOREST paper sales every Saturday, 11am-noon outside the post office, Hoe St, Walthamstow, London E17.

TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge Group meets every fortnight (phone 247 2717 for details). Next meeting: Thurs. 26 Oct., 7.30pm, Oxford House, Derbyshire St., E2, with speaker from National Abortion Campaign.

TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge supporters sell every weekend: Saturdays meet 10.30am, Whitechapel tube; Sundays meet 10am, Brick Lane (corner of Buxton St.).

SW London Socialist Challenge Group meets fortnightly at 8pm at Clapham Library, Clapham Common North Side (Clapham Common tube). Next meeting, Weds. 1 Nov: 'The nature of Zionism'.

WALTHAMSTOW readers can buy Socialist Challenge regularly from Sheridan's Newsagents, 86 Hoe St, E17.

LEYTON readers can buy Socialist Challenge from Patel's Newsagents, 326 Lea Bridge Road, E10.

SW LONDON sales every Saturday, 11am-1pm, at Capham Junction (Northcote Rd), Brixton tube, Clapham Common tube, Balham tube. Also obtainable from bookstalls outside Oval tube, Herne Hill BR.

HARINGEY Socialist Challenge public meeting: 'Violence against women', with speakers from the Rape Crisis Centre and Haringey Women's Aid. Thurs. 26 Oct., 7.30pm, West Green Community Centre, Stanley Rd. (off West Green Rd.), N15 (Turnpike Lane tube).

SOUTH WEST
ISLE OF WIGHT readers can buy Socialist Challenge from the Oz Shop, 44 Union St., Ryde.

BATH Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday, 2-3.30pm outside Macfisheries. Ring Bath 20298 or 29971 for further details of activities.

SOUTHAMPTON Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday from 10am-1pm above bar, Post Office, Bargate.

PORTSMOUTH Socialist Challenge sales, Saturdays, 11.30am-1pm, Commercial Road Precinct.

BRISTOL Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday, 11am-1pm in the 'Hole in the Ground', Haymarket.

FOR INFORMATION on activities in the South-West, write to Box 002, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Bristol 6.

THE DEADLINE for this column is midday on the Saturday before publication.

YORKSHIRE

BRADFORD Socialist Challenge Group meets fortnightly at 8pm at the Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate. Next meeting, Mon 6 Nov.

DEWSBURY Socialist Challenge Group meets fortnightly at 8pm at the Socialist Club. Next meeting, Tues 7 Nov.

HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge Group meets fortnightly at 8pm at the Friendly & Trades Club, Northumberland St. Next meeting, Thurs 26 Oct: 'Feminism and Socialism'.

DEWSBURY Socialist Challenge sales regularly on Saturday mornings in Westgate at the Nat. Westminster Bank, 12.30-2.00pm.

HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge sales regularly Saturdays 11am-1pm in the Piazza.

YORK Socialist Challenge is on sale at the York Community Bookshop, 73 Walmgate or from sellers on Thursdays (12.30-1.45) at York University, Vanbrugh College; Saturdays (11.30-3.30) at Coney Street.

MIDLANDS

For details of activities of local supporters throughout the Midlands contact the Socialist Challenge Centre, 76b Digbeth High Street, Birmingham: (021) 643 9209.

NOTTINGHAM Socialist Challenge Forum: 'A Socialist Strategy for Women's Liberation' (speaker: Celia Pugh). Thurs 26 Oct., 7.30pm, Room 4, Peoples Hall, Heathcote St.

SOUTH EAST

BRIGHTON Socialist Challenge sales regularly on Saturdays at the Open Market, London Road, from 11am-1pm.

COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. For

details phone Steve on Wivenhoe 2949.

NORWICH Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday in Davey Place (opp. market), and bookstall Thursdays at SCOTLAND

For informa'on about the paper or its supporters' activities throughout Scotland please contact Socialist Challenge Books, 64 Queen St, Glasgow. Open Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoons. Phone for alternative arrangement (221 7481). Wide range of Fourth International publications.

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge supporters group meets regularly. Phone George at 031-346 0466 for details.

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

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE now has a stock of attractive hessian bags with two designs; in black, fight racism; in red, women's liberation symbol. Cost: £1 from our offices or £1.25 by mail (including p.p.).

'FIGHT RACISM' T-shirts. Good quality white cotton with red design. Cap sleeve or regular short sleeve. Medium or large (sizes are on the small side, if in doubt order a large). £1.50 from our offices, or £1.75 inc. p.p.

UNDER REVIEW

Politics and culture

Does 'Wedge' know where to draw the line?

WHEN THE cultural magazine 'Wedge' was launched in the summer of last year, the review in Socialist Challenge considered that its articles did not 'conform to any preconceived position on cultural questions'.

Rather, the review added, 'they are suggestive in the way they open up areas of debate'.

With the publication this month of its third issue, GEOFFREY SHERIDAN argues that 'Wedge' has allowed preconceptions to creep in and is tending to narrow debate.

There is one issue for socialists that looms over all others in discussion of culture: the relationship and interface between culture and politics. It is an issue which Wedge

has not so far explicitly considered.

Wedge No 1 carried an 'In place of an editorial', which held back from offering a policy statement as such, but presented several guidelines. Among these was a rewrite of the women's slogan:

'There will be no cultural liberation without political revolution — there will be no political revolution without cultural liberation.'

As Annie Janowitz's review in Socialist Challenge noted, this formulation seemed to set up as beyond debate the status of revolutionary cultural practice in relation to the class struggle as a whole.

CONFUSING

Wedge No. 3, which is around the theme of 'Looking at the left' — a critique of cultural aspects of the British left, presents us with a view of politics and culture that at crucial points collapses the one into the other.

It is, I would say, the failure of the magazine collective to make any real distinction between the two areas of activity and analysis that has led them to publish too much confusing and tendentious material.

Two examples. In a five-page article on demonstrations, Carl Gardner and Malcolm Imrie (helped by Tim Pigott) argue against the traditional 'public parades' which set off from Hyde Park.

Examining the 'meanings' of demos, they conclude that the 'pre-arranged and planned demo, with police approval, ought to be a much more marginal practice', and favour

the integration of 'the whole gamut of cultural oppositional forms — music, theatre, dance, displays of all kinds'.

But why techniques of cultural analysis should be considered as appropriate and largely sufficient to expound on what are political events is not explained by the authors.

It is an approach which inevitably leads to false political conclusions. The 'meanings' they identify as determining the politics of a march exclude what is politically central to many marches.

The 80,000-strong march against the cuts in 1976 is thus dismissed as a failure because the police forced the demonstrators to march out of Hyde Park in a narrow column and it all ended up with parliamentary lobbying.

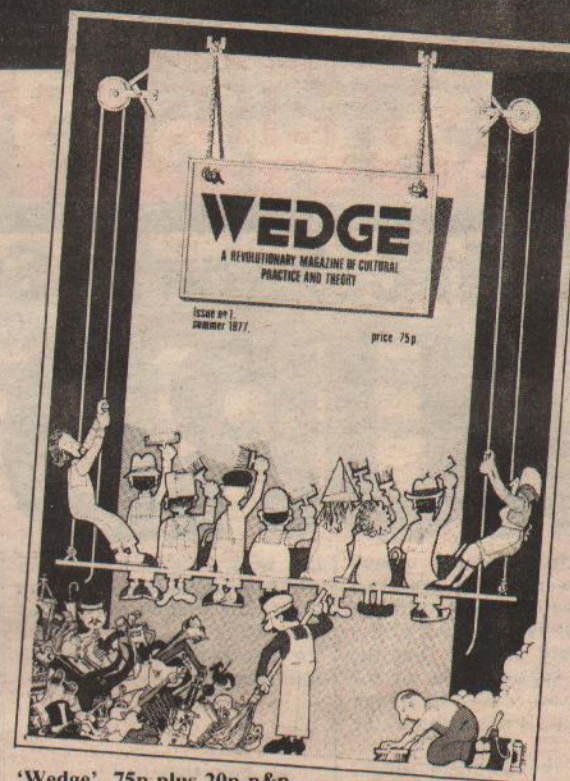
A second example. Six pages of Wedge 3 are devoted to an analysis of Socialist Worker and Socialist Challenge by Kevin McDonnell. (McDonnell, Gardner, and Imrie are all members of the seven person collective which produced the current issue.)

Whatever value we might place on a cultural approach to such analysis, it is clear that it is fraught with difficulties, which again are ignored by the author.

DISTORTED

The article is thus infused and distorted by his own preference for a political project which does not correspond to that of either of the newspapers he examines.

The choice of subjects through which the collective 'looks at the left' is itself



'Wedge', 75p plus 20p p&p, from 44 Eccles Road, London SW11. Or left bookshops.

curious. The absence of any article on the cultural contribution of the ANL and RAR is mystifying; as is the content of a nine-page feature by Martin Thom (another member of the production team) on the use of 'animal language' by anti-fascists.

There is no doubt about the need for a culture magazine on the side of socialism. The sales of Wedge, around 2,000, show that.

Openness is an essential requirement. There are too many difficult questions to be asked about culture; too many avenues to be explored, to suppose that any of us has more than a few tentative answers.

Debate on the relationship between culture and politics would serve a valuable function for the left; as would making available in a popular way the views held by Marxists such as Brecht, Breton, and Trotsky on the subject.

Carnivals, punk, the increasing use of film in struggles, debates on mass media issues, conflicts over the recent Allen Jones exhibition of sexist paintings all indicate an increasing awareness of culture on the left.

But Wedge is in danger of

prematurely closing important areas of discussion.

Although the current issue includes a very informative article by the Newsreel Film collective on their work, other articles simply assert that cultural productions with radical content cannot succeed if they use a conventional 'bourgeois' form of presentation.

This highly contentious view appears to be unanimously held by the collective, and Wedge 3 effectively extends it to political activity.

ELITIST

It is unfortunate, too, that the collective spurns contributions from 'celebrities'. There are far too few socialists who manage to work in the mass media for any of us to close the door on them. It is futile and elitist to exclude them.

We need the journal. It's up to the Wedge collective to recover the 'suggestive way they open up areas of debate', and it is up to us, by discussing with the collective and contributing to the magazine, to help Wedge achieve the important role it can play.



OBITUARY

Neil Williamson - a tragic loss

THE INTERNATIONAL Marxist Group and the socialist movement suffered a major loss on 16 October when Neil Williamson died following a car crash.

Although aged only 26, Neil had been an active socialist for ten years and a leading member of the IMG in Scotland for nine. For three years he was the IMG full-time organiser in Scotland, and had been a member of all its leading committees.

ESTEEM

The esteem in which Neil was held by the whole labour and socialist movement in Scotland was shown at his funeral, which was attended not only by representatives from the IMG and the Fourth International but from every significant section of the labour movement in Scotland.

Members from six Labour Party branches, officers from four trades councils, from the Communist Party, from the women's movement, and from branches of almost all the major trade unions in Scotland made up the greater part of the more than 250 people who attended the funeral.

Janey Buchan, the Labour Party chairperson in Scotland,

was there in an official capacity, as was the President of the Scottish National Union of Students. Also there were well-known socialist writers in Scotland such as Louis Sinclair, the bibliographer of Trotsky, and Hillel Ticktin and Michael Cox from the journal Critique.

This only reflected Neil's extraordinary range of activities. He was well known for his writing on a range of socialist issues. In particular he had consciously set himself the task of producing an analysis of the new prominence of the national question in Scotland.

At the time of his death he was just completing, with another comrade, a book on this question. Its manuscript, even before publication, had already established Neil as one of the major theoreticians on the national question in Scotland — and its publication will confirm it.

ACTIVIST

But Neil's impact came from the fact that he was not merely a writer but a total revolutionary activist. His first involvement

in politics was at the age of 16 in his native Denny, where he was active in organising fellow school students in building the Labour Party Young Socialists.

During his four years at Glasgow University, one of the most right-wing in Britain, Neil led the fight to get it to join the National Union of Students, and in 1973 he ran as candidate of the entire left for the Presidency of the Students Representative Council.

Recently he had played a leading role in the Anti-Nazi League in Edinburgh and helped to organise the Scottish Carnival Against the Nazis.

ABILITY

For the IMG the loss is particularly severe. Neil had played the key role in leading the IMG to understand the national question in Scotland.

He had led the organisation through important experiences such as work in the Scottish Labour Party, and during his three years as full-time organiser he had established a political centre and bookshop for the IMG in Glasgow as a base for the Scottish organisation.

Neil was a strong advocate of unification of revolutionaries, and in recent months was

particularly insistent on the need to develop links with the British Socialist Workers Party.

His combination of theoretical ability with activism is one only too rare in Britain, and one the IMG could not afford to lose.

In his last conversation before his death, Neil had remarked how bright the future seemed for revolutionary socialism. Although tragically he will not now be part of that future, his work and example will strengthen all those fighting to realise it.

A 'Neil Williamson Memorial Fund' has been set up for which donations have already come from a wide range of socialist figures in Scotland.

This will be used to publish a collection of essays on the national question in Neil's memory. Any money left over will be used to launch an appeal to develop a major socialist bookshop in Glasgow — something Neil had always urged.

All donations, which will be acknowledged, should be sent to Neil Williamson Memorial Fund, c/o Scottish Socialist Books, 64 Queen Street, Glasgow. Further details will be published in Socialist Challenge.

Many on the left look at the present situation as a thankful return to the uncluttered days of Tory against Labour, bosses against workers, politics of the period before the rise of the SNP. Everything points to the opposite conclusions. For better or worse the national question is an integral part of the British political crisis. The sooner we get used to it the better.

—Neil Williamson, The Left and Scottish Nationalism, Socialist Challenge, 12 Jan 1978.

Socialist Challenge

Britain looks on as Smith's racists rampage

MURDER AT DAWN

THE 110 unarmed young women were eating breakfast when the invaders arrived, writes RICHARD CARVER.

They hid at once, but the invaders captured one of the women who enticed 80 of her friends out. It was a trap — the 80 died.

When the invaders sought out the other 30, a well-placed hand grenade dealt with them.

This story, which was not plastered over the front pages of the tabloids, took place in Africa.

SAVAGERY

The attackers have a reputation for unbridled savagery among right-thinking people the world over. They are Rhodesian soldiers.

Needless to say the press didn't pull out the stops over

last week's raids on Zambia and Mozambique in the same way as they did when the dead were white — and this despite the fact that the death toll ran into thousands.

PROUD

But even they had to sit up and look when Ian Smith's army started tramping unhindered over large portions of southern Africa.

The Rhodesians themselves are proud of this. They have even released the transcripts of radio conversations between leaders of the bombing raid and air traffic control in Lusaka.

The complicity of the Kaunda regime in Zambia is as evident as the contempt Smith feels for his black neighbours in the north.

Only days after Zambia had

re-opened her border with Rhodesia, the racist state accepted the kind invitation and poured its troops across the Zambesi.

Baffled air traffic controllers had clearly been told to give the Rhodesians free passage. And in case they were a little reticent the racists threatened to bomb shit out of them if they refused.

The pilot of a Kenyan airliner circling Lusaka in an attempt to land was bewildered by the whole bizarre episode.

'Who has priority here anyway?' he asked.

'Well, I think the Rhodesians do at this time,' came the reply.

MASSACRES

The racist regime has every reason to feel proud of itself. In the latest and largest of a long line of similar massacres it has wiped out hundreds or thousands of unarmed refugees.

There may even have been the odd combatant among the victims, but that isn't what Smith was after.

There hasn't been a word of protest from the imperialist capitals — there never is — and instead the Anglo-American diplomatic offensive has been belted back to square one.

Britain and the United States reckon that Smith's 'internal settlement' with some erstwhile African nationalists is inherently unstable and wish to initiate all-party talks involving the leaders of the Patriotic

Front guerillas.

Last week's invasions of Zambia and Mozambique are both a display of bravado to boost failing white morale and a lasting obstacle to talks.

APOPLECTIC

Joshua Nkomo, one of the Patriotic Front leaders, was justifiably apoplectic at the weekend, accusing white journalists of being racist (true) and saying that he would never, ever talk to Ian Smith again.

(This is not to be taken absolutely literally since this is the same Nkomo who had secret talks with Smith not two months ago.)

Hence Smith will now make an effort to present himself as the conciliator (with the help of Fleet Street) and the Patriotic Front will, quite rightly, not dare to have anything to do with him.

CORPSES

The silence from Whitehall has been as predictable as it is deafening. The Foreign Office will use the murders for its own purposes, to demonstrate the need to send British troops in — itself a recipe for further massacres.

The politics behind the murders are thus byzantine in the extreme — but what can be expected from a regime whose diplomacy is built on the corpses of children?



Anniversary of the Fourth International

RALLY

Speakers include:

Ernest Mandel

(United Secretariat Fourth International)

Willie Mae Reid

(leading black woman militant of American SWP)

Stalls, exhibitions, speakers on Zimbabwe, Ireland, Iran, Latin America, international youth struggles.

Friday 24 November, Camden Town Hall, London.

Win subscribers

SUPPORTERS of 'Socialist Challenge' should now be preparing for the paper's next National Sales Day on 18 November, writes distribution manager STEVE BRIGNULL.

Part of the paper's circulation drive must be to win new subscribers, especially those readers who only buy Socialist Challenge when they run across a seller.

Everyone who buys a paper on one of the Sales Days should be asked to consider the special introductory offers.

It's a good time in particular to sell the £5 for 6-month

offers, because this includes a 1979 diary.

The target we have set ourselves for income from subscriptions is an additional £1,000 this quarter for the special offers. This is apart from renewals and the normal level of new subscriptions.

Every supporters' group has been asked to win at least one

new regular reader per week for ten weeks. That's ten special offers per town — except for towns like Birmingham and Manchester, where the number of supporters is significantly larger.

So...we have eight weeks left. Are you doing your bit to help us reach this target?

OUR FUND DRIVE

THE LAST week has not been a good one for the paper. Our debtors have been knocking at our doors.

For the first time since the summer months under £100 arrived in our offices for the Fund Drive. The £90.75 received makes the total of £237.70 sadly behind our

target.

This means we can't even take up the offer from a comrade to increase the fund drive by £5 for every £100 we get in a week.

We don't want to have to meet our debtors this week with empty hands! So we are asking each and every reader to rally behind the paper and:

*Take a collection for the paper at your place of work, on your campus book stall, or while you are doing a street sale.

*Organise a fund-raising effort — a film show, jumble sale, or Guy Fawkes bonfire party. Camden Socialist Challenge supporters showed the

way last week with a showing of Mick Gold's documentary film on the surrealist movement.

*Buy — and why not sell? — raffle tickets for our Xmas lottery.

We have too many good ideas on how to improve the paper to let finances stand in our way. But they are doing just that.

Our thanks this week to:

Robbie Mahood	£3.50
Non-smokers sponsorship	£3.70
T. J. Gregory	£1
S. White	£1.70
B. Wilson	£3
Pat Fryd (non-smoking sponsorship)	£12.65
Camden SC Group	£30
Roland Sheret (in memory of N. Williamson)	£10
John Thackara	£5
Jan Pollock	£5
Ronnie Held	£5
Margaret Ford	£5
Cash Anonymous	£5.20
TOTAL	£90.75



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SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Domestic: 6 months, £5; 12 months, £10
Abroad: Airmail, £16.50. Surface, £10 per annum.

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Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'. Complete and return to:

Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.