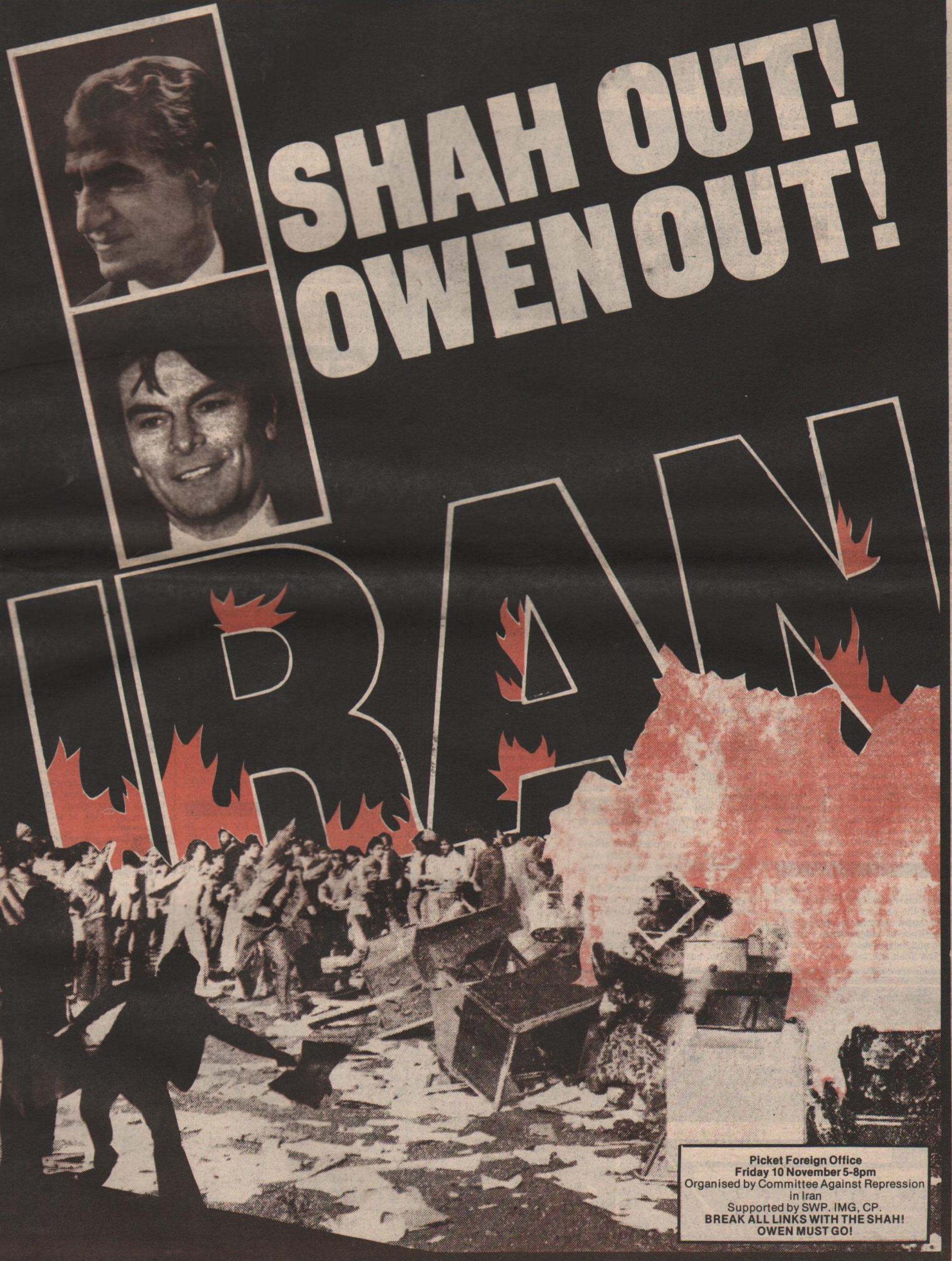


Socialist Challenge



Picket Foreign Office
Friday 10 November 5-8pm
Organised by Committee Against Repression
in Iran
Supported by SWP, IMG, CP.
**BREAK ALL LINKS WITH THE SHAH!
OWEN MUST GO!**

EDITORIAL

Editorial statement on Iran

EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

A YEAR ago police attacked a demonstration of several thousand students in the Iranian capital of Tehran. It hardly merited more than a few column inches — the usual space awarded to that slightly obscure central Asian country.

This week the British press is freely speculating on which country the Shah will retire to, so shaky is his rule.

In the past year police repression has set in motion a rising cycle of resistance, centred first on the religious cities and intellectual opposition, now on the industrial working class.

Now many workers are on strike for openly political ends. Some of the longest-standing political prisoners have been released and the Shah does not dare resort to the repression which greeted the mass movement in September.

The fall of the government at the weekend was the direct result of mass action. For once the appointment of a military government was less a signal for further repression than an admission of weakness on the part of the dictator. He simply could not find a politician to form another administration.

The life expectancy of an Iranian government is becoming rather less than a Tommy in the trenches. The professional politicians are looking to their careers under a future republican government — and the way these self-seekers bend is always a sign of which way the wind is blowing.

Among the masses themselves things are changing at an incredible rate. For example, against all Islamic tradition, women are playing a more and more active part in politics.

This is even true among the religious opposition. Reporters who have visited Ayatollah Khomeini in France have remarked on the number of unveiled women playing an active part in political discussion in his household.

The working class was missing from the struggles in Iran for many months. That has been set right. Industrial workers have moved swiftly from wage struggles to extensive political demands which can only mean the end of the regime.

The significance of all this is not simply that the end of the Shah is on the immediate agenda. Also (and here Dr Death is right for once) any provisional capitalist government is bound to be inherently unstable.

Even the most far-reaching bourgeois democracy is unlikely to satisfy the needs of the masses, who have spent months increasing their experience of independent organisation and independent political action.

The Shah will fall because he was



pushed, not because of any vague death wish. In other words, what exists in Iran today is an insurrectionary situation in which there is the possibility of the masses developing their own organisations of workers power — not simply to get rid of their present ruler, but to seize their own destiny once and for all.

None of this is certain of course. The only thing we can predict with scientific accuracy is that everything is possible!

One major obstacle still stands between the masses and power: an enormous armoury of repression furnished and maintained by imperialism.

Iran has received 40 per cent of US arms exports since 1973. Although a treaty with the Soviet Union prevents the establishment of US bases on Iranian soil, there are 43,000 US personnel working as 'advisers' with the Iranian armed forces — some of whom have been deployed in combat zones.

The Shah's regime is the world's biggest buyer of British arms. The tanks which are rolled out to greet demonstrators are British Chieftains (of which Iran has more than the British army) and Tehran recently bought a massive consignment of British anti-riot weapons.

For a long time the Shah has been a pivot of stability in central Asia. Iran's military strength provides the West with a guarantee that Middle East oil won't fall into the wrong hands and polices a whole sub-continent from the Himalayas, to the Gulf, to the Caucasus.

Iran's own oil supplies have always arrived with greater regularity than those of its more highly strung neighbours. In accordance with time-honoured principles the Shah is prepared to sell to anyone with the money to spare; be they South Africa, Israel or whoever.

If Iranian stability is militarily and economically vital to imperialism, Iran also has an importance as a

'model' of development — an indication that third world countries can develop if they are prepared to buy high technology from the West and throw political caution to the winds.

But there is another side to this coin. If the Shah goes, imperialist interests in the whole of central Asia are put on the line. Afghanistan has recently had a left-wing coup, Pakistan is on the verge of collapse and the states to the west of Iran are chronically unstable.

The Iranian people themselves understand this imperialist concern for Iran's future. In particular they see perfectly Britain's role in shoring up the dictatorship — better than does the British left and labour movement.

The burning of the British embassy and other British buildings in Tehran this week was not an accidental act of vandalism but a calculated two fingers to the Shah's most enthusiastic backer.

In the orgy of support for the Shah among the well-placed and well-heeled, the role of Foreign Secretary Owen almost defies description.

In 18 months in office Dr Death has a record which must be the secret envy of the Ghengis Khans of the Tory backbenches. Troops into Belize, troops into Bermuda, a British general proposed to run Zimbabwe — and now expressions of affection for the Shah which make the Sadat-Begin mutual congratulation sessions look positively stand-offish.

And all the while, as he jets around the world from dictator to dictator, he gives pious statements and cosy interviews on the virtues of 'Christian Socialism', the centrality of human rights in politics, and the necessity of fulfilling our loyalties.

This oily individual goes so far that he even outdoes the Shah in explaining away mass murder in the polite tones of the salon and debating chamber. The Shah has at least admitted that there have been 'mistakes', 'corrup-

tion', perhaps even a teensy bit of 'cruelty' — which makes Owen's sustained apologies of the past months look a little foolish.

But it is not just the capitalist West which has come to the Shah's rescue. Peking's support for the most reactionary cliques of killers and torturers has become well-known, justified as it is by the claim that the Soviet Union is the more dangerous of the 'superpowers'. True to form Hua Kuo-feng has done the Shah loyal service.

Less well-known is Soviet concern for the stability of the Iranian regime. Brezhnev's little-publicised telegram of congratulation to the Shah on his 59th birthday is a token of Soviet interest in the central Asian status quo.

Daily Telegraph leader writers may live in a fantasy world where every rum doing is financed by Moscow gold. Sadly perhaps, the Iranian workers live in a real world where they have received not an ounce of gold, nor any other support.

Soviet reticence in Asia is motivated, as in Europe, by fear of the awesome consequences of a genuine socialist revolution on a Soviet working class educated to believe that socialism equals bureaucratic monopoly. Socialism on the borders of the USSR could mean curtains for the Kremlin.

So it is natural that capitalists and bureaucrats should line up — with varying degrees of enthusiasm — behind the Shah.

But equally it should go without saying that the place of the working people of the world is alongside the struggles of the Iranian masses. In the first place that means opposition to their own government's support for the Shah.

If, as we have argued, the main thing standing between the Iranian people and revolution is the Western-backed machinery of repression, then it follows that international solidarity could play the crucial role in deciding what happens in Iran.

This solidarity must be based on the assumption that it is the Iranian workers and peasants who must make their own revolution.

There is a model for such an international solidarity movement. The relentless wave of support for the Vietnamese revolution in the imperialist countries was a central reason for the defeat of US imperialism.

Immediately we must fight for action to demand an end to all trade, military and diplomatic links with Tehran. That campaign should be built both on the streets and within the



GHOLAM AZHARI, chief of staff of Iran's armed forces, and now the country's prime minister.

factories and workplaces. As the Vietnam campaign of the 1960s showed, these two type of activities are not alternatives but complement each other.

Another immediate task is action for the release of the remaining political prisoners. Adoption of prisoners by labour movement bodies is a good way of drawing attention to the reality of Iran as opposed to the anodyne nonsense issuing from Whitehall.

The campaign to kick out SAVAK and stop Iranian embassy spying must be developed, particularly in the colleges. There are thousands of Iranian students in British whose political activity is curtailed by fear of SAVAK, the Iranian secret police. Joint Iranian and British student activity can drive out the Shah's torturers.

We must also take up the role of the Labour government and of Owen in particular. Unusually, Owen's brazen defence of the Shah has caused quite a stir in the Labour Party. The secretary of Croydon CLP has resigned from the party after 20 years. And when Owen addressed a Cambridge Fabian Society meeting he was hit by a sack of flour — thrown by the secretary of the society!

This sort of activity (which should certainly not be discouraged) is nevertheless not enough. Opposition to Owen and the government, both inside and outside the Labour Party, needs to be organised.

A good focus would be meetings where Owen or other prominent Labour leaders are speaking. Owen must be hounded the length and breadth of the country. The Shah's poodle must not be given a month's peace.

Britain is the major backer of the Shah. This means that our responsibility for the course of the Iranian revolution could hardly be greater.

This is not 'yet another' international campaign. It is an issue of central importance facing the international working class.

If the Iranian revolution expires before the bayonets and tanks of British imperialism, those who survive will look at us and hold us responsible.

We cannot guarantee anything that happens in Iran, but we should not have the awful responsibility of having failed to do what was possible.

Let us repeat: the repression inflicted upon them has dispelled the fear of the Iranian masses. They have nothing to lose and a world to gain. Everything is possible.

Socialist Challenge Editorial Board

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.

OUR POLICIES 2

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.

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.

Ford mass meetings

A resounding No to the offer

FOR THE FIRST time in seven weeks, Ford workers have had the chance to discuss and decide on the future of their strike.

With the last vote coming in from the Swansea mass meeting on Sunday, where only 32 out of the 1,500 strikers voted to accept the company's 'final offer', the bosses have received an overwhelming thumbs down, writes MICK DRAKE.

Two things were decisive in achieving this vote: the unanimous opposition of the trade union side of the National Joint Negotiating Committee, and Ford's shopping list of penalty clauses on the proposed attendance allowance.

As one Dagenham worker told me after the Friday mass meeting: 'The only way we'd ever get that allowance is by living in the factory.'

But the feeling of many Ford workers as they left the mass meetings last week must have been - just what have they voted for, and what's happened to the full claim?

The issues were particularly murky at those plants where the union officials allowed no rank and file speakers.

Despite a vote of between two and three to one to reject the offer at Dagenham, for example, bureaucratic conduct of the mass meeting left those workers who had voted to accept feeling cheated, while militants who want to fight for the full claim had no chance to counter the demagoguery of the platform.

REACTIONS

On the next page we publish extracts from the speech made by Ron Todd, chairperson of the trade union side, and the reactions of some of the strikers. Todd and AUEW official Les Choulerton were the only speakers at the Dagenham meeting.

Predictably, the press and television have latched on to this meeting to launch a campaign for secret ballots, although no one has claimed that the vote was really in favour of acceptance.

Nevertheless, the impression has been given that the vote was rigged.

There is no great concern for workers' democracy in the press campaign. As speakers at the Langley mass meeting pointed out, there was no call for secret ballots last year when Ford workers turned down their negotiators' recommendation.

The media has consistently misrepresented the offer as being worth 16 per cent in the hope of swaying the vote. As Brian Phillips, convenor of the Swansea plant, explained: 'The offer isn't worth 16 per cent, it's 11 per cent plus 5 per cent with strings.'

STRINGS

'Even if they drop the strings we're not interested. We'll accept £20 on the pay and one hour off the day.'

Asked about secret ballots, Phillips added: 'Secret ballots are a load of bullshit. Our members are perfectly capable of coming to the meetings, having a discussion and voting as they choose.'

Unfortunately, the issues were not posed in such a clear-cut way at Dagenham, where nearly half of Ford's 57,000 workers in Britain are employed.

When the vote was taken, chairperson Michael Murphy slipped in that it was to endorse the negotiators' position in rejecting the company offer and demanding that the attendance allowance money be incorporated into the basic rate. A far cry from the original claim.

At Leamington, the convenor first of all instructed workers to take no notice of the leaflet put out by the Ford Workers Group, and then proceeded to set out the case against Ford's offer - using the arguments in the leaflet!



RON TODD — allowed no rank and file speakers at Dagenham

But the shop stewards there did not make a clear recommendation to reject the offer, and it was narrowly accepted. Many of the Leamington workers complained later that they had not known what the union leadership had recommended.

In the past, even some militants have been wary of the call for regular mass meetings in case all they got was 'more Leamingtons'.

Last week's votes show that not only is this manipulative attitude towards the democratic running of strikes wrong in principle, but it is ineffective

in practice. It was at plants like Langley, where workers who wanted to accept were allowed their say, and their arguments replied to, that there was the most emphatic rejection of the company offer.

The fight must now be for more mass meetings, democratically run and with every viewpoint aired.

This would strengthen the fight for the full claim and answer the phoney campaign for 'democracy' being waged by the media on the theme of secret ballots.



Wrong number

THE CURRENT issue of the London magazine Time Out carries an appeal for support for Haydee Palma Donoso, a Chilean militant who disappeared in the hands of the junta. The only thing is that while there are 2,500 such prisoners, Haydee is no longer one of them.

She was found heavily drugged on the Chile-Peru border last March, following an international campaign for her release. She now lives in Cuba. So why the appeal?

Time Out says it received an official-looking press release from the Chile Committee for Human Rights. The committee says it's a fake, and an obvious attempt to discredit the campaign, perpetrated quite possibly by one of the Spanish-speaking junta lovers who make obscene phone calls to the committee's office.

It is inconceivable that this has anything to do with the Chilean embassy. Readers who care to confirm this should note the embassy number, 01-580 6392. A list of the real prisoners can be obtained from the committee at 1 Cambridge Terrace, London N1.

Risky business

ENTHUSIASTS of democratic rights may feel that these haven't been doing too well under the regime of James Callaghan, what with Agee-Hosenball, ABC, Astrid Proll, the Suppression of Terrorism Act, etc ad nauseum.

In fact, they may be drawn to the conclusion that our very own democratically elected Labour Government has been extending the use of the state's powers, and that the farrish right would be moderately pleased.

Forget it. Electing governments to run capitalism is a very risky business these days. The subject of this year's Ross McWhirter Memorial Essay Competition - prize £2,000 - is: 'Are limits on the power of democratically elected governments necessary to safeguard the freedom and responsibility of the individual.'

Strangely, Augusto Pinochet of Chile and a string of similar usurpers have not been included among the judges.

Intelligence (sic)

THE ALL-POWERFUL, super-technological British war machine in the North of Ireland is showing signs of strain. Two weeks ago the RUC called at the Gibson home in Belfast's Andersonstown. The officer inquired after Andy Gibson junior, and told Andy's mother:

'I have a warrant for his arrest for failing to turn up for jury service. He's got enough reminders, now he will have to face the consequences.'

When the RUC man demanded to know where he was, the woman politely explained: 'Certainly, if you go up the MI and take the Blaris turn off at Hillsborough you will find him about a mile down the lane. Ask the Governor to take you to Cage 11.'

Andy Gibson is serving 16 years in Long Kesh.

But the red faces in the RUC after this little incident are nothing compared to what happened last week, when a

letter arrived at John Pickering's Belfast home informing him he had been fined £5 for failing to answer a summons for jury service.

John had been asked to sit on a jury on 29 September. Unfortunately at the time he, too, was in Long Kesh, and has been since August 1976.

Apparently these marvellous examples of the British intelligence system are due to the computers used by the RUC/Army, crammed with half a million names. Which reminds NfN of a question: 'Why are anti-Irish jokes so stupid?'

So that the British can understand them.

A funny thing happened...

IT WAS difficult for photographers to find a vantage point to take pictures of the Ford mass meeting at Dagenham on Friday. Our photographer, Jonathan Silberman, waited by a conveniently sited garage roof for a convenient time to climb up.

He gained permission from the owner of the garage. But he was approached by a cop. This conversation ensued:

'If you get up there, I'll arrest you for behaviour likely to cause damage to yourself. Meanwhile, you're looking suspicious, so move on.'

'Suspicious of what?'
'Well, you're wearing tight trousers and there are children playing here. You look suspiciously like your're intending sexual play with children.'

'What's your number? our photographer demanded.'

'K384. What's your name and address?'

Silberman gave the details, and produced his NUJ press card for identification. The cop asked:

'What's your date of birth?'

'I don't have to stand here answering questions.'

'Right, I'm arresting you on suspicion of intending sexual activity with children. It won't stick. But I can take you down the station for a few hours and then you won't get your photograph, will you? Alternatively you could give me your date of birth.'

Silberman gave PC K384 this information and walked off after being warned: 'If I see you back around here you know what the consequences will be.'

The NUJ is being notified about the incident, and an official complaint made to the police.

Twinkle, twinkle

VICTOR MATTHEWS' new Daily Star - 'It will support anyone who supports capitalism. That means the Tories' - had an unscheduled send off when the printing presses rolled out the first instalment of full-page nudes and endless titillation last week.

Feminists decorated the paper's Manchester offices with slogans on the theme of: 'This is offensive to women.'

Short stories

Readers are invited to submit short stories for this year's Short Story Competition. Maximum length of stories should be 3,500 words.

They should arrive at our office by 24 November. The judges will be: Mervyn Jones, Emma Tennant, and Francis Mulhern.



THE vote to reject the offer at Dagenham

Photo: BOB MURPHY (Socialist Challenge)

Photo: BOB MURPHY (Socialist Challenge)

HOME NEWS

Ford strike, week 8

Stick out for the full claim!

THE CLAIM that brought about the Ford strike was scarcely mentioned by the union officials at the mass meetings which rejected the company's 'final offer' a few days ago.

When the vote was put at Dagenham, for example, the strikers were called on to reject the offer on the basis of opposing the penalty clauses and seeking to ensure that the (16½ per cent) increase in wages was incorporated into basic rates.

The official, Mick Murphy of the Transport Union, said nothing about the original claim, which includes the demand for a £20 rise and a five-hour reduction in the working week.

ROB McCRAE, a press shop worker at the Dagenham plant, looks at the importance of these two demands and argues that the national conference of Ford shop stewards which originally formulated the claim should be recalled to ensure they're not dropped.

£20 on the pay!

ALONG WITH everyone else, Ford workers have suffered the effects of three years of incomes policy under the Labour Government.

Wage increases have fallen more than 20 per cent behind price increases, which have doubled since Labour was elected in February 1974.

An increase of £20, which is what our claim demands, would almost restore the purchasing power of our gross pay to what it was in October 1974.

Even taking into account the Government's tax cuts, a £20 rise would still leave a shortfall of 4 per cent in real take home pay over the same period.

The figures for the majority B-grade workers tell their own story. Even if the penalty clauses and attendance allowance are discounted, the new offer would leave Ford workers well behind the rising cost of

living.

The figures are these. On day shift, the present basic wage before stoppages is £68. The company's offer is an additional £6.52, with £3.48 on top with their weekly attendance supplement. That makes a total new wage of £78 — £10 short of our claim.

Under the claim our wage would be £88, which is what we need to protect our living standards.

It isn't only Ford workers who would suffer if we fail to meet our target. It's no coincidence that all the major groups of workers with wage claims pending are demanding increases of a comparable amount.

Public sector manual workers, for instance, are demanding £17 to bring their minimum up to £60. A compromise on the principles involved in drafting the Ford workers' claim would weaken the case of others too.

A very important principle is the unifying character of the Ford claim for £20. In the past, we've always had a collection of sectional demands as a way of dressing up a moderate pay demand.

Even in this dispute, the idea of a special allowance for line-workers has been pushed by Ron Todd, the chief negotiator, as a way of selling something short of the £20.

The best answer to this in Ford, as in other places, is to fight for unifying demands like the across-the-board £20 which will benefit everyone.

Five hours off the day!

FORD HAS MADE a great deal of the high absentee rates in its plants. The 'attendance allowance' is designed to eliminate this.

But the main cause of absenteeism is the fact that work conditions are so unpleasant.

It's no joke when the line speed is so high. The engine plant at Dagenham produces 133 engines an hour — the equivalent of one engine every 27 seconds.

Shiftwork, the stench in the factory, the boring nature of

the work, the terrible din — all these contribute to so-called 'absenteeism', and to the huge turn-over of workers at Ford.

That's one of the reasons why a reduction in the working week is so important. To improve the quality of life.

Everyday we're told what a wonderful system capitalism is; how we've made such progress. But at Ford, as in many other factories, we only achieved the 40-hour week at the start of the '60s, and we've had no reduction since then.

Some progress!

The company's employee relations director, Paul Roots, has been quoted as saying that negotiations could continue until Xmas and they still wouldn't concede the reduction in hours.

As Ron Todd said at the Dagenham mass meeting, everything we've ever had from Ford, we've had to fight for. And a reduction in hours will be no exception.

ROUGE

With the introduction of new technology, the case for a shorter working week is even more important. We've only got to look at what happened in the United States to see that automation means job loss.

At the River Rouge plant in Detroit, for example, there were 102,800 workers in 1929. By 1970, there were less than

35,000.

The only way to save jobs is to fight for work-sharing with

no loss of pay. The 35-hour week would be a real step along this road.

Absent without leave

IF FORD workers had accepted the company's attendance allowance and the penalty clauses attached to this, what would it have meant for us?

Principally, that a large part of any new cash offer is not guaranteed to the workers at all.

It would be well nigh impossible for many workers to avoid getting caught up in the maze of conditions laid down by the geniuses in Ford management.

This is what they told us in a letter to all employees:

An employee will not qualify for the supplement in a week in which he (sic) has been:

* On annual vacation for which qualification by service has not been earned.

* Involved in a strike or

stoppage of work whether official or unofficial.

* Taken off pay either individually or as a member of a group.

* Suspended for disciplinary purposes.

* Absent without permission.

* Absent with permission, for example, on personal business or extended unpaid leave.

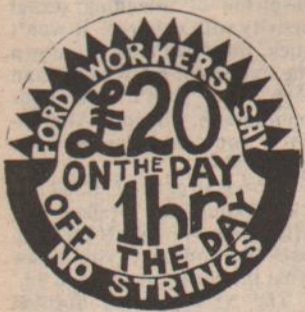
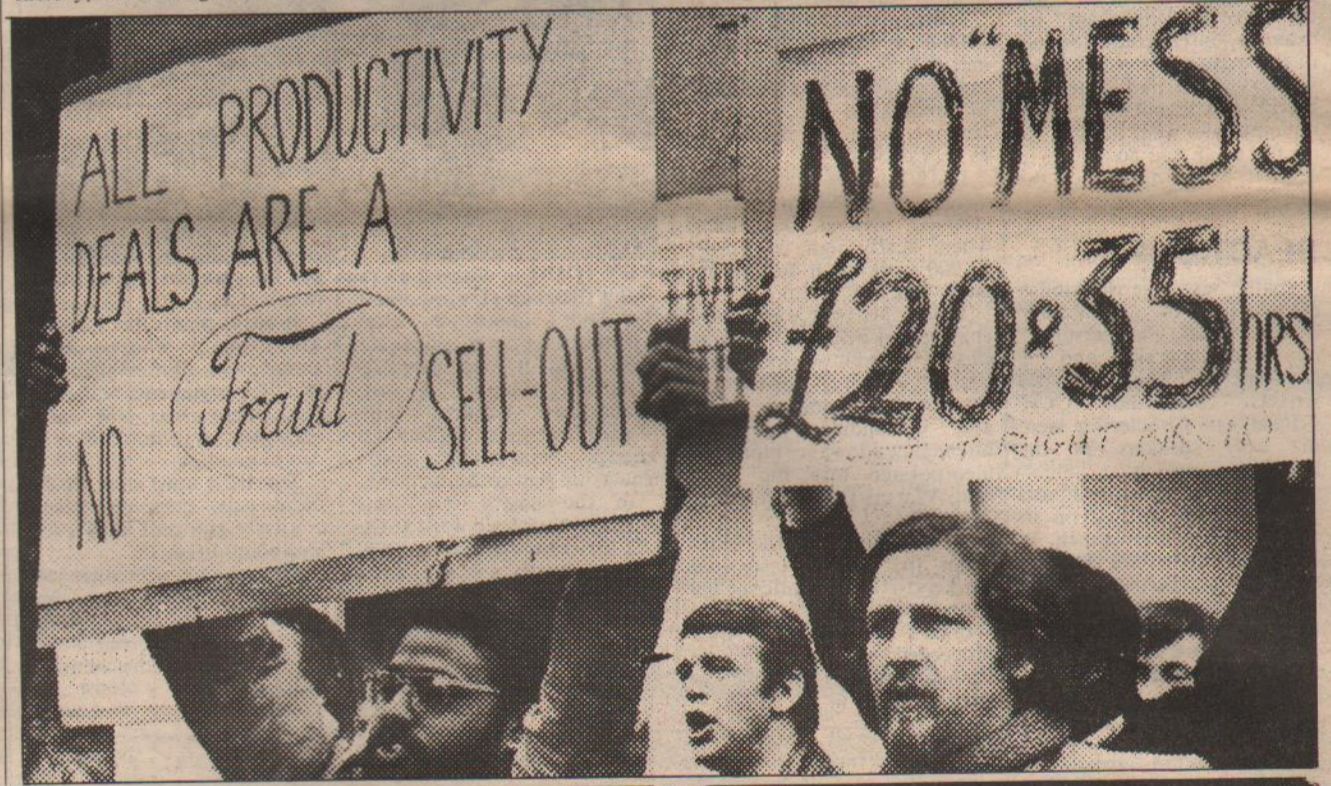
* Late on more than one occasion, or on one occasion in excess of five minutes.

* Disqualified from payment for a public holiday.

* Laid-off where this results directly or indirectly from disruptive action within any of the company's plants or establishments.

As you can see, the proposed allowance simply adds £3.48 — the amount of the supplement — to what we directly lose in wages for hours not worked.

It would prove a mighty weapon in the hands of management to push through their productivity drives.



What Ron Todd said

THE MAIN speech to the Ford strikers in Dagenham at Friday's mass meeting was made by chief negotiator Ron Todd. Here are extracts from his speech.

So we are talking to a company which is highly profitable, a company which over three years has amassed a profit of £700 million, and we said now is the time for the company to begin to redistribute some of that profit to the people who created that profit — the Ford workers ...

The media still present the issue as a confrontation with

the Government. Well, let's get one thing clear: there is no way we have used any of you in a political fight.

We are fighting the company on the basis of their success, on the basis that we believe now is the time for Ford workers to have an improvement on their basic wage ...

Everything you have ever had from Ford you have fought for. They never gave it to you.

Every advantage we've had from Ford from the days when I was a shop steward in the Walthamstow plant has been wrung from the company ...

We reached the position that

the company had made an offer of nine and a half per cent, plus the attendance supplement.

Despite our insistence, they are now offering on the basic

rate less than they offered last year. Ford profits are going one way, and the offers to you are going the other.

WHAT NEXT IN THE UNIONS?

One-day trade union conference organised by Socialist Challenge supporters in Yorkshire to discuss the problems of organising the fightback.

- ★ The lessons of Rank & File and the Broad Left
- ★ The way forward for socialists in the unions

Saturday 11 November. Starts 10.30 am

Swarthmore Centre, 4 Woodhouse Square, Leeds 3
Child care and accommodation available — contact Leeds 629631 first

Acting internationally

FORD, the American owned multi-national, attempts to take every conceivable advantage offered to giant firms by operating on a world-wide basis.

The capitalists think internationally, which is why it's vital that workers do likewise, as has begun to happen in the present strike.

The following letter from members of the Ford Spain Works Committee was sent to the Ford Workers Group in London on 28 October.

'To Ford workers in Britain: The effects of your strike begin to be felt at Ford Spain.

'We have been offered by the company's direction to get two days off next week due to a shortage of some of the

components needed to build the Fiesta — carburettors mainly.

'The production of these two days should be recuperated on a compulsory overtime basis, done by all the workers once the situation was normal again.

'We have been discussing this offer at the Ford Spain Works Committee and have decided not to accept it.

'We have approved a resolution explaining that this is a Fords problem and so we are not going to do anything against the struggle of British workers.

'If the factory has to be laid off we want to be paid as normal, but we won't call for overtime to recuperate production.'

Leyland clash looms

A pay offer with ropes attached

JOHNNY HAINE in Cowley and PAT HICKEY in Birmingham report on the Leyland pay claim and the response from management and the unions.

At a mass meeting of workers at Leyland's Longbridge factory last Friday, Derek Robinson, chairperson of Leyland stewards, chose his targets carefully.

His attitude to the company's offer of a five per cent increase was conciliatory. 'We are prepared to be reasonable,' Robinson assured Leyland's management.

HARSH

His harsh words were reserved for those on the left who argued for immediate strike action.

'I get tired of being advised what to do by the lunatic left, the Trots, and their henchmen,' shouted Robinson.

And yet it was the threat of immediate action which finally persuaded Leyland management to make any offer in reply to the unions' 30 per cent claim.

The Cowley plant had threatened strike action if a money offer was not forthcoming, and just before

Cowley's deadline for action ran out last Friday the offer was produced — the staggering sum of £3.65 a week.

It would be incorrect to say

that there are strings attached. There are enormous ropes.

If the workers accept productivity schemes, if they accept job losses of over 20,000, if they accept the parity fraud, and if parity is self-financing, then the workers can have their five per cent increase.

The Cowley negotiating committee's answer to this offer was short and sharp.

Bob Fryer, Transport and General Workers' Union senior steward, described the offer as 'derisory' and called for a joint stewards meeting to consider the next step.

The response of the workers at Leyland's Drew's Lane plant was even more dramatic — an immediate walk-out of the 3,000 workers.

POSTPONED

It was left to Communist Party member Derek Robinson at the Longbridge meeting to try and calm matters down. He successfully persuaded the mass meeting to postpone possible strike action until 1 December.

But it seems unlikely that Leyland's boss Michael Edwardes will respond to Robinson's friendly overtures.

Leyland has already insisted that five per cent is the 'absolute maximum', and being a nationalised industry the company is much more susceptible to pressure from the Government over the five per cent norm than is Ford.

Checklist of anger over pay

NUMBERS TEN and 11 Downing Street must be keeping their radios closely tuned to the industrial news these days, as the storm swells up against the pay policy that the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer have vowed to sustain.

This is the checklist of anger against the 5 per cent.

*A total of 57,000 Ford workers still on strike after overwhelmingly rejecting the penal terms attached to a 16 1/2 per cent pay offer.

*26,000 bakery workers on strike for a 26 per cent rise after turning down a deal, with productivity, worth about 11 per cent.

*26,000 Vauxhall employees will be meeting next week to decide whether to accept an 8 per cent deal.

*3,500 British Leyland workers have walked out of the Drews Lane plant in Birmingham in protest at a 5 per cent offer. The demand is for a £15

rise.

*85,000 farmworkers are asking the Government for 'special treatment' on the basis of their claim for an £80 a week basic wage.

*42,000 gas workers are demanding rises of 20 per cent.

*3,000 British Oxygen employees have been urged by their negotiators to turn down 9 per cent.

*5,000 Scottish lorry drivers — the first of 500,000 engaged in regional negotiations — are seeking an increase of 25 per cent.

*Over one million local authority workers are seeking a 40 per cent increase to lift their basic wage from the present £42.40 to a £60 a week minimum.

*700,000 civil servants have just set up a £1m fighting fund to smash through 5 per cent.

*Over 60,000 members of the furniture and timber trade union, FTAT, have rejected a 5 per cent 'all in' offer as 'derisory'.

Moreover, Edwardes has already made quite clear the direction he wants to see the company go.

Two weeks ago he called a meeting of union officials and convenors in Leyland when he unveiled the company's plans until 1983.

These include closing Senesse in Belgium, Vanden Plas in London, No.8 Foundry in Leeds, and Coventry engines.

Redundancies are also proposed at Cowley and Longbridge, and Edwardes has threatened to close Solihull if

management proposals on shift working are not agreed.

Edwardes' aim is to achieve 'Japanese levels of productivity'.

In this context, Derek Robinson's expectation that if the unions are 'reasonable' Leyland management will be more flexible seems grossly out of touch.

In contrast to Robinson, the unofficial Leyland Stewards Committee for the Annual Review is setting the lead in calling for industrial action now in support of their claim.

LEYLAND CHARTER NATIONAL MEETING. The fight against the Edwardes offensive. September 16th. Digbeth Civic Hall 11.00. Open to all Leyland workers. PRICE: 10p. LEYLAND Charter. The rot has gone far enough! FIGHT BACK! WE BUILD PRINCESS CARS FOR WAGES. FOOD UP! RISES UP! RISES UP! RISES UP! RISES UP!

The rank and file Leyland Charter is calling a meeting open to all Leyland workers in early December. For further information write to: 6 Salisbury Rd., Moseley, Birmingham.

"Of course it's a political fight"



Phil Newton: 'The officials are looking for an easy way out'.

AFTER FRIDAY'S mass meeting at Dagenham, Socialist Challenge spoke to Nick Fox, Phil Newton and shop steward Barry Graham who work in the body plant about the future of the Ford strike.

This was the first mass meeting in seven weeks, why do you think it was called?

Phil: All Ron Todd and the other officials are looking for is an easy way out of the situation they find themselves in. The unions will only pay out for the strike for so long.

They are not asking for anywhere near what we're supposed to be going for, which is £20 and a 35 hour week. I doubt if the 35-hour week has even been talked about.

Nick: All the stuff about sick benefit and so on — I bet they've forgotten that alto-

gether. It's just the money on the basic rate they're interested in now.

Barry: If the attendance allowance is put on the basic rate they'll recommend a return to work.

What do you think the Ford Workers Group should be doing?

Phil: The Group put out a good leaflet on the offer, but that's the trouble — there is very little you can do but leaflet.

Barry: But we went down to the Vauxhall plants to speak. At Liverpool we related our

situation and the feelings on the shop floor to what they were doing, their claim, and their unofficial committees. We got a resounding success.

Unfortunately, we couldn't get a speaker down to the other two plants in time. I'm not saying it would have changed the situation, but their knowing our claim and us knowing theirs helped a lot.

Phil: I agree entirely, but you must look at these things a bit cynically.

PRESSURE

Look at all the work done in the past by the Ford Workers Group on the claim. It can all be blown away in a few minutes by the decisions of a few top officials.

Barry: But don't you think that if the rank and file organise themselves into a proper pressure group they can push for greater democracy inside the unions?

I'm not saying we could do it overnight, but we could gradually build up greater internal democracy inside these things so that the officials are no longer appointed or elected for life but only put in on a year to year basis.

And if they don't do their job properly we can replace them by somebody else.

Do you think the Coventry conference of Ford shop stewards should be recalled?

Phil: The Coventry conference is a chance for the workers who do the work on the floor to mandate the stewards on the claim. But last year they didn't recall the conference.

Barry: This year it was specified

that there should be a recall conference. It hasn't happened because everything has been left in the hands of the NJNC and senior stewards at plant level.

What do you think of Todd's statement that the unions are not using you as a political weapon against the government?

Nick: It must be a political fight. The Government makes pay policy. We won't get anywhere unless other workers are drawn in.

Women workers and wives don't seem to have been involved in the strike.

Barry: The ones from the Riverside plant were down the front this morning singing Henry Ford is in a mess. And I think the wives of Ford workers are behind the strike, because they know what the conditions are.

But the whole way the strikes run, with only stewards on the pickets and so on, means the only information most Ford workers and wives obtain is what they read in the Daily Mirror.

PEOPLE'S FESTIVAL 78

12 hours of culture, politics and fun + children's festival/creche

Sun. 26 Nov., 11am-11pm

Belle Vue, Manchester

Tickets £2 — reduced for non-earners

Details: 28 Hathersage Road, Manchester 13 (061-224 5378)

Organised by Manchester Area CPG



Barry Graham: 'Ford wives are behind the strike'.

TWO IN THE EYE. Wear An Anti-Racist Badge to Work. Fight Racism badge is black on white. Repeal All Immigration Laws is black letters on white with red star. Both are 15p plus 7p postage, or 11p for bulk orders (over 10) including postage. Cheques payable to Socialist Challenge (Badges), PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. FOR RACISM!

Photo: BOB MURPHY [Socialist Challenge]

Photo: BOB MURPHY [Socialist Challenge]

HOMENEWS

Union leaders' plan

The wage-link scheme the public sector doesn't need

ALTHOUGH the employers have said that any offer they make in response to the claim of the local government manual workers' claim will be within the Government's pay guidelines, negotiations continue. Over what, you might ask. RICH PALSER has been wondering.

It seems that the employers are prepared to consider union proposals for wages in the public sector to be linked to the national average wage.

They are also awaiting the outcome of the talks between the TUC and the Government, which may well result in similar proposals.

While this might seem attractive to many public sector workers, it is a dangerous diversion.

AVERAGE

David Basnett, general secretary of the General and Municipal Workers' Union, has been the brains behind the campaign to get public sector wages related to the average industrial wage.

As early as last December, he argued in the *Sunday Times* for 'permanent review bodies to replace the one-off emergency inquiries'. These would annually 'establish objective

comparisons between public and private sector pay'.

Basnett's basic argument is this. In practice, the public sector always faces an incomes policy — because the employer is the government, which always imposes its policies more rigidly in the public sector than in the private one.

Therefore the public sector always comes off worse.

The unions should recognise this fact, Basnett considers, by maintaining regular discussions with the government over economic policy, and moving towards synchronised pay review dates.

In addition, comparisons should be made with the average industrial wage in order to establish what public sector wage levels should be.

'Dedicated public servants... who had long eschewed the strike weapon have increasingly seen strike action as the only way of resolving their problems', he lamented.

Shortly after writing this, Basnett voted against the TUC supporting the FBU strike.

Will his plan resolve the pay problems of public service workers? In a word, No.

The CPSA, representing lower-paid civil servants, has had a system of 'pay research' for some time.

The civil service comparison is with people doing similar jobs in private industry. Thus civil servants are compared with the wages of clerical grades in private industry, who are often among the lowest paid.

Basnett proposes a similar method of comparison, with special review bodies 'where no direct comparability exists', for workers such as the firefighters, and, of course, the police.

BEHIND

Secondly, these comparisons always leave civil servants an inflation-boosted 12 months behind by the time their increase is implemented.

But most important of all, it means that there is no membership involvement in drawing up the claim; assessing the most important thing to go

for next, and deciding how to prepare the fight for the claim.

The Pay Research Unit meets, comes forward with a figure, and that's where negotiations start. If the recommendation is too low, the membership have not been mobilised ready for a fight, because it is not their claim.

HOPEFUL

It will leave them waiting idly by, hoping that private sector workers can obtain decent increases for them.

Many public sector workers might be encouraged to go for this type of deal, because they feel weak and unable to win through industrial action when it means taking on the government.

In practice, increases have been won no other way. The only year in which manual public sector wages have not fallen behind the public sector — when the gap has narrowed — was that of the 'dirty jobs' strike.

The right to prepare and submit your own claim, and to take industrial action to win it, is the only guarantee of a decent living standard.



NUPE stewards say: Strike now strike together

THE PAY claim submitted by the National Union of Public Employees is now being discussed in branches.

Over 350 members of the Newcastle (Local Authority) branch voted at a meeting on 24 October to reject the five per cent limit.

Two Newcastle shop stewards in the branch, PAUL DAVIDSON and GEOFF RYAN, report.

The Newcastle meeting showed some of the weaknesses of the NUPE claim. The union leadership argues for action in 1979.

They say that by then there will be a united claim involving all NUPE members.

No one can disagree with such unity. It would be stupid to have manual workers putting

in their claim one month, nurses the next, and another section of the membership at a later date.

But why not bring the claims forward? If NUPE members were fighting now, not only would we be united with the union, we would also be fighting alongside others — such as Ford.

The NUPE leaders are proposing a series of selective strike actions. If we can bring the employers to heel by only bringing out a small section of the membership, that is fine.

However, we still need to involve all the membership in the campaign. Newcastle branch has agreed to levy all its members. That's fine, but to win we need to have the support of other workers.

At the very least this means organising meetings at factories, docks, shipyards and so on.

NUPE members need to organise now for action. In Newcastle the organisation of

strike action has been left to full-timers. The membership should control the strike.

We need to set up action committees to take responsibility for the dispute.

We need to draw up a list of members from all sections who may not be called out on strike, but who can talk to other workers about the appalling wages and conditions most NUPE members suffer.

If such measures are followed we believe our members can aid both themselves and other workers — by smashing the five per cent.

WHAT'S LEFT

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

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.

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.

SPEAKING TOUR by Claude Gabriel, a leader of the Fourth International Africa Commission and a regular contributor to *Intercontinental Press* and *Inprecor*. The meetings will be on the theme of current revolutionary developments in Africa.

Thursday 9 November: BIRMINGHAM, University of Birmingham Student Union, 1.00pm.

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. 01-2401056.

FRANTZ FANON. Soweto and American Black Thought by Lou Turner and John Alan, 60p (inc p&p). Also 'Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis' by Raya Dunayevskaya, £1. Both from News & Letters Publications, Box NL, Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N1.

BLACK SOCIALIST Alliance desperately needs money. Here to stay, here to fight social. Afro/Asian food, bar, disco etc. Adm 75p (50p wageless). Fri 10 Nov 8pm, Institute of Education SU, Bedford Way, London WC1. All welcome.

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.

DESIGNER required to work for *Socialist Challenge*/FI Litho. Must be politically committed. Knowledge of printing and production techniques, especially platemaking, an advantage. Apply in writing to FI Litho, 328/9 Upper St, London N1 or ring 01-359 8288.

POLITICAL status for Irish political prisoners — public meeting. Thurs 16 Nov, 8pm, Manchester Town Hall, Basement Theatre. Speakers: Joan Maynard MP, and speakers from the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression and the United Troops Out Movement.

CHILE 73-78: a conference on Sat 25 Nov at the Language School, 21 Star St, London W2. 1-5pm. Sponsors include: Arthur Latham MP, AUEW North London district, West Middlesex CP, West London IMG. A social with music, food and drink will follow. Organised by West London Chile Solidarity Campaign. Credentials from: The Secretary, 14 Hounslow Gardens, Hounslow, Middx.

RACISM — How to fight it. Socialist Action public forum. Wed 14 Nov 8.30pm Durning Library, 167 Kennington Lane, London SE11. All welcome.

SOCIALIST PRESS rally! film. 1st anniversary of weekly *Socialist Press*. Film: Strike (dir. Eisenstein). Sun 19 Nov. New Ambassadors Hotel, Upper Woburn Place, (Euston tube). 3pm. **Y FANER GOCH**—Wales' Socialist newspaper. First issue out now, 20p including postage. Subscriptions: £1 for six issues. From 21 Howard Gardens; Roath, Cardiff.

BASS guitarist/vocalist wanted for established left-wing rock band. Tel: 01-267 6722 (day), 01-247 1269 (evening).

LONDON Revolutionary Communist Group public meeting: POW status for Irish prisoners. Speakers: Jacqueline Kaye (PAC), Jim Reilly (Provisional Sinn Fein), Terry Marlowe (RCG). Tues 14 Nov 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

NORTH HACKNEY Anti Nazi League film festival begins on Fri 10 Nov 7.30pm Stamford Hill Library with *World in Action* film on the NF and *State of Siege*. Adm: 60p (30p unwaged).

ANTI-ZIONIST Seminar: British Anti-Zionist Organisation and the struggle against racist Zionism. Sat 25 Nov, 11am, Manchester. Details: G Mitchell, 90 John St, Glasgow G1.

EDINBURGH Revolutionary Communist Group public meeting. Support Irish POWs! Hands off Ireland! Support 26 Nov PAC demo! Trades Council, Picardy Place. Wed 8 Nov 7.30pm.

ASTRID PROLL Benefit with the Passions, Clapperclaw and the Nips. Tues 14 Nov, Acklam Hall, Acklam Rd, London W11 (off Portobello Rd). Tickets: in advance £1.25, on door £1.50. 8-12pm late bar.

COMRADE from an African country (political refugee) desperately needs own room to rent in London. Contact: Richard Carver at SC, 01-359 8180 (office hours and Sundays) or Jon 01-986 4045 (evenings).

SOCIALIST musicians/vocalists needed to form rock group in South London. Tel: 01-693 6796 — Paul.

HOME Soldier Home — film. Wed 15 Nov 2.30pm. SSA, South Bank Polytechnic, London Rd site, Room 7, Elephant and Castle, London.

CUBA '78. Middlesex Poly Broad Left presents an international evening to celebrate the World Youth Festival of youth and students. Slide and film show of festival. Guests: Arthur Scargill, Sean Hosen and Cuban Embassy. Including 'El Pueblo' Chilean Group, 'Ekon', Akel Cypriot dance group. International food and drink. 50p in advance, 75p at door. Enfield site, Queensway, Ponders End. Tube: Oakwood and Turnpike Lane. Overground: Southbury station. Tuesday 9 Nov 7pm.

CONFERENCE ON Nuclear Energy and the Trade Unions, Ruskin College, Oxford, 25 November, 10.00am. Registration £1 in advance or £1.50 on the day. Details from SERA, 9 Poland St, London W1.

INTERNATIONAL Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland. Rally. Speakers: Brendan Gallagher, father of Willie Gallagher, & Tribunal representative, NUFTO Hall, Jockeys Field (off Theobald's Rd, Holborn tube). Fri 10 Nov., 7.30pm.

ALL OUT ON 26 NOVEMBER:

REVOLUTIONARY Communist Group public meetings in support of Prisoners Aid Committee demonstration in London on 26 November. Meetings this month at 7.30 unless indicated: 9th, Huddersfield. Friendly and Trades Club, northumberland st. 10th, Manchester, Basement Theatre, Town Hall Extension, Albert Sq., with PAC speaker. 13th Newport, Civic Centre, with PAC speaker. 14th, London, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., WC1, with PAC speaker and Provisional Sinn Fein speakers. 15th, 1.30pm., Bristol, Students Union, Bristol University. 17th, 6.30pm, Coventry, Pugwash Lounge, Union Building, Warwick University. 23rd, Bristol, Shepherds Hall, Old Market, with PAC speaker.

Other public rallies organised by RCG and other organisations in PAC mobilising committees with PAC speaker:

6th, Dundee, details advertised separately. 9th, 7.30pm, Glasgow, Pearce Institute. 15th, 7.30pm, Sheffield, Sheffield Polytechnic, Room 5113, Five-Storey Block, Pond St. 20th, Middlesbrough, details advertised separately.

Further meetings being arranged. Details to be advertised separately. PAC march from Hyde Park, Speakers Corner, 2.30pm, to Clerkenwell Green. Solidarity with Irish POWs!

Police attack women's march

WOMEN who gathered in Soho on Halloween (31 October) to 'reclaim the night' for women intimidated off the streets were met with even greater violence.

While the police broke up the women's demonstration by attacking them with truncheons, another woman on a nearby street was brutally beaten.

Women clearly cannot rely on the cops to protect them from street violence, as JUDE WOODWARD explains.

Halloween was chosen because it had been named as an international day of action by women against rape, and because witches are a potent symbol of women's power.

Soho was the target because of the large number of porn shops and the high level of harassment of women in the area.

Pornography — in showing women entirely as sexual objects — encourages men to see women as their property, available to them whenever and however they want.

INSULTING

In fact the violence started at the first porn shop that the women came to.

The new Swedish Cinema in Brewer Street, displaying its typically insulting and degrading images of women, enraged the demonstrators. They halted to deface the pictures with stickers and slogans.

One of the staff then rushed out with a stool which he brought down over a woman's head. She crumpled bleeding to the ground.

From then on the violence escalated. The same man threatened the women with a hammer.

Then some police arrived. Their response: to attack and seize women haphazardly.

TRUNCHEONS

Women were hit over the head, breasts and in the small of the back as police reinforcements lashed out at random with their wooden truncheons.

Five women had to receive hospital treatment for head and face injuries, and others were badly bruised.

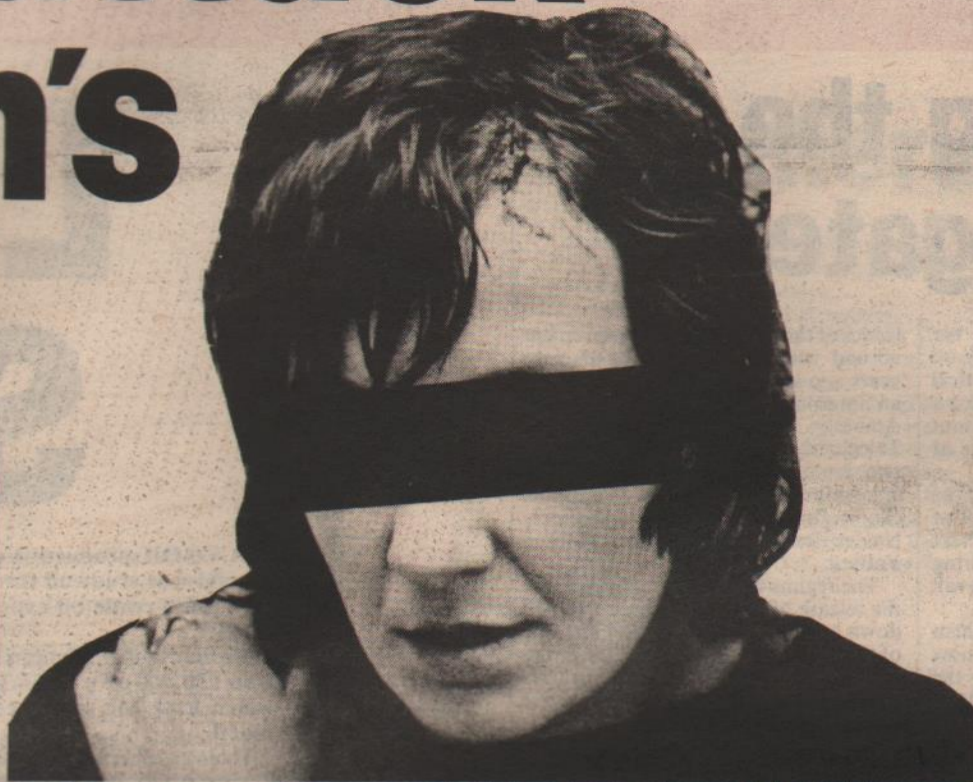
A total of 15 women were arrested for obstruction, threatening behaviour, assaulting a police officer, and other charges.

While some of them were waiting in the police station, another woman was brought in. Nothing at all to do with the demonstration — she was badly bruised and beaten up, as the result of a Soho street attack.

Where were the police when this was happening?

INTEREST

The police have never shown much interest in protecting women out at night. The prevailing attitude is that if a woman is out at night without a man to protect her, then she is asking for whatever she gets.



One of the women attacked on the march, showing her head injuries. Eyes are blacked out at her request

Until the labour movement acts to change these attitudes, so that women can be certain of help if they are attacked and are not seen as easy targets for degrading assaults, they can rely on no-one but themselves.

The establishment of local rape crisis centres; emphasis on self-defence, insisting that it is taught to girls in schools; monitoring of the local and national press so that women are not presented as sexual objects and so that rape is not sensationalised and made attractive — these are all ways of starting to change the situation.

For as women on a recent 'reclaim the night' demonstration in Brighton chanted: 'Whatever we wear, wherever we go, yes means yes and no means no'.

★ The Reclaim the Night defence committee is anxious to hear from anyone who witnessed or photographed the events on Halloween. Initial statements, names and addresses should be sent to: A Woman's Place, 43 Earlham St., London WC2.

'Life' in the labour movement

'LIFE' is a virulent anti-abortion group whose support is mainly to be found in the Catholic church.

The National Front is the only political party to adopt its anti-abortion programme. But now it is seeking support in the Labour Party.

So far it has not had much success. Life's glossy propaganda is too crude to convince many Labour Party activists.

★ It claims to be a 'trade union' acting in the interests of the unborn.

★ It says that the unborn are the most oppressed 'class' in society.

★ It emotively refers to abortion as 'killing off the unborn', and sometimes refers to foetuses as 'our unborn brothers and sisters'.

These arguments pose as politics and class consciousness, but really depend on sentimentality and demagoguery.

However, while Life's extreme ideas do not win much support in the labour movement, that is not to say that there is a clear understanding of the importance of a woman's right to choose.

The notion that women should primarily be wives and mothers is still prevalent, despite the impact of the ideas of the women's liberation movement and the large scale employment of women in all

sectors. Until women themselves have the right to decide whether or not to have a child, whether or not to continue with a pregnancy, their position in the workforce will remain at the mercy of the state and bosses.

It is to extend the fight for a woman's right to choose within the labour movement, and to counter the offensive ideas of organisations like Life, that the National Abortion Campaign and the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign have called the trade union conference on abortion on 25 November.

Various anti-abortion groups have already declared their intention to bring coachloads of their supporters to London to picket the conference.

We have to make sure that they have no chance of making a show of strength. Make sure that your union branch is sending a delegate to the conference and is supporting the initiative.

Plans are being made for a counter-mobilisation of supporters of a woman's right to choose outside the conference. ★ Trade Union Conference on Abortion. Will you be represented? Saturday 25 November, Caxton Hall, London SW1.

Delegate form from NAC, 374 Gray's Inn Rd, London WC1 (01-278 0153).

Social security payments Benefit rate cuts proposed

PROPOSED changes in the payment of supplementary benefits could result in severe hardship for claimants.

The same proposals could also mean limitations on the right of appeal against benefit decisions.

SYLVIA BLISS reports.

Supplementary benefits are paid to those without enough stamps to qualify for unemployment benefit or whose dole money has to be made up to meet their financial needs.

Rates of benefit and who gets them is controlled and decided by the Supplementary Benefits Commission.

The review produced by this body in July suggested flat-rate rent allowances for the first eight weeks of any claim, rather than the present needs-tested system.

Flat-rate rent allowances of £6.95 for single people and £8.40 for married couples

would mean that for eight weeks many claimants would have to make up their rents by getting into debt.

HARDSHIP

One of the groups hardest hit would be women living in refuges. Over 50 per cent of refuges receive no grants from national or local government, and could not stay open if they did not charge a realistic rent — above the proposed flat-rate allowance.

Moreover, many women arrive at refuges with nothing other than the clothes they stand up in. These women are

currently able to claim exceptional needs payments for clothes — this would go under the new scheme.

APPEAL

Appeals against benefit assessments will not be allowed unless 'important principles' are shown to be at stake.

The changes are clearly part of the wider plan to reduce social service spending and could cause enormous hardship. The National Women's Aid Federation will be submitting a detailed criticism of the review to the Commission in December.

Copies of the review, entitled Social Assistance, are available from: DHSS Leaflets Division, Leaflets Unit, Block 4, Government Buildings, Honey-pot Lane, Stanmore, Middx.

Abortion crossing borders

THE obstacles women need to overcome to exert control over their bodies are different all over the world.

But if one thing became clear from the first of a series of forums organised by the International Campaign for Abortion Rights, it was that women are resisting attacks on their right to fertility control, writes DODIE WEPPLER.

Manuela Lombardo from the Committee for Information on Sterilisation and Abortion spoke at the London meeting on Friday 27 October about how the new abortion law in Italy — passed by only nine votes in June — would not be implemented without a massive struggle led by women. She stressed that it isn't as liberal as the press claim.

A major problem for Italian women is the Catholic Church — especially the immediate excommunication which hangs over the heads of medical staff who implement the law.

Anne Connolly, from Dublin Well Women Clinic, explained that the Church was a major obstacle for counsel-



Photo: DEREK SPEIRS (IFL)

ANNE CONNOLLY

lors at the clinic — the only place which does open pregnancy counselling anywhere in the South of Ireland.

Zulma Rivera, from the Committee for Puerto Rican Independence, said that for women in colonial countries, fertility control involves a fight to end forced sterilisation.

The International Campaign for Abortion Rights is hoping that the next forum — 'Black Women Speak Out' — will tackle many of the issues involved.

What do the organisers hope to achieve with these highly informative forums? Campaign activists at the meeting argued that the only guarantee of success for women's struggles will be if they have an internationalist perspective.

More concretely, the British campaigners have agreed to co-ordinate an international day of action on 31 March.

'We will need a tremendous effort to get this united action off the ground. The response has been tremendous to date. But now we need help to raise funds, translate material, organise the forums, plan pickets at embassies, and so on.'

The success of Friday's meeting can best be measured by the fact that every single one of the forty people present signed up to do just that.

IRAN AND WO

Opening the prison gates

THERE is nothing like a victory for giving a boost to a struggle. The release of more than 1,100 Iranian political prisoners on 25 October was just such a victory. Millions of people throughout Iran are now demanding the release of all political prisoners.

The Shah will try to claim that the release of political prisoners is proof of his 'liberalisation' programme. Next time Dr Owen is on television uttering words of wisdom about Iran he too will no doubt try to take some credit.

But no-one will be listening to them in Iran. For the Iranian masses know that it was they who released the political prisoners and not the Shah. It was their victory and no-one can take it from them.



Unlike previous releases of political prisoners over the last two years, which usually involved unknown prisoners who in many cases had been imprisoned for extremely trivial 'offences' or even by mistake, this time there were many important and well known figures among those released.

One of the most important and symbolic was Safar Ghahremani who was released after 30 years in prison.

He had been in prison longer than any other Iranian political prisoner and probably longer than any other political prisoner anywhere in the world.

Through these years he had won enormous respect among fellow prisoners because of his courage.

Another veteran prisoner was the Kurdish militant Ghani Boulourian who like Ghahremani was serving a life sentence and had spent 25 years of his life in the Shah's dungeons.

Vida Hadjebi, the former Tehran University sociologist arrested in 1972, was also among those released. The campaign for her release had won widespread international support.

Other well known figures released included Hossein Rezai, a former

leader of the Iranian student movement abroad who had been arrested eight years ago when he returned to Iran as an interpreter for a lawyer sent by Amnesty International; Ayatollah Taleghani and Ayatollah Montazeri, two leading figures in the Moslem opposition; and the two famous playwrights and theatre directors, Nasser Rahmani-Nejad and Mohsen Yalfani.

The regime had probably hoped that the release of prisoners would dampen down opposition. But as soon as some of the prisoners were told that they were to be released they organised protests inside the prisons calling for the release of all the other political prisoners.

Some even refused to leave the prisons for some time as a sign of protest and solidarity with other prisoners. All the released prisoners refused to accept an 'imperial pardon'.

Outside prison prisoners were greeted by jubilant crowds. Many of them spoke to the demonstrators thanking them for the struggle they had waged for their freedom and calling on them to fight for the release of all remaining prisoners.

Many have been giving press interviews since their release describing torture and maltreatment in prison.

The prisoners' call is gaining widespread support, not just among students and intellectuals who had always fought for the release of political prisoners, but also within the working class.

The oil workers have now put the release of all political prisoners at the top of their list of strike demands.

Airline workers have also demanded the release of political prisoners. Before them a million striking civil servants and hundreds of thousands of striking teachers had made the same demand.

Faced with this pressure the Iranian regime has now promised that all remaining political prisoners will be released by 10 December. This is nothing but a paper promise at the moment, especially in view of the fact that only two weeks ago a leading member of the Writers' Association, Beh-Azin, was arrested.

FORCED

But the regime can be forced to carry out this promise, just as it has already been forced to release many prisoners.

Internationally the campaign for the release of Iranian political prisoners must be stepped up. In this country every effort must be made to build up the campaign being organised by the Committee Against Repression in Iran.

We must raise our voices in solidarity with Iranian workers and demand the **immediate and unconditional** release of all Iranian political prisoners.

Lack of oil Shah's m

IRAN'S OIL production came to almost a complete standstill last week. The flow of crude oil through Khark Island in the Gulf, usually one of the busiest crude oil export terminals in the world, dropped to a mere trickle.

Production at Abadan refinery, the world's largest, ground to a halt. Iran's 30,000 oil workers had stopped work. They had turned off the taps which have for years been providing the Shah's regime with its life-blood.

There have been numerous strikes in the Iranian oil industry over the past two months. In many cases the workers have won important wage rises. But the present strike is different — it isn't just for better wages or conditions.

It is a political strike. The powerful oil workers are demanding an end to

martial law and the unconditional release of all political prisoners.

High on the list of the oil workers' demands is an end to imperialist domination of the Iranian oil industry. They want the expulsion of the consortium of eight major imperialist oil companies which has effectively controlled the production and export of most of Iran's oil since 1954, and of all foreign oil company staff.

The largest partner in the consortium is British Petroleum, followed by the part-British owned Royal Dutch Shell.

The regime's response was to send troops into the oil fields and other oil installations. Workers occupying Abadan refinery were attacked by troops last week and several workers were injured. The regime also threatened to sack all striking workers if they did not return to work after four days.

DEADLINE

But the deadline has now passed and the workers have not been fired. The threat to use soldiers under the supervision of managerial and technical staff to run oil installations is also unlikely to be carried out.

The oil workers are not the only group on strike for political demands. When the present wave of workers' strikes began over a month ago, workers' demands were mainly for higher wages and better conditions.

Political demands mainly related to the workers' immediate situation in their work place — abolition of state-controlled syndicates and the right to form free trade unions, expulsion of secret police agents from the factory, and the sacking of reactionary managers.

But now more and more workers are turning their attention to wider political demands.

A million striking civil servants demanded an end to martial law and the release of all political prisoners a fortnight ago. Following them,

hundreds of thousands decided to drop their higher pay and concentration demands.

When the teachers in Tehran their banner demanded an end to martial law and the release of all political prisoners.

Striking airline workers grounded all Iran Air planes demanding an end to the release of all political prisoners.

They have now demanded the cancellation of a telecommunications agreement and by power telecommunication workers the expulsion of 'advisors' from the country and the cancellation of a telecommunications agreement and contract with Iran.

IMPROVED

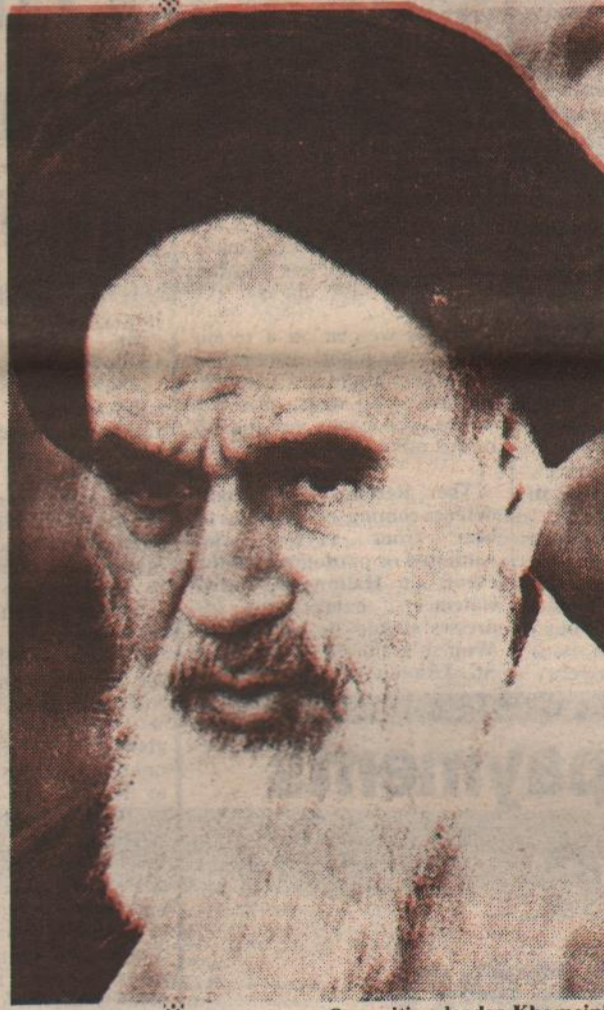
The power workers' demand the cancellation of power plants at exorbitant prices from Western countries. Instead of wasting money on the already operating improved and repaired plants.

The fight for pre-revolutionary newspaper workers, which resulted in major concessions to the regime and a very obvious improvement in their conditions, is also continuing. Other workers of the Ayandegan (a paper believed to be directly controlled by the regime) have been on strike against attempts by the regime to suppress their internal censorship.

Meanwhile there has been a series of street demonstrations. Every day tens of thousands come onto the streets of provincial towns to express their opposition to the Shah's regime. Some of the biggest demonstrations since the declaration of the Islamic Republic have been taking place.

The main campus of the University, situated in the city, has been the scene of demonstrations. Last week again open demonstrations led by demonstrators leaving the city. Several demonstrators have been killed.

There have also been demonstrations with troops elsewhere



Opposition leader Khomeini

'Ruthless, corrupt and totally

How is it that the struggle in Iran can escalate despite the lack of a clear political leadership. Why is the Iranian ruling class not able to contain and control the mass upsurge?

THE ESCALATING struggle in Iran is a response to a quarter century of brutal dictatorship and repression. This is symbolised by the Shah and the instruments of repression which he has created.

Once the struggle developed beyond a certain stage, once people were killed in street battles, the masses lost all fear. In a very literal sense they had nothing else to lose. Trotsky always used to stress the independent political

capacities of the masses in motion. In Iran we have seen a textbook demonstration of this revolutionary axiom. Even the oil workers' strike has a political demand as its only focus: end Martial Law and release the prisoners.

The one demand which united the religious leaders and the left is the call to overthrow the Shah. In the present context this is a revolutionary democratic demand. And the masses will not accept anything less. The Shah's attempts to persuade the moderate opposition parties to form a national government will founder on the wrath of the masses.

As for the second part of the question, the answer is obvious. The

Iranian ruling class has governed through coercion, exemplified by the existence of SAVAK. They have no reserves to draw upon. That is why we have explained that there is a fundamental difference between countries like Iran and others where bourgeois democracy exists. It is not just possible to contrast Portugal in 1975 with Iran in 1978 to understand this fact, but even compare Iran with India. Despite the moth-eaten character of India's institutions, they have nonetheless served the ruling class of that country well.

It is in that sense that we would insist that despite the gravity of the economic crisis in the advanced capitalist world,

the bourgeoisie has enormous political reserves at its disposal. In a country like Iran this is clearly not the case. Any one-sided or Eurocentric view of the world political situation can, therefore, prove fatal for revolutionary marxists.

Why are the leaders of the United States and Britain prepared to go so far in order to defend the Shah and his regime? After all their 'human rights' demagoguery has never been so well exposed as in the case of Iran?

THE ANSWER can be summed up in one word: OIL. The crude oil reserves of Iran amount to 10 per cent of the world total. As a result the West needed

a strong and tough regime in Iran which could safeguard these reserves and ensure a continuous supply of oil to the West.

The Shah fitted the bill. He was ruthless, corrupt, a megalomaniac and totally loyal to the West. So imperialist strategy concentrated on building up the Shah's regime over the last 25 years.

They transformed and modernised Pahlavi's army and air force. Various other forms of aid were provided. A time passed and the facade of stability appeared almost permanent, the West encouraged a more audacious role for Iran. Given that the Persian Gulf state produced another big chunk of world oil, Iran was given the task of

WORLD POLITICS

Oil halts machine

of teachers demands for late on political

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and many are reported to have been killed.

The growth and now the rapid politicisation of strikes is a very important new development in the situation in Iran. The working class is beginning to act as an independent political force.

For the first time, workers are becoming organised around strikes through mass meetings in their factories. Workers are establishing links and expressing this through messages and actions of solidarity. Every day workers are gaining fresh experiences through their own actions, which are unfettered by any established trade union bureaucracy.

The regime is very worried by the situation. It has failed to control the situation by martial law and violence. It is now having to retreat daily. The release of more than 1,100 political prisoners was a major concession.

Now it has been forced by workers to promise the release of all other political prisoners. In another concession, it has sacked many of the important figures in SAVAK; among them Parviz Sabeti, the former head of Internal Security — the Shah's chief torturer.

LIBERAL

The bourgeois liberal opposition is also very worried by the rise in workers' struggles. It is frantically trying to find a compromise solution before it is too late. Tehran is full of rumours about a coalition government involving the bourgeois opposition.

The National Front (main bourgeois opposition group) leader Karim Sanjabi has been in Paris trying — it seems unsuccessfully so far — to persuade the exiled religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini to moderate his views.

Khomeini, who is a key figure because of his popularity in Iran, has so far insisted on the overthrow of the Shah. The National Front's recent compromise on this question is that a referendum should be held to determine the future of the monarchy.

At the same time, the former Prime Minister, Ali Amini, who has links with the National Front, has been visiting the Shah in the hope of persuading him to compromise. These behind-the-scenes wheeling and dealings have been accompanied by a propaganda

campaign about an impending 'blood bath' and 'ultra-reactionary' coup in the hope of scaring the masses into a compromise solution.

But the Iranian masses who, unlike the bourgeois politicians, have stood up to real blood baths and ultra-reactionary coups, are not likely to be frightened so easily by such stories.



Mass meeting last week

Partners in crime

ONE OF the first effects of the Iranian oil crisis will be felt across the Indian Ocean — in South Africa.

RICHARD CARVER reports. The Tehran-Pretoria axis that has developed over the past few years is historically appropriate.

During the war the British exiled Reza Shah, the father of the present Shah, to Johannesburg for his pro-Nazi sympathies. Thirty years later Reza Shah's son was to seal one of the country's most important alliances with John Vorster, who had been interned in wartime Johannesburg for his pro-Nazi positions.

LOOSEN

The alliance was impelled, on both sides, by a wish to loosen ties with the major imperialist powers, particularly the United States.

Neither regime wanted to cut itself adrift completely — indeed the US would never have tolerated it — but on a day-to-day level both came into conflict with US tactics and wanted more room for manoeuvre.

South Africa, for example, had fought a bitter war with the US Treasury over gold prices. The Shah was out to establish Iran as a military power in the Indian Ocean in its own right.

But more important than any momentary tiff with the US was the effect of the 1973 Middle East war.

The oil crisis which followed the war has been greatly exaggerated. The multinational oil companies' control of refining, transport and distribution meant that they could afford to lose — indeed often wanted to lose — direct control of drilling.

Given, as well, North American near self-sufficiency in oil, US imperialism came out of the 'energy crisis' somewhat strengthened. But this does not mean that the oil crisis was a complete sham. And one of the countries hit hardest was South Africa.

For Pretoria the problem was not the oil price rise, because that also sent the gold price shooting up — and gold is to South Africa what oil is to most of the Arab countries.

SANCTIONS

But the main Arab oil producers took political sanctions by cutting off oil to South Africa because of its military alliance with Israel — an embargo which has partially continued.

Iran stepped into the breach. With an admirable combination of political arse-licking and economic nous, the Tehran regime became a major supplier of both Israel and South Africa.

One of the features of late capitalism is the distorted industrialisation of certain semi-colonial countries through the export of technology from the imperialist powers.

This also has its military aspect, with

the creation of a series of middle ranking third world powers which act as a regional police force.

Iran, South Africa and Israel are good examples of such powers. Brazil, Australia and South Korea are others.

Their role has taken on particular significance since the defeat of US imperialism's direct intervention to defend another of these regional cops: South Vietnam.

But these regimes are not 'imperialist puppets'. They have a considerable autonomy and are increasingly forming alliances with each other. The Tehran-Pretoria axis is a case in point.

Even more sinister is the nuclear development of these powers. Earlier this year it was reported that, along with South Africa, Israel and South Korea, Iran had entered a mutual defence pact with specifically nuclear aims.

The impact of the present crisis on Israel remains unclear. Some reports have suggested that almost all Israel's oil imports come from Iran, though the financial press over the past few days has stressed that Israel has diversified her oil suppliers in case of a further war. But that could just be bluff.

What is certain is the serious effect on South Africa. United Nations sources reckon that Iran supplies 90 per cent of South Africa's oil needs.

STOCKPILES

South Africa is not primarily an oil-based economy and it has always maintained large stockpiles as insurance against a serious oil embargo, but it still cannot afford a halt in supplies.

For one thing, a rundown of reserves would leave the Pretoria regime vulnerable to an embargo. There may not be much chance of the imperialist powers imposing such a boycott but, for example, low oil stocks could strengthen the bargaining power of the South West Africa People's Organisation in Namibia.

Potentially one of the most dramatic consequences of the drain on South African reserves could be in Zimbabwe.

The Bingham report has revealed how British oil companies have supplied the Rhodesian regime by way of South Africa.

The companies involved — British Petroleum and Shell — hold between them 54 per cent of the Iranian Oil Participants Consortium. Include the French company Total which collaborated in the Rhodesian 'swap' arrangement and the figure is 60 per cent.

That, and the directness of the Iranian-South African oil link, suggest that a large amount of that illicit oil started life beneath Iran.

The supply will not dry up completely, but equally the Iranian oil workers will have a political impact far greater than they can have imagined.

loyal'

by TARIQ ALI

preserving stability in the whole region. The guerrillas in Dhofar were amongst the first victims of this policy. They were crushed by the combined weight of British military techniques and Iranian manpower.

Thirdly Iran's geographical proximity to the Soviet Union gives it a key strategic place in American military strategy.

For the imperialist powers, therefore, the emergence of even a moderate regime which took its distance from the United States would not be acceptable. But what they fear is a growing instability and a growing mass radicalisation. And these fears are our hopes. For if there is a democratic

interregnum the left could grow very rapidly.

The attack on the Tehran Inter-continental Hotel (where Lord Chalfont normally stays) a few days ago, is a small, but significant manifestation of how the masses regard Western support for the Shah. Carter and his British poodles are supporting the Shah because they're desperate. But if his removal becomes vital, they will search for another alternative. Iranian revolutionaries must ensure that they don't find it.

What would be the effect of the fall of the Shah on neighbouring countries?

THE SITUATION in Pakistan is already precarious. If the Shah falls it will accelerate the break-up of Pakistan.

The Baluchi people, in particular, would seriously consider establishing links with the Iranian Baluchis, especially if a democratic government was established.

What effect it would have on Afghanistan it is difficult to foresee. The regime in that country is clearly pro-Soviet and hostile to the United States. However, a right-wing opposition does appear to be developing and this could have expected strong support from the Shah in normal circumstances.

In the Gulf states the overthrow of the Shah could have the effect of destabilising some of the Sheikdoms, particularly in Oman. Nor should the effect of the Iranian example in Saudi Arabia be underestimated.

So, in this sense as well, the concern of imperialism is perfectly comprehensible.

What should those who support the mass struggle in Iran do in this country?

IF YOU'RE at a college, school or university you should organise a meeting on the subject immediately. Speakers are available from the Committee Against Repression in Iran,

Box 4, 182 Upper St, London N1. If Owen or a member of the Labour Government is visiting your place of study you should intervene forcefully against Labour's support for the Shah.

If you are in the Labour Party or in a trade-union branch you should raise the question of inviting a speaker. You should call for Owen to be sacked and Labour to break all military links forthwith. You should pass a resolution to that effect and send it to Transport House and the local press.

If you belong to the CP or any of the far-left groups you should agitate within your organisation to ensure that solidarity extends beyond articles in newspapers and develop various actions.

INTERNATIONAL

SA women face sack Ever Ready for struggle

THE British-owned Ever Ready firm has sacked 160 striking women workers in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, reports RICHARD CARVER. Some 300 Coloured women walked out last week, demanding improved pay and conditions and recognition for their union, the National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South Africa.

Many returned to work but more than half stayed out, defying company threats of dismissal for breach of contract.

The union has said that it will call for international strike action from its international affiliates and in Ever Ready plants if the company sacks the women.

In Britain the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs has sent a letter of protest to Ever Ready.

As we went to press ASTMS members in the West Midlands, where the union organises in three out of every four of Ever Ready's plants, were meeting to discuss the possibility of local solidarity action.

They might bear in mind the example of workers in the Unilever multinational. Unilever workers in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Italy, Sri Lanka and New Zealand recently staged hour long solidarity strikes in protest at the company's refusal to recognise black trade unions in South Africa.

Detroit organiser to speak at London rally



NAN BAILEY

DETROIT was the birthplace of the Ford motor empire. It has the highest concentration of black and industrial workers in the United States — but half of them, almost literally, have not got jobs.

Nan Bailey, who will be speaking at a rally in London on 25 November, is a black revolutionary from Detroit — a full-time organiser for the Socialist Workers Party and former chairperson of the Young Socialist Alliance.

In 1972 Bailey became Washington co-ordinator of the Women's National Abortion Coalition, which led the successful fight for women's legal right to abortion in the United States. More recently she helped organise the 100,000 strong demonstration in support of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Bailey has been most concerned to represent the needs of black women in the women's movement. She participated in the founding conference of the National Black Feminist Organisation and in the organisation to defend Joan Little — charged with murder after defending herself against rape by a white prison guard.

As a founding member of the National Student Coalition against Racism, Bailey directed her energies to the campaigns to de-segregate schools in Louisville and Boston despite the violent opposition of the racist

anti-bussing thugs.

Throughout these campaigns Bailey has stressed the importance of uniting all the oppressed. During the 1975 student demonstrations against social expenditure cuts she remarked: 'Students should encourage trade unions, community groups and black and Puerto Rican organisations to support and become involved in these demonstrations. The rulers of this country want to keep the victims of the cutbacks and lay offs divided.'

TOUR

British revolutionaries can learn much from her wide experiences. It is with this in mind that the International Marxist Group has organised Nan Bailey's tour of Britain in December.

Her first stop will be the rally to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Fourth International. She will replace Willie Mae Reid — who is unable to leave the US — and will be accompanied by Ernest Mandel from the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and representatives from liberation struggles in Ireland, Zimbabwe and Iran.

COMPUTERISING APARTHEID

ANTI APARTHEID's new pamphlet 'Computerising Apartheid' will aid militants in International Computers Limited by illustrating the depth of the company's involvement with the apparatus of apartheid.

ANDY BLUNDELL, one of the union representatives who met ICL last week to challenge the company over its South African involvement, reviews the pamphlet.

As well as documenting the extent to which ICL systems are used in the repression of the black population, the pamphlet exposes the discrepancy between the apologetic justifications made by British directors, who claim 'that ICL computers helped the Bantu population', and the South African management who openly proclaim that 'we have decided to support South Africa — business, government and people'.

It also points to the way that ICL, despite a 25 per cent National Enterprise Board shareholding, acts contrary to British government policy in supplying systems for the administration of Namibia and Transkei.

SUBSIDIARY

But the most awkward question for ICL is the role of its Rhodesian subsidiary.

Although the company told union representatives on 31 October that it had contact with the subsidiary only on questions of welfare of personnel, it admitted later that this subsidiary had been the agent for the order of two 2903 computers by Malawi.

But it strongly denied reports that the machines were no longer in Malawi!

Even if this is the limit of ICL's contact with Rhodesia, ICL still has a number of questions to answer about its subsidiary — the most important being how a company can operate under the name of International Computers and offer for sale computers that it can neither

make nor import.

The Anti Apartheid Movement says it hopes this pamphlet will 'stimulate a vigorous campaign which will result in the termination of all forms of collaboration by British computer companies with South Africa'.

OPPOSITION

But unfortunately Anti Apartheid appears to think that the pamphlet needs only to publicise the involvement of ICL in South Africa and tack on the end a list of demands for the company to stop misbehaving and, if it won't, for the government to investigate ICL and bring it to heel.

From the pamphlet one would get no idea that there is any opposition to the South African connection among the ICL workforce and that ASTMS, the largest union in ICL, and TASS have repeatedly sought to question the role the company plays, let alone that workers inside ICL — even if only in small numbers as yet — are refusing to handle South African work.

CONTRACTS

The unions in ICL are already pressing the company to recognise the right of individuals not to work on South African contracts and for a review of their trading policies and their implications for trade with progressive countries.

We also recognise that the immediate fight within ICL will not in all likelihood bring about a withdrawal of ICL but may prevent the company from



ICL computers help to maintain the repression in South Africa

extending the range of its technological assistance to apartheid.

The delegates from ICL who will be attending the conference on Saturday called by Anti Apartheid in Manchester will obviously be wanting both to relate their own experiences of organising against apartheid and to learn from other people's struggle.

But the main lesson we will want to impress on other delegates is not so much the response that our initiatives received from our members as the need to build a network of militants at rank and file level if one is to successfully challenge any major company.

The role of such a network in ICL would be to organise a group able to take action challenging the company's South African connections, as well as investigating and publishing their implications.

Such a network is already developing as a result of the campaign against ICL's decision to supply computers to the South African police.

Anti Apartheid can play a very valuable role in helping to build this — but only if it recognises that it is only the labour movement and not the government that is likely to be both willing and able to force companies like ICL to forego the profits from apartheid.



EIGHTY THOUSAND agricultural workers demonstrated in Beja, southern Portugal, on 24 October. They were protesting against the reversal of the agrarian reform and Republican Guard attacks on agricultural co-operatives in the Alentejo region.

It is not often that we in Britain have a chance to express our direct solidarity with Portuguese workers against these attacks. But on 16 November Portuguese President Ramalho Eanes will be visiting Britain — doubtless to thank the Labour Government for its consistent efforts on behalf of the counter-revolution in Portugal. The Portuguese Workers Co-ordinating

Committee is organising a picket of the Portuguese Embassy, 11 Belgrave Square, London SW1, at 7.00 that evening. The demands are: defend the agrarian reform, and Republican Guard out of the Alentejo.

Eanes' trip is likely to attract wide press coverage in both Portugal and Britain, so a large turnout is especially important.

The agricultural workers of the Alentejo were in the vanguard of the Portuguese revolution. Now they are one of the last sections of the working class to defend their gains against the counter-revolution. They deserve our support.

Defend Soviet gays

THERE will be simultaneous pickets of Soviet embassies and offices internationally on 25 November to demand an end to the repression of gays in the Soviet Union.

As well as the massive social oppression and discrimination that gays face, and against which they have no means of organising, there is a draconian law against male homosexuality introduced by Stalin in 1934.

This has been used to victimise political dissidents such as the film director and Ukrainian nationalist Paradjanov.

The picket, which has been organised by the International Gay Association, deserves the maximum support from all anti-sexist groups and those concerned with democratic rights in Eastern Europe.

★ Aeroflot Office, Piccadilly, London, 2pm.

Intercontinental Press combined with Inprecor

IRAN features prominently in the latest issue of Intercontinental Press/Inprecor (Vol 16, No 42), which includes an interview with a recently exiled student activist. Copies are still available of the last issue which contains a major article on the economic roots of the Iranian crisis by Saber Nickbin.

p&p. Subscriptions: £9 for one year (48 issues), £5 for six months (24 issues), or £2.50 for an introductory offer of 10 issues.

Write to Intercontinental Press/Inprecor, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. All cheques/POs should be made out to Intercontinental Press.

Single copies are 30p plus

IRELAND

Labour and Ireland I

Will Roy Mason ban the sound of music

AN ALMOST UNNOTICED feature of the Queen's Speech last week was the announcement that the Labour Government will increase the representation of the North of Ireland at Westminster from 12 to 17 seats.

Labour's intention could be seen as further evidence of its determination to maintain the partition of Ireland. Equally it could be interpreted as a ruse by Labour to secure the votes of the ten Loyalist MPs during the present parliamentary session.

Nevertheless the effect of the proposals will be to increase the number of Loyalist bigots in Parliament; Unionists of one variety or another are expected to control at least 14 of the 17 seats.

GEOFF BELL examines the beneficiaries of Labour's proposed handout of power.

A fortnight ago the Official Unionist Party held its annual conference in a disused cinema in the rural Northern Irish town of Enniskillen. The 'platform' consisted of what one newspaper report described as 'two rickety tables'.

It was a rather unimpressive display compared to the spectacles of privilege and power the Unionist Party was able to put on a few years back when they ruled the North of Ireland through the Stormont parliament.

But if the power of Official Unionism has lessened, their ideas remain much the same.

Captain Austin Ardill, an Official Unionist, recently offered this explanation as to why Catholic workers are either unemployed or in low paid jobs:

'Big families, living for years on social security, knowing they get more than working hard — what sort of jobs would you give them but the manual ones?'

MANIA

More humorously, the Democratic Unionist Party, led by Ian Paisley, showed its adherence to religious mania when it declared two months ago that *The Sound of Music* should be banned because it was 'Romanist' and John Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men* should be excluded from school libraries because it was 'obscene'.

Paisley went so far as to threaten to set up his own schools because of the teaching in state schools of the 'pagan' Darwinian theory of evolution.

But the politics of the Official Unionists and the Democratic Unionists are not really a laughing matter. The Official Unionists' demand for the reintroduction of internment in the North of Ireland is one indication of where it stands.

Other clues are to be found among the personnel who run the party. The leadership of the Unionists at one time consisted of failed British Army officers, lords of the realm, and country squires.

WORTHIES

Although such worthies no longer have the same dominance, they retain more than a foothold in the power echelons of Official Unionism.

The chairperson of the party is Josias Cunningham, a

nephew of both the party's president, Sir James Cunningham, and of one of the most reactionary Unionist MPs, the late Sir Knox Cunningham.

ESTATES

Josias has a large country estate in County Antrim. A similar estate in County Armagh is the residence of Michael Armstrong, chairperson of the party's security committee. Armstrong is a barrister and a former Army captain.

Martin Smyth, the party's vice president, has different qualifications. He is seen as the Unionists' main 'theoretician'. It is an indication of that theory that he is a Presbyterian minister and Grand Master of the Orange Order.

The Orange Order is the largest of the exclusively Protestant secret societies, but the Royal Black Percepsory is the most upper class and exclusive.

The head of that august body is James Molyneaux, leader of the Official Unionists at Westminster. The overall leader, Harry West, describes himself as 'a natural conservative' and owns a large farm in County Fermanagh.

Cunningham, Armstrong, Smyth, Molyneaux and West make up the leadership of Official Unionism. Its most famous advocate, Enoch Powell, has never quite made it to the top; one reason is his advocacy of full integration of Northern Ireland into the UK is not shared by the majority of Unionists.

INDEPENDENCE

West and Smyth are keener on a return to the old Stormont parliament. The other Loyalist option is independence.

For an ideology which claims to put the link with Britain above all else, this might appear odd. But the Unionists have always indicated that they are only advocates of the link with Britain if it is on their terms.

Harry West has no ideological objections to independence, only practical ones.

He recently argued: 'We couldn't make the running now, we haven't the financial resources. There was a time in the '60s when we were on the crest of a wave. We could have thumbed our noses at the British then.'

Today, the only significant advocates of independence are



Harry West, of the Official Unionist Party, in Orange regalia.

to be found in the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association, whose strongest base is in Protestant working class

Belfast.

But the UDA is no longer the strength it was, and in a recent opinion poll only two per cent

of the Protestants questioned said they favoured independence.

The decline of the UDA is symptomatic of the general inability the Protestant working class has shown in breaking from the politics of Unionism.

Occasional attempts by the odd individual to formulate a 'socialist' version of Unionism have met with the inevitable failure; inevitable because 'socialism' and an adherence to the undemocratically formed and undemocratically conducted state of 'Northern Ireland' is a contradiction in terms.

FANATICAL

Accordingly, the main pro-partitionist opposition to Official Unionism is the Democratic Unionism of Ian Paisley.

His willingness to take up bread and butter issues combined with his fanatical adherence to fundamental Protestantism continues to appeal to many working class and petty bourgeois Protestants.

Although the Official Unionists have 15 seats on Belfast's city council, Paisley's party has a not insignificant seven.

And the Official Unionist leaders know that they cannot afford to be seen as too anti-Paisley. Thus Harry West recently described him as 'a man of many good points and a

steadfast defender of the Protestant faith'.

But despite recent attempts by Unionists of various shades to patch things up, their disunity remains. None of them is able to come up with a coherent strategy which would maintain the state of 'Ulster' as they wish to see it maintained.

They are suspicious of complete integration with the UK because they think that a Westminster government might 'reform' the vast areas of discrimination which continue to exist.

They are reluctant to go all out for a return to Stormont because they think no British government will give it.

Similar problems of ruling elites who face rebellions by sections of their population exist elsewhere. Perhaps the best indication of the politics of the Unionists is the following comparison made recently by former Unionist cabinet member Roy Bradford:

'Six thousand miles away and yet Rhodesia has much in common with Northern Ireland... the precariousness of the situation, the feeling of being beleaguered, the ever present menace of terrorism'.

Of course, in making the comparison, Bradford was really talking of white Rhodesians, and comparing them to Northern Ireland's Loyalists. It is a fair comparison.

Labour and Ireland II

Remember 1920

ONE of the most widely accepted myths of the British left is the idea that the labour movement in this country is permanently indifferent to the struggle for self-determination and democracy in Ireland, writes COLIN KENNEDY.

The third issue of Ireland Socialist Review just published includes a reprint of the 'Report of the

The report is an extremely contradictory and complex document.

It alternately applauds and condemns aspects of the Irish Nationalist struggle, implying some degree of support for the revolutionary Dail Eireann of 1919-21, the economic policies of Sinn Fein, yet arguing that Irish democracy and economic independence can safely abide under the protective wing of the British Empire.

It would not be difficult to pull apart the report on the grounds of the inconsistencies of its logic.

But the significance of the report lies not in the wrongness of its positions but the extent to which it is an authentic articulation of the consciousness and views of the British working class movement in the early 1920s.

If this is the case, we have to ask which of the contradictory views contained in the report motivated the working class movement into action at any

particular time.

Was it the confused formulations deploring the military reprisals by the British forces and the denial of democratic rights to the Irish people?

Or was it those sections which preached that the Irish lamb should learn to lie down and live with the British lion?

Historical studies of developments in 1920 and early 1921 reveal that the most advanced sections of the British working class were greatly influenced by a broadly progressive standpoint.

This brought working class opinion into conflict with the policies and actions of the

military reprisals of the British Government of the day.

The socialist movement today is faced with a situation which is beginning to develop features not unlike those of the 1920s: a general dissatisfaction with the Government's policies on Ireland; an increasing willingness to take a second look at the issues involved in the war in Ireland; and attempts to produce political positions which articulate these newly-emerging currents of opinion.

The first fruits of these efforts has been the mounting concern about the position of the political prisoners in the Six Counties, the use of torture

during interrogation, and the practice of internment by remand.

New moods and currents of opinion were reflected in the recent Troops Out editorial in the *Daily Mirror*.

It is easy to see that all the old confusions of the PLP's report in the 1920s have been and are continuing to be reproduced in these new currents of opinion. This is not surprising when we consider that these views reflect the concerns and preoccupations of a working class movement which is only just beginning to analyse these issues for the first time in 50 years.

But we should have confidence in the fact that these currents are capable of generating a radical challenge to the policies of British imperialism for all that.

'Ireland Socialist Review' 30p plus 15p p&p from: ISR, c/o 60 Loughborough Road, London SW9. Issues 1 to 3 of ISR, 80p post free.

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL ON BRITAIN'S PRESENCE IN IRELAND RALLY

Speakers: BRENDAN GALLAGHER, father of Willie Gallagher
Representative of Tribunal Planning Ctte
FRIDAY 10 NOVEMBER 7.30 PM
NUFTO Hall (Jockeys Field, off Theobalds Rd)

COMMENT

The other 'Star'

'NEWS from Nowhere' is certainly an apt title for a column in which you publish stories about the Communist Party and the *Morning Star* which appear to be pulled out of thin air. You say (19 October) that 'information now reaching us indicates that the leaders of the Communist Party of Great Britain are seriously considering dispensing with their daily organ' and that the *Morning Star* 'could become a weekly in the new year'.

Some such item of pub gossip apparently also reached *The Times*, but that capitalist journal did at any rate have enough sense to ring us up and ask if it was true. It is not.

The leadership of the Communist Party has not considered any proposal that the *Star* should become a weekly paper. The recommendation of the executive committee earlier this year was that an enlarged paper should be produced on Saturdays as a weekend edition, but this would not involve ceasing production on other days of the week.

But perhaps you are just trying to challenge *Private Eye's* hitherto unrivalled reputation for unreliability. **GEORGE MATTHEWS** (Press & Publicity Department, CPGB)

SC groups — Liverpool report

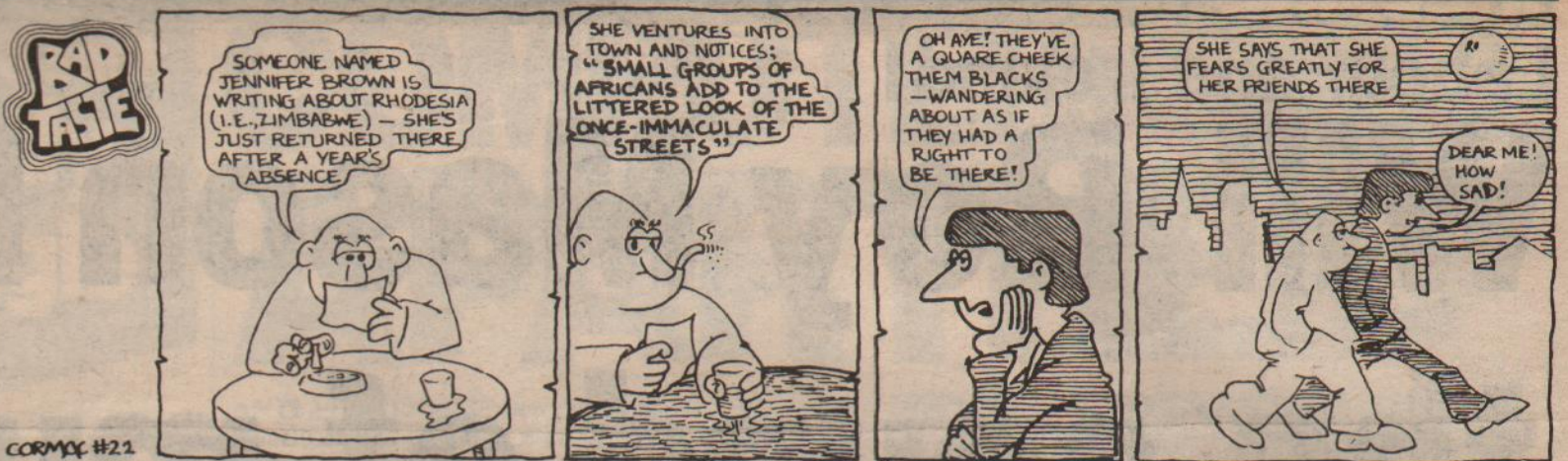
I STRONGLY agree with Steve Rose's arguments in favour of autonomous Socialist Challenge groups (26 October). This has proved to be extremely difficult, however, in a city like Liverpool which has a relatively large and already structured far left, consisting of several competing groups.

For example, in Liverpool we have had meetings organised in support of the Ford strike separately by **Big Flame** and **Socialist Challenge**. These could no doubt have been more successful had they been organised jointly, following the excellent example of the Ford Workers Combine in united action.

There are some encouraging examples of co-operation, such as in the Anti Nazi League. So far, though, **Socialist Challenge** activities in Liverpool have been dominated by the IMG, intentionally or unintentionally. We hope to overcome this by organising regular meetings, including debates with other groups.

To succeed in organising an autonomous supporters' group, we obviously need to attract and involve independents in our activities, including solidarity action in support of struggles such as those of the Ford workers and social workers.

To encourage this type of development, I would propose that



CORMYK #21

the paper's National Policy Committee adopt and issue clear guidelines for the organisation of local groups, including the election of independent steering committees and organising local activities.

This should also provide for some democratic control over the policy and content of the paper, in line with our stated aims. Regional meetings of representatives from supporters' groups, such as those now taking place in the North West, can also help.

JOHN STRAUTHER (Liverpool)
* See page 13

No to Moscow boycott

SUPPOSING a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics, which Chris Roseblade (19 October) proposes to launch 'now', were successful, where on earth should they be held? Perhaps in one of the so-called 'free', 'democratic' countries? Say in Britain?

The British state — it is well known — does not have bloodstained hands, it does not fulfil murderous repressive functions. What is going on in Northern Ireland, for instance, has nothing to do with 'human rights', hypocrisy plays no part there... Where, where is this 'humane' country worthy of the Olympic Games, this country without a 'Gulag Archipelago'?

The point, Roseblade might retort, is not 'Where are the Olympic Games to be held?' but: 'Let us launch a meaningful and courageous political campaign against the Soviet bureaucracy! We are not concerned with the fate of a chauvinistic and farcically competitive sports event!'

The point, I think, is to face 'now', realistically, a wide range of concrete political tasks and minor problems (such as the habit some 'academic comrades' have of embellishing empty organisational proposals with regurgitations of Trotsky's correct theoretical analyses), instead of embarking upon fanciful projects of dubious correctness and even more dubious effect.

Let us build a strong campaign against the Soviet bureaucracy! But not this way.

ALAN BROWN (London SW10)

Question of tactics

OTHER readers will no doubt want to comment on Chris Roseblade's reply (19 October) to my original article (7 September) opposing a campaign to boycott the 1980 Moscow Olympics. So just two brief points.

First, there is a rather dishonest implication in Chris's article that opposition to a boycott campaign equals opposition to any campaign against the Soviet bureaucracy. This is nonsense. We're talking about the best tactics for such a campaign (as we were over the World Cup). It's not a matter of principle and it doesn't help to pose it as such.

Secondly, does Chris also propose that we organise a campaign to boycott the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles? If he does, we can at least argue about tactics within a framework of basic political agreement (though I still think he'd be wrong).

But if he doesn't — well, that's something else. Because then the only implication is that the imperialist USA is somehow preferable to the USSR. It would suggest that socialists can approach such questions simply by applying a 'democratic' litmus test rather than from an overall class viewpoint. In which case a question of principle definitely is involved!

MARTIN METEYARD (London)

Soviet moral from Bristol

FURTHER to the discussion on whether to boycott the Moscow Olympics — three trade unionists from Latvia spent a recent week in Bristol as guests of the Bristol Trades Council.

The policy of the Bristol Trades Council is: against the use of psychiatry to 'treat' Soviet dissidents; for the right of trade unions to organise independently of the state. Curiously, however, none of the proposers or active supporters of this resolution could speak to our Latvian (or were they Russian?) guests.

Worthies from the Co-op, Labour Council, British-Soviet Friendship Society, and the officers of the TUC did exchange views with these bureaucrats. But the majority of their hosts never met them, and only found out they were here through the local press!

Should we boycott these representatives of a workers state? Opinion is divided among the left opposition of the Bristol Trades Council — to boycott them as if they were the same as representatives of the Spanish *sindicatos* under Franco plays into the hands of anti-communists like Boyd and Chapple. To welcome them, however hard a time you might give them when they're here, allows them to claim favourable publicity at home.

Anyway, they came — and a small picket tried to greet them in the Co-op. But a couple of Maoists, two children, two Trotskyists, a pair of state capitalists and a CP member were such a threat that they smuggled the three bureaucrats out the back way; and the treasurer of the TUC claimed he'd never seen us before!

Moral: If you want to support those who suppress democracy, you end up suppressing democracy yourself.

MIKE EAUDE (Bristol Trades Council delegate)

Value of 'Wedge'

GEOFF Sheridan's review of *Wedge* 3 (26 October) is both evasive and complacent. In spite of a facade of academic concern, he actually takes up virtually none of the substantive points raised by the articles he mentions.

For instance, the *Wedge* article on demonstrations offers both an analysis of their function and a number of ways in which they can be made more effective in their aims and more valuable experiences for those taking part. Geoff ignores all of these. In the same way, he doesn't even try to answer the criticisms raised by the article on the left press.

This dismissive approach is particularly unjustified when it is compared to the highly positive approach of *Wedge* itself. It avoids the facile knocking of left groups which the *Leveller* is prone to indulge

in. Instead, *Wedge* offers some valuable suggestions for ways in which the left could improve its politics and its practice. Geoff Sheridan doesn't seem to want to know.

GUY REDMOND (East London)

Political or cultural?

SOCIALIST Challenge seems to be very confused by the differences/similarities between 'political' and 'cultural'. First Tariq Ali calls the gay and women's movements 'cultural movements', and then Geoff Sheridan (26 October) calls a cuts demonstration a political (not a cultural) event. Wot were all those brass bands there for, me old fruit? Tubas against the socialists?

Why is it that *Socialist Challenge* reacts as if hot water was poured over them when debate goes outside the formal jousting between IMG and the SWP and CP?

Kevin McDonnell's article in *Wedge* was a much-needed look at why left parties bother to run weekly newspapers. Maybe too near the knuckle for your wordy and worthy weekly magazine, which (sad to me) grows weekly more predictable. No wonder the non-aligned left is rather sceptical of joining you, let alone the vast mass of people for whom the word politics is a complete turn-off.

The language you use is almost laughable. The intro to the *Wedge* article reads: 'Wedge has allowed preconceptions to creep in and is tending to narrow debate.' Ho, hum. I'll keep my preconceptions to myself in future. Also, how it is 'elitist' not to allow 'celebrities' to write for you really bends my brain. You may not agree with them but you can hardly call them elitist.

GEOFF LEE (London NW1)

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.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

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

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.

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.

BOLTON Socialist Challenge supporters group meets, White Lion, Deansgate, Thursday, 23 November, 8pm. Is the Communist Party revolutionary or reformist?

MOSS SIDE Socialist Challenge supporters sell the paper at Moss Side Centre, Saturday, 11-1.

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.

HACKNEY Socialist Challenge supporters meet to discuss revitalising the SC Group on Thurs. 9 Nov. at 7.30pm in the Britannia Pub, Mare Street. Speaker: Dodie Wepler. This is your chance to have a say in its future!

TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge Group meets every fortnight (phone 247 2717 for details).

TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge supporters sell every weekend: Saturdays meet 10.30am, Whitechapel

tube; Sundays meet 10am, Brick Lane (corner of Buxton St.).

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 Group, 'The Fight Against the five per cent', with public sector trade union speaker. West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road (off West Green Road), London N15. Tube: Turnpike Lane. Thursday 9 November, 7.30pm.

NEWHAM/TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge meeting: 'Ford and the fight against the 5%'. Speakers: Tariq Ali and speakers from Ford, NUPE. Thurs 9 Nov, 7.30pm, Room 201, Main Building, W. Ham precinct, NE London Poly, Romford Rd (Stratford tube).

CAMDEN Socialist Challenge jumble sale, 18 Nov. Please bring your spare jumble to 73 Arlington Rd, NW1 between 5 and 6pm any evening.

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 for further details.

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.

SWINDON supporters sell **Socialist Challenge** 11am-1pm Saturdays, Regent St (Brunel Centre).

CARDIFF Socialist Challenge forum. Fri 17 Nov, 7.30pm, Four Elms Pubs, Elm Street, (off Newport Road). 'Should Socialists Support an Assembly for Wales?'

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

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

HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge meeting on Thursday, 9 November, 8pm, Friendly and Trades Club.

DEWSBURY Socialist Challenge meeting every Tuesday, 8pm, Socialist Club. Next meeting: 'Reform or Revolution'.

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: Bob Pennington, 'The Struggle for a United Revolutionary Organisation', 7.30pm, Thursday, 9 November, International Community Centre, Mansfield Road.

SOUTH EAST

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

NORWICH Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday in Davey Place (opp. market) and bookstall Thursdays at University of East Anglia.

COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. For details phone Steve on Wivenhoe 2949.

SCOTLAND

For information 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.

OPEN FORUM

Local groups and how they work

Organising for Socialist Challenge

TWO WEEKS AGO the organiser of the Preston Socialist Challenge Group, Steve Rose, wrote to the paper raising a number of points about the role and development of supporters groups.

Similar queries have come from other readers. So we decided to ask DODIE WEPLER, the member of the Editorial Board responsible for liaising with these groups, to explain their aims and functions in detail.

Socialist Challenge was launched by the International Marxist Group on the basis of two policies — for a unified revolutionary organisation, and for a class struggle left wing. What progress do you think has been made in these areas.

Socialist Challenge has tried to reflect this goal in the way the paper is organised both on a local and national level.

For example, the National Policy Committee — which oversees the paper's general direction — involves the IMG, the International Socialist Alliance, an observer from Big Flame, as well as independent revolutionaries.

Socialist Challenge groups are promoted in line with these policies. We hope that revolutionaries working together in them can overcome in practice and through clear debate the sectarianism which has splintered the left for too long — often on quite secondary questions.

Today comrades from the IMG, the ISA, Big Flame and a number of non-aligned militants are discussing how to take the fight for revolutionary unity one step further.

The ISA and the IMG are proposing that if we can clarify the areas where there is broad general agreement, then we should engage in systematic joint work coupled with an organised discussion on areas where differences remain.

The aim of this collaboration would be to work towards a common revolutionary organisation.

With respect to the other fundamental policy on which Socialist Challenge was launched — for a class struggle left wing — I think there have been similar positive developments.

The most recent example of how the paper has been able to promote a real fighting opposition has been with its coverage on Ford's, which most comrades agree has been first rate.

Through its support for the Ford Workers' Group, the paper has been

able to show concretely — on an industry-wide basis — how to take forward the fight for a class struggle left wing.

The Socialist Challenge Trade Union Conference in July showed that the need for a political approach to the crisis which cuts across sectors has a ready response amongst trade unionists.

We want to follow this up with another conference in the spring, as well as a number of day schools for trade unionists on topics such as health and safety, alternative products, and so on.

Many of these militants aren't yet convinced of the project of a united revolutionary organisation but see the need for an alternative to Labour's policies. Can you explain a bit more how you see SC groups in relation to initiatives like Socialist Unity or Socialist Centres?

I think we should have a totally flexible approach to membership in supporters groups. With Labour in office there are large numbers of militants who are looking for an alternative to both the Labour Party and the Communist Party.

We actively support all efforts to bring together class struggle militants — and Socialist Unity and Socialist Centres have been two ways of starting to do this. But to give these movements a direction we also need to establish a current within them putting forward clear revolutionary policies.

Open discussion in the SC groups of all the important questions facing the working class at the present time is one very important way in which we can help to achieve such understanding and commitment.

But presumably the role of SC groups goes further than discussion forums?

Absolutely. Our fundamental aim is to organise supporters of the paper's policies in an active fight for those policies.

The only real test of whether differences among revolutionaries are fundamental, or can be handled within a framework of general political agreement, is through joint action.

So we hope to see SC groups organising more systematically around events like the Ford strike. Every group should be discussing how to go out and win support for the strike, distributing the material from the Ford Workers Group, and so on.

I think that this action-oriented approach towards a whole number of struggles and campaigns can really help to lift the groups and make them into a pole of attraction on the left as a whole.

This also applies to other activities. For instance, sales of the paper itself should be pretty important for the group!

After all, when someone who's been coming to meetings agrees to take part in paper sales, that's an important step in their political development and commitment.

We have to encourage them to move towards that level of identification with the paper — which means discussing it openly in the groups.

The same holds true for fund-raising. This not only helps to keep the paper afloat but can also help to finance your own activities — the cost of a room, mailings, and so on.

What's more, fund-raising is very often fun, and helps people in the group to get to know each other in a more relaxed way than is possible at meetings.

This needs quite a lot of organisation!

Yes. That's why we're in favour of the groups electing a steering committee which can discuss proposals on all these questions and bring them to the meetings.

It's particularly important to encourage non-aligned revolutionaries to go on to these committees. That's the only way groups will be able to develop their own independent identity.

With all this stress on SC groups, does this mean that you think regroupment will primarily take place in this way?

If comrades from different political traditions are consistently organising together in local SC groups this can only aid the process of regroupment.



SOCIALIST Challenge supporter leaflets for Socialist Unity in Birmingham last year

Photo: SOCIALIST CHALLENGE

But it would be mad to see regroupment occurring through any rigid schema.

The only guidelines should be to promote any structures which allow revolutionaries to overcome sectarianism and work together in an organised fashion, on a principled political basis.

On the other hand, quite different structures may well evolve if the campaign of joint work being discussed by the ISA, the IMG, Big Flame and independents gets off the ground.

Comrades interested in this campaign may feel that the SC group is the obvious structure to help coordinate their joint work. But if they have reservations here, we shouldn't let this stand in the way of united action.

You are a member of the IMG's Political Committee — can you explain the exact relationship the IMG sees between itself and the SC groups?

Well, as I've said, the main point the IMG wants to stress is that these groups must be autonomous, determining their own direction and activities within the broad political framework encompassed by the paper.

There is no question that we see these groups as simply periphery organisations for the IMG. But equally we are pleased when independents decide to join the IMG!

We think that the more people who can be won to the IMG as an organised force, the greater are our chances of pushing through this project to a successful political conclusion in terms of a very wide regroupment.

But recruitment to the IMG is not in any way a substitute for this much wider process.

What have been the main difficulties groups have come up against?

One of the biggest problems is that we consistently seem to underestimate the scope of the support which exists for the paper. And so we haven't set our sights as high as we might have

done.

The Editorial Board was wrong not to place more emphasis on helping out the SC groups when the paper was first launched. They swam or sank on their own.

Now we are beginning to organise regional meetings of group convenors. All political currents are encouraged to be involved in these meetings.

What would you see as the typical meeting of a group?

I think a democratically elected committee should draw up a programme of educational, around both fundamental questions and action-oriented topics.

The topics for this period are obvious — solidarity meetings for workers in struggle to discuss how revolutionaries can organise broad support locally; meetings to mobilise for the NAC Trade Union Conference; the Prisoners Aid Committee demonstration; and other national and international initiatives promoted by the paper.

But the group may also wish to discuss more fundamental aspects of Marxist theory — the nature of the state, Eastern Europe, and so on. A combination of both sorts of topics seems to attract and hold both experienced militants and comrades who are newer to revolutionary politics.

In addition to the educational part of the meeting, the group should have a regular business item including: distribution of papers; organisation of at least one collective mass sale (street or estate sales); the sub drive; promotion of the paper (fly-posting, getting it in WH Smith or local newsagents); fund-raising events.

Finally, as well as selling the paper, all comrades should be encouraged to show their commitment to the paper by making a small, regular donation — preferably through a bankers' order. In some groups the norm is £1 per month per supporter.

*What do you think? The next meeting of the National Policy Committee on 19 November will be discussing this question, and we would like to be able to draw on as much local experience as possible.



Photo: LAURENCE SPARHAM (JFL)

REVIEW OF BOOKS

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Merlin Press,
3 Manchester Rd,
London E14.

Don't sue, organise

Rights at Work by Jeremy McMullen
Pluto Press Workers' Handbooks, £2.25 pbk and £12 hbk.

WHAT DO trade union activists need from a book about legal rights at work? First, an explanation of how and according to what principles the law works. Secondly, a book organised according to the problems they face as trade unionists, so that confronted with a problem over, say, maternity leave, you can find the information you want straight away.

Perhaps most importantly, since few books have done this, you need a book that explains how best to use what legal rights exist — a book written from an active trade union viewpoint.

Jeremy McMullen's book achieves all three, and a bit more besides. Many workers, and active trade unionists, know little about their legal rights. The introduction points this out most strikingly by referring to the Grunwick dispute:

'Look what happened to the rights workers thought they had until Grunwick: 1. You have the right to join a union — but Grunwick members of APEX and the T&GWU were sacked without compensation when they did so. 2. You have the right to withdraw your labour — but if all strikers are sacked, none can claim unfair dismissal.

3. You can ask ACAS to recommend recognition — but ACAS has no power to demand co-operation by the employer. 4. ACAS can recommend recognition — but it isn't legally binding on employers. 5. You have the right to picket — but this does not override police powers to arrest you for obstruction and other minor offences, or allow you to stop vehicles.'

McMullen argues that the limitations of the law are to be found in four main areas. The law is concerned only with individual, not collective (i.e. trade union) rights.

Under the law, a contract of employment is seen as a mutually acceptable agreement between an individual worker and employer who have equal bargaining power. In practice any worker applying for a job, especially under today's conditions of mass unemployment, has to accept the employer's terms.

The result is that unions can't bring a tribunal claim over, for example, equal pay; each individual worker must make a claim based on her contract. Workers have many rights under the law, but 'having a right is not the same as getting it enforced.' In addition, the law is stacked against women. And finally, the law is constantly changing: legal rights once won are liable to be taken away.

So what conclusion does McMullen come to? 'Union organisation, collective bargaining and industrial action are the preconditions for individual rights. Putting it simply — don't sue, organise.'

Why write a book about rights at work, you might ask. The most obvious answer is that weakly organised workers may often have to use the law in the absence of strong union organisation to defend them. But while well-organised workers may be able to avoid relying on the law, they cannot afford to ignore it.

McMullen puts forward some guidelines:

*Organisation, negotiation and action are more effective than legal action. *While pursuing collective action, don't ignore the possibility of legal action at any time. *Often the threat of legal action can be a tactical advantage in negotiations. *Use the cases in this handbook to prevent your boss taking unilateral action which tribunals and courts have said is unfair.

Rights at Work explains the working of the law. The different types of law and who enforces them is all there, with diagrams to make it all clearer. The second part of the book

explains individual rights under the law. This deals with everything from the contract of employment, through to equal pay, maternity leave and discrimination. The third section, on union rights, is a goldmine of information which you need to be aware of in order to effectively use collective action to defend your legal rights.

Is striking a breach of contract? Can strikers be sacked with no comeback? Does it make any difference if you give strike notice? What are the legal threats to occupations? All these are answered.

So careful has the author been to see that any union activist or worker can use the information in this book, that it contains a glossary of legal terms, a list of useful addresses, a list of further reading, and even copies of forms you will have to fill in to claim your rights.

In short, this is just the sort of handbook that every union branch, shop stewards committee, and active trade union militant needs a copy of. See that your union branch gets one.

RICH PALSER

Rebutting conventional wisdoms

The Poverty of Theory by E.P. Thompson
Merlin Press. £3.95.

IT IS hardly necessary to urge people to read E.P. Thompson. **The Making of The English Working Class, William Morris, Whigs and Hunters** advertise and commend themselves far better than any reviewer.

What is generally not realised, however, is Thompson's coherence as a theorist. His disclaimer to the contrary — 'I do not have gifts as a "political theorist"' — must be firmly rejected. The publication of this important set of essays will aid our rebuttal.

Thompson presents us with the 'conventional wisdoms' of the dominant historical traditions of the British workers movement. The essay entitled 'The Peculiarities of the English' is an eloquent statement of his positions. The arguments contained in the latter have been defended by diverse forces on the left. The ideologues of the WRP, the theoreticians of the SWP, Michael Barratt-Brown, of the Institute of Workers Control, have all expressed strong approval of Thompson's interpretations of English history.

One makes this point not in a polemical spirit, but merely to register an important fact. What are these positions then? What makes them so attractive to the British left?

E.P. Thompson's fundamental thesis is simply that the English working class movement is peculiarly in advance of workers in other countries. This view leads to a clear theoretical framework and orientation.

If the English workers movement is so advanced then clearly the empirical embodiments of this must exist. Accordingly different manifestations are cited. Thompson himself argues that William Morris' 'original contribution... seems to me to be quite as significant as those of (let us say) Plekhanov and Labriola.'

Some of Thompson's less talented supporters have produced other proofs. Challinor idealises the Socialist Labour Party, Kendall the pre-war syndicalists and Hinton the Shop-Stewards movement. An attempt to find a more generalised and diffuse 'collective' progressive tradition is embodied in the **History Workshop** project which, as Tom Nairn has put it, projects an 'epic poem' of popular and radical achievement.

Since a particularly advanced Labour movement must be advanced in relation to something else, Thompson is critical of the small

alternative current in British or Irish Labour politics. Connolly, Maclean and the early Communist Party are seriously downplayed. Engels' politics are severely denounced.

Kendall actually argues in **The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-21** that the formation of the CP was an unmitigated disaster, as it blocked the development of a healthy British tradition.

The British working class, in its majority, has never confronted the political rule of the bourgeois state. To prove that it is advanced, one therefore has to hold up its actual preoccupations and concentrate attention on these. This approach has clear strengths as far as historical research is concerned. Thompson's account of the English working class exudes power precisely because, as a brilliant historian, Thompson can integrate the wealth of factual material he has uncovered in a masterly historical survey.

But as a political approach Thompson's method leaves a lot to be desired. For it avoids concentration on central questions of political strategy and focuses on minute research on interesting, but not central issues.

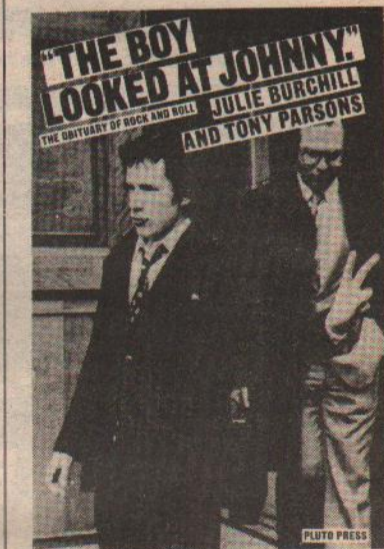
When appropriated by 'theoreticians' of left groups, who utilise Thompson's framework, but lack his greatness as a historian, all that emerges is a caricatured insularity. Thompson's political project leads the workers movement to focus exclusively on itself. It should be doing the exact opposite.

Should we buy this book? Yes, a hundred times yes. It should be read by every socialist. It is a coherent presentation of a wrong strategy, but it must be studied.

Thompson's historical work has helped transform our entire consciousness of working class history. It permits a serious debate to ensue.

The precondition for disagreeing with Thompson is a meticulous study of what he writes. Ignorance, after all, is the biggest enemy of advance.
JOHN ROSS

No Fun to No Threat



The Boy Looked at Johnny by Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons.
Pluto Press. £1.25.

PUNK rock-rebel music. Challenging the values of an apathetic society that ignores the length of the dole queue (despite Saatchi and Saatchi) and tolerates the fascists of the NF.

Music that encourages people to think and not to take no for an answer, while musicians are taken over by the business and forced to sell out on their principles — if they had any to lose in the first place.

Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons are not typical music journalists. They claim to stand outside the world of record company payola as 'the only unbiased rock writers in the world. and are prepared to expose the sham

Socialist Bookfair

The most comprehensive display of socialist and radical literature available in Britain today.

Camden Euston Road, London NW1
Townhall Fri 10th Nov. 12.30pm-6.30pm
Sat 11th Nov. 11.00am-5.00pm

THE Socialist Bookfair this year will have Camden Town Hall bursting at the seams.

Librarians and booksellers from all over Britain will be jostling with trade unionists, pensioners, students and teachers to see and buy the widest selection of socialist and radical literature ever assembled together.

There will be history, fiction, books from the womens movement, economics, poetry, politics, kids books and books from Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, USA, India, USSR, China and the Middle East.

For those who find the need for physical as well as intellectual nourishment there will be a bar open from 12.00 to 7.30 on Friday and 11.00 to 3.00 on Saturday. Delicious food will also be provided.

All books can be bought at the fair, but the real success of it all will be judged by the wider distribution of useful and inspiring books into many more shops and libraries throughout the country.

and corruption of the rock industry.

In the *New Musical Express* they have constantly attacked racism and sexism and brought back a report from the battle of Lewisham in 1977.

In this short book they chart the development of Punk rock from cult to mass acceptance. They show how new music has its potentially subversive features neutralised by enticing the artists with 'the same old dangled carrots of sex/drugs/cash/fame'. 'What were once sharp angry fangs are rendered soft ineffective gums'. 'Punk started as a movement born out of No Fun and ended as a product whose existence was No Threat.'

Names are named as they indict those who have fallen by the wayside.

Burchill and Parsons write in a highly subjective, new-journalistic style and there is plenty of humour as they recount their day to day experience of the rock and roll menagerie.

They relate how Iggy Pop — 'He was a racist and sexist, the hippy ideology seen through a microscope instead of rose tinted shades' — came to their office 'to ponce drugs'. 'He was given a generous supply of laxatives and gulped them greedily', causing 'the Mighty Poop' to interrupt his concerts over the next 48 hours.

They feel that punk has burnt itself out and that it's time for something else to take its place. Just what that may be they are not saying, they catalogue the antithesis of the original punk philosophy: 'Never mind kid, there'll soon be another washing machine/spot cream/rock-band on the market to solve all your problems and keep you quiet/off the street/distracted from the real enemy/content till next pay day.'

All in all, a book which separates the acceptable (X Ray Spex, Tom Robinson etc.) from the unsound (most American bands, the Banshees, Rastafarianism etc.). By showing the downfall of punk they may make it easier for those who follow to avoid the pitfalls. They certainly warn consumers to look critically at their heroes.

Just a couple of reservations. I wasn't too happy with the carte blanche they give to the use of speed, or with the dedication to Menachem Begin but it's up to the readers to make up their own minds.

Also, it's worth noting that, although published on 16 November, the book was written in the Spring. This means that the authors have not been able to look at developments like Carnival 2.

Still, a highly worthwhile read, which if it encourages a movement as energetic as punk, with a socialist content, may well be very important.

KEVIN WOOD

Hot air and water

Our Daily Bread — Who makes the dough? by the Agricapital Group of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science.

BSSRS 60p

BREAD is like paper: most people are more concerned with what is put on to it — whether it be purple prose or raspberry jam — rather than the thing in itself. In fact, today's bread, mass produced and ready wrapped, has more in common with a ream of A5 than we would expect.

Both are mostly white in colour, good for cleaning the hands, have rocketing prices and serve similar functions — paper keeps the words together and bread stops the jam from running down your arm. They are about equally nutritious.

Very few people I know eat a lot of paper, but eleven million loaves are consumed every day in this country. This is potentially dangerous. The wrapper of 'Mother's Pride' should have a Government Health Warning.

This may seem surprising for something as apparently innocuous as

a white sliced loaf (wsl) which is 75 per cent hot air (by volume) and 40 per cent water (by weight).

But eating a lot of this kind of bread has been related to the incidence of tooth decay, heart disease, cancer and that British dread, constipation.

The white sliced loaf is the result of the workings of capitalism in the baking industry. The bread and milling market is dominated by three big combines — Rank Hovis McDougall, Spillers-French and Associated British Foods — in fierce competition (Spillers have recently sold off their bakeries with the loss of 6,000 jobs).

In their pursuit of profit, they mill white flour because they make more money selling the by-products, bran and germ (the most nutritious part of the wheat grain) as animal feed and 'health' food, and in the process take out many important ingredients, including some protein, vitamins and 'dietary fibre' (keeps your shit together).

To produce bread in the cheapest possible way the 'big three' introduced the sinister CBP method of baking. This does away with the



traditional fermentation process and substitutes the high-speed stirring of a gruel of yeast, sugar, milk power, calcium carbonate and oxidising agents so that bread is produced in minutes rather than hours. It also uses less flour and results in bread that is ideal for mechanical slicing.

The nutrient and taste values of bread are way down the list of priorities for the bakeries. White slices mean more greenbacks for the baking and mill owners.

Not only the bread eaters suffer. The bakery and mill workers are subject to accidents, disease and very low pay (bakery workers have a basic wage of just over £1 per hour, including night shifts).

All this and a lot more is detailed in this excellent booklet on the bread and milling industries.

The one weakness in the booklet is the section on what can be done in the interests both of bread workers and bread eaters.

Although the working out of a strategy for bread workers to fight the sell-outs of their unions' bureaucracies may be beyond the brief of the authors, their championing of bakery cooperatives as the way to improve the quality of bread and the living standards and working conditions of bakery workers is totally misplaced.

Nor is there any real conception of how to unite the interests of the working class as consumers with those as workers. The fight for better conditions for bakery workers can and must be linked to the fight to improve the quality of mass produced bread and the conditions of the processes used.

This booklet provides some of the basic propaganda for militants to use to start this fightback — both for those in the baking industry and those outside.

However, 'health food' manufacturers and so-called master bakers are also after profits. Roughage is not the answer to capitalism. Nor is the whole wheat loaf (be careful not to drop it on your foot).

I await the first case of whole wheat bread poisoning and grievous bodily harm done by too much muesli.

COLIN SMITH

Writing our history

Tales I Tell My Mother by Zoe Fairbairns, Sara Maitland, Valerie Miner, Michele Roberts, Michelene Wandor. The Journeyman Press, £2.50.

ONE WOMAN in *Tales I Tell My Mother*, asks: 'In how many ways have we written our history?' The history is of the ideas and development of the women's liberation movement, told here in short stories by five women, all 'writers, feminists and socialists'.

The book is very conscious of its historical context; it is consciously feminist, and structured to raise specific questions about feminist fiction and language, politics and aesthetics.

Within this context, fifteen short stories explore the experiences that built the women's movement. They document, for instance, the nagging details of chores that pre-occupy women's minds; like Kathy, working frantically to deadline to cover up for her boss, thinking blankly she must clean the window.

One story, *You Only Have to Say*, is the best description I've ever read of just how women's sexuality is made secret, driven into silence: 'Oh yes, she knew she only had to say'. *Just Lie Back and Think of the Empire* conveys the weird matter-of-factness of a rape.

Other stories focus more directly on the experience of the women's movement. *After the Ball was Over* turns sisterhood inside out and back again in a beautifully tender lesbian love story.

Keep it Clean and Parallel Lines write the movement's history the way it was lived, asserting (as all the stories do in different ways) the importance of women's personal experience. 'All that does not glitter is not necessarily dross' writes Michele Roberts.

The majority of the stories are firmly grounded in everyday life, in England, during the last few years. A few of them do explore the fantastical, the erotic, or the bizarre, like the evocation of childhood in the story that begins 'There is a dead nun in the school chapel'.

On the whole the scope of the book is far more modest than, say, American feminist science fiction, which often looks at women's potential freedom and strength rather than our actual oppression.

Tales I Tell My Mother aims to be more than a collection of short stories. It consistently raises questions about 'feminist fiction': what it speaks of, what it's trying to do.

Answers, and further questions, gradually shape themselves. For these writers, feminist language is fluent, articulate and English. Its value lies in its subject, in reclaiming women's experience from silence or distortion; Michelene Wandor tells the story of the elephant and the mouse:

Elephant: You're very small.
Mouse: I've been ill.

What's innovative about the book lies in its explicitly feminist viewpoint, rather than the form and language of the stories.

For the most part these are fairly traditional, and none of them would seem out of place in a magazine. They relate in interesting ways to the 'literary tradition of writing by women — from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* through the Brontës and faintly into Women's Own serials', as the book comments.

The book contrasts with the tradition of political fiction. The stories go beyond 'parables about sexism' or rather wooden expositions like *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. On the other hand there's no way they have the power and urgency of fiction written from the heat of mass struggles, like Victor Serge's books do.

The impression *Tales I Tell My Mother* gives of feminist politics is of a process of illuminations, or pointers

towards what women's oppression is and how to fight it. It's a new and revealing way to write our history. And there's some fucking good stories in it.

SUSAN WATKINS

A diary to jolt our consciences



Big Red Diary 1979
Pluto Press, £1.50.

WHAT ON earth do you say when you're asked to review a diary?

This one has 365 days in it, same as the one I had last year (it has a few more in fact). Unlike last year, however, the dates all match up with different days. Clever that.

But this diary is different. Instead of lighting up times, Northern Ireland bank holidays and charts telling you what year was good for Beaujolais there is...politics! In other words, this is a *Big Red Diary* (though it's yellow this year).

The topic: Better active today than radio-active tomorrow.

The front and back pages contain all the necessary information on nuclear hazards, the threat to civil liberties, the worldwide anti-nuclear campaign and so on. It also has a simple explanation (useful for people like me) of how nuclear power works.

An improvement on previous years is that the anniversary dates at the end of each week no longer encroach on the space for each day, which makes it more useful as a normal diary.

One quibble: the diary tends to take over wholesale the environmentalist-style arguments of the bulk of the anti-nuclear movement instead of trying to place the issue in a socialist context. It is, after all, meant to be a red diary.

This means, for example, that it uncritically reproduces media horror stories about the possibility of 'terrorists' being able to make their own bomb — precisely the argument used to justify the clamp down on civil rights and restriction of trade union activity in the nuclear industry.

Still, the fault lies less with the editors of this diary than with some of the British left which sometimes seems pathologically incapable of adjusting itself to take up new issues. Perhaps if they have one of these diaries in their pocket all next year it might jolt their consciences.

RICHARD CARVER

The elementary duties of Marxists

The Second Slump by Ernest Mandel. New Left Books. £6.50.

THIS BRIEF extract from the last chapter of Ernest Mandel's new book on the present economic recession indicates

the character of the book. It is a popular account of the present crisis — a counterblast against bourgeois economists and bourgeois politicians who argue for austerity. It is vital reading for every militant who wants our explanation for the events shaking the world capitalist economy.

'The crisis and the re-emergence of massive unemployment are organic products of the capitalist system. They cannot be overcome within the framework of the system except by a sharp deterioration in the living and working conditions of the workers. To reject this deterioration is possible only by rejecting the capitalist system and initiating the construction of a qualitatively different economic system.'

To be sure, the workers' movement cannot be content to fight the crisis with the mere proclamation of the need for a general anti-capitalist struggle; to do so would entail division, demoralization and certain defeat. The crisis confronts the workers with alarming concrete problems: layoffs, job losses, factory closures, attacks on wages and social security, speed-up, attacks on previously acquired trade-union and political rights. To reject the defensive fight for immediate demands under the pretext that 'there is no way out within the framework of capitalism' is to condemn oneself and the entire working class to impotence.

In any event, the working class will not follow dogmatists who mount that particular hobby-horse. The workers have already shown that they are prepared to fight stubbornly to defend every gain, every threatened job. The elementary duty of revolutionary Marxists is to support this struggle with all their might, proposing the most effective demands and organisational forms.

The 35-36 hour week, a sliding scale of wages (its defence or conquest, depending on the conditions in each country), the defence of the right to strike and the freedom to negotiate wages, the struggle for solidarity with the hardest hit sectors — immigrant workers, women, youth, old people, the unemployed; such are the prime imperatives of this essentially defensive struggle.

To the argument of the employers and reformists that these demands undermine company profits and threaten to exacerbate the crisis the reply is that, given the choice between defence of the physical and moral integrity of our class and defence of capitalist's profits, we opt resolutely to defend our class, against the defence of profit. If full employment and a decent standard of living have become incompatible with capitalism, the employers have only to depart.

There will be some reformists (and ultra-leftists too) who respond that the logic of capitalism cannot be overturned factory by factory, industry by industry, region by region, or even country by country, but only as a whole; while awaiting the general combat against international capitalism (simultaneously in all countries, of course), a combat that will assuredly consign this system to the dustbin of history, they say, one must yield to this logic of capital.

The answer to this argument is simple: everything has a beginning. It is perfectly possible to defeat an employer or a sector of the employers if the working class is united, resolute, and develops a leadership that is up to the task. There is no better way to unleash a general combat than to wage some partial battles that achieve complete success and thus show the workers in practice that it is possible to defend existing employment, wages, and rights.

It is true, however, that any success in the defensive struggle remains only fragmentary and provisional. In the long run the logic of capital will reassert itself so long as we remain under the capitalist system. This logic of capital particularly works against the working class during a period of massive unemployment and economic depression.

That is why any defensive combat must be integrated into an overall anti-capitalist strategy that seeks to foster, by all possible means, a mobilisation of the working class around transitional demands directed against the fundamental causes of the evils from which the workers suffer."

Socialist Challenge

Bakers show the way NOW SPREAD THE FORD STRIKE

BAKERS have given the biggest boost to the Ford strike since the overwhelming rejection of the motor company's final offer, reports **JONATHAN SILBERMAN**.

The 26,000 bakers have taken action over their claim for a 26 per cent increase which would bring their basic rates to £51.55.

The employers' offer is strictly within the government's guidelines — 5 per cent plus a 6 per cent productivity deal.

By taking action over their claim now — four weeks before the settlement date — the bakers have given the lead to other workers with wage claims pending.

United action alongside the Ford strike is the most effective way of strengthening the case of all.

The unions at Ford are in a confident mood after the estimated 10/1 rejection of the

company's offer.

Ron Todd, chairperson of the union negotiators, said on Monday: 'We are available to meet the company when they are ready to indicate their willingness to negotiate on our claim.'

Secretary Reg Birch of the Engineering Union added: 'We will not be encouraging discussion on the ABC of the attendance allowance.'

Ford strikers have also received a boost from figures announced by the company concerning their European operations.

At Saarlouis in Germany, 5,500 of the 7,000 workforce have been laid off; the production line is approaching

standstill.

At Genk in Belgium the lines have already stopped.

Encouragement for the Ford strikers is coming in from other quarters. Civil servants employed at five London DHSS offices picket the London regional headquarters of the DHSS in protest at the 'shabby treatment' of the strikers.

The 25,000 strikers at Dagenham are forced to go through a complicated centralised postal arrangement to receive their payments rather than through the normal procedure of local strike centres.

It is this sort of support which must now be actively sought by Ford strikers. Flying pickets, organised by local

strike committees and involving the mass of strikers, can be used to win other workers to take action.

Locally and nationally, joint action with bakers and other workers — meetings and demonstrations — should be organised.

The TUC must be called upon to turn its Congress resolution opposing the pay code into action. The sentiment must be: no delay on pay, out now with Ford.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Anti Nazi League rally
Sunday 12 November, 1.30pm
Central Hall, Westminster
Stop the Nazi NF!
No more Holocausts!



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.

18 November Sales Day

WHAT ARE YOU doing on Saturday 18 November? That's the second National Sales Day on which we plan to make a big push with 'Socialist Challenge'.

Can you help us, asks distribution manager **STEVE BRIGNULL**.

All Socialist Challenge groups should by now have discussed how many extra copies they want of next week's issue. Let us know immediately so that we can adjust the print order.

It's no good telling us you want an extra couple of hundred after the paper's been printed — we just won't have the copies to spare.

Socialist Challenge groups should also be discussing where they are going to organise mass street sales on the 18th.

We want all present supporters (and some new ones as well!) to be out on that day so that we can spread our forces and make a real impact.

One way of attracting more attention is to sell badges as well. Hackney supporters found a big market for these on the first Sales Day. If you don't

already have any, write or phone in your order at once.

And if your group is particularly involved in any local struggle or campaign, why not distribute leaflets about it at the same time? It all helps to get you known as activists in the local community.

The other thing is subscriptions. All groups should have a stock of our 'special offer' subscription cards.

The offer is as follows: either £2 for three months, or £5 for six months, which includes a free 1979 diary — either the Big Red Diary on nuclear power or the Pan-African Diary (both £1.50 in the shops).

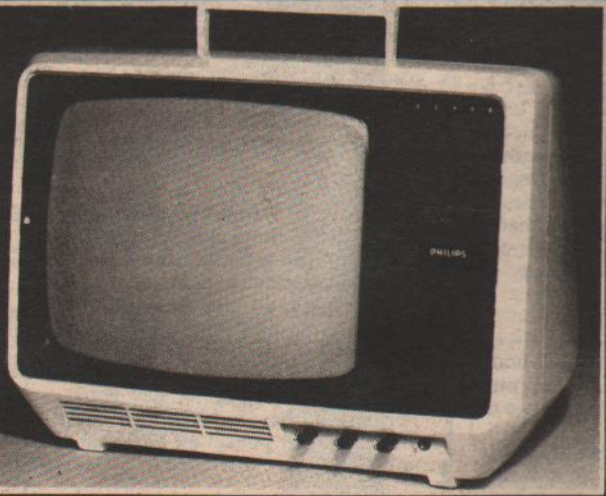
Everyone who buys a paper on 18 November should be given one of these sub cards. Our slogan: make every new reader a regular reader.

OUR FUND DRIVE

WHY NOT try your luck in our Xmas lottery?

For 10p per ticket or £1 for a book of tickets, plus sae, you can have a chance to win one of the following: a portable 12-inch black and white TV; a case of French wine; an autographed copy of Ernest Mandel's new book, *The Second Slump*; a record token; or a year's subscription to Socialist Challenge, International and Socialist Woman.

The draw will take place on 18 December in our offices, and the winning number will be printed in the issue of 4 January 1979. Organised by D. Weppler of 328 Upper Street, London N12XQ.



LAST MONTH a supporter who was a founding member of the Fourth International in 1938 offered us an extra £5 for every £100 we raised up to £500 in the next four weeks, and an extra £10 for every £100 above that.

Well, the four weeks is up. And with a rather disappointing £126.65 coming in over the last week, the grand total stands at £723.93.

This means that we can now expect an extra £45 from that supporter. Our grateful thanks to him.

Does anyone else fancy making a similar offer to cover the next four weeks? We can assure you that such a challenge always adds a real spur to our fund-raising efforts.

At the very least, we hope that supporters will donate enough for the guillotine blade to send Begin's head rolling into the basket next week to join Videla's.

This week our thanks to:

Stirling supporters	£1.95
P. Sedgwick	£10
H. Richards	80p
P. Fryd (non-smoking)	£3.40
Anon	£1.50
J. Blackburn	£10
Finchley supporters	£2
E. Singer	£10
SOAS socialist unity supp.	£2
Anon	£5
Haringey SC group	£80
TOTAL	£126.65



VIDELA
500

BEGIN
1000

SHAH OF IRAN
1500

PINOCHET
2000

SMITH
2500

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Domestic: 6 months, £5; 12 months, £10
Abroad: Airmail, £16.50. Surface, £10 per annum.

Name _____

Address _____

I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of _____

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'.

Complete and return to:

Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.