

socialist
REVIEW

Monthly Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

**Profile of
Arthur Scargill**

**Civil War in
Central America**

**Russian Women
Speak Out**

20 April-17 May 1984 40p



**Exclusive: How Britain's
Biggest Union
Sold The Steelworkers
Short**

Nasty Medicine—What's New?

'A fundamental revolution in the control of the economy' (*Financial Times*). 'A radical departure from all previous British budgets' (*Guardian*).

What the Tories expect us to put up with for the next four years has been spelt out in black and white. The treasury expects unemployment to rise by a minimum of 400,000 by the end of next year. The living standards of those on the dole queues are to be cut by five per cent a year as prices rise so as to force them to look for jobs, however poorly paid. The wage-related cushion that makes life just about bearable for the first six months on the dole is being phased out over 18 months.

The prescription charge will rise to a figure that will deter vast number of people from visiting the doctor. Attempts will be made to starve strikers with families back to work by hitting social security payments and tax rebates. Education will face the biggest cuts yet. Housing expenditure will fall to less than half the 1974 figure (in real terms). Calculations by the *Sunday Times* show that the only people to gain a penny from the budget after taking into account the combined effects of the tax changes and the spending cuts will be those on more than £30,000 a year.

And, just to ensure that the bitterness engendered by these steps does not 'disrupt the fabric of society' police spending will increase by 2½ per cent a year and military spending by 4 per cent.

As nastier a batch of measures as you could imagine. Yet, to be honest, none of them in themselves constitutes a 'fundamental revolution' or a 'radical departure' from what we've had in the past.

Not only was there Howe's just as nasty budget last year, but before that there was the trend set by succession of Healey budgets in 1976. State housing expenditure slumped 40 per cent between 1974/5 and 1978/9, education was £400m less (in real terms) in 1977/8 than in 1975/6. Social security expenditure rose only because unemployment more than doubled. And over the period of the Labour government both defence and police spending rose.

However, there is something radically new with Howe's approach. To see what, we have to look briefly at what governments in the past — Tory as well as Labour — have attempted to achieve with their expenditure.

They have set themselves three goals:

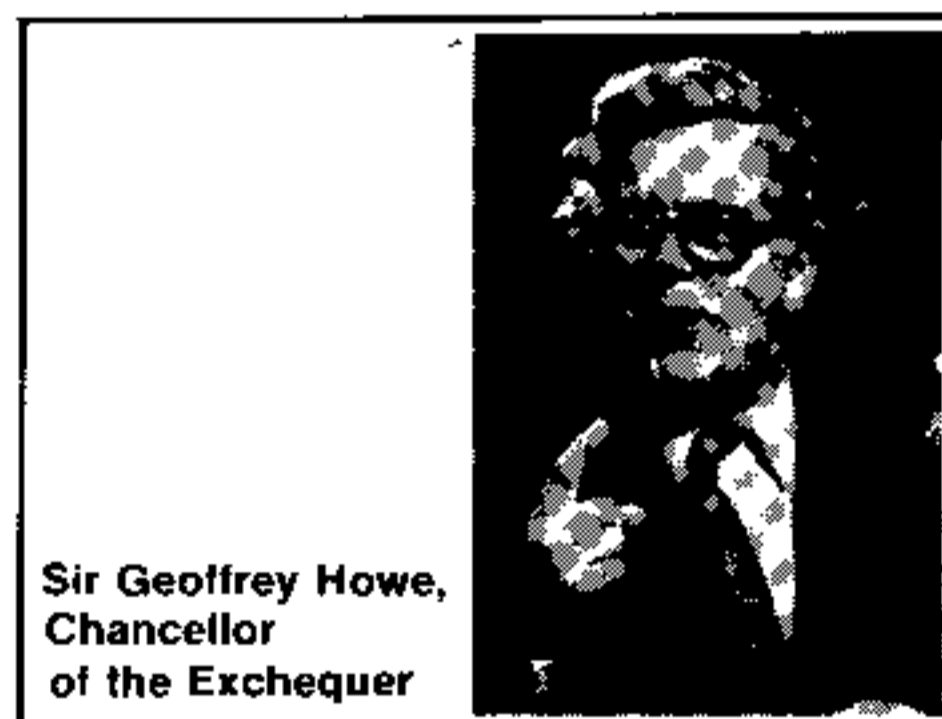
(1) To provide a framework which makes it easier for capitalists to obtain surplus value and to accumulate capital. This means above all ensuring that workers are fit, able and willing to work — what Marxists usually refer to as ensuring the 'reproduction of labour

power'. The education budget provides workers with the minimal skills needed the operations of modern industry; the housing budget ensures that they can recuperate their strength and bring up the next generation of workers; the health budget provides the means to deal with the wear and tear which might otherwise keep some labour power out of the labour market.

(2) To provide measures that prevent the frustrations and discontents bred by the system tearing it apart.

(3) From the late thirties until the late seventies government spending was thought to be able to fulfill a third function — to act in a 'counter-cyclical' way to compensate for the ups and downs of the private sector. In this way, Keynes and successive generations of politicians of the 'left' and right argued, capitalism's tendency to crisis could be overcome.

All three goals have undergone drastic changes in the last few years. The conditions of prolonged economic crisis since 1973-4 have led to a complete re-appraisal of what is needed and what is possible.



**Sir Geoffrey Howe,
Chancellor
of the Exchequer**

The crisis has meant that capitalism has expected to need fewer workers, not more and had demanded cuts in expenditures on 'reproduction' of the workforce — a demand to which the Labour government conceded from 1976 onwards. Economic competitiveness came to be seen as more important than 'social peace' and so measures were taken that were bound to drive people below the poverty line. Above all, the Labour government broke with Keynesian notions and began admitting that it could not overcome the crisis by government intervention.

However, the break with the past was not quite complete under Healey and Callaghan. As social democrat politicians, they still needed a lingering faith in the ability of their own actions to improve capitalism. And so they more or less assumed that the cuts of 1976 would be temporary, to be restored once a new world boom and the flowing of North Sea oil together put British capitalism on to a new path of expansion. Accordingly, they allowed total expenditure in

their last year of government, 1978-9, to begin to rise again from its 1977-8 low point.

The assumption was shared by many — if not most — senior Tories, who took it for granted that pre-election demands for still more cuts could be forgotten once in power.

Since then, however, the expected world boom has collapsed into the beginnings of a new recession which will be hastened by Carter's latest 'anti-inflationary' measures — and British big business has been doing appallingly both in terms of exports and in the domestic market.

It is these facts which explain the genuinely 'revolutionary' features of the latest budget. It breaks with the past because it assumes that the crisis is here to stay and that no-one can do anything about it. The treasury has publicly stated that production will fall by 2½ per cent this year, and will not thereafter pull itself out of that trough at a rate of more than one per cent a year. In private, it expects industrial output to plunge by an enormous 7 to 8 per cent this year. Such predictions mean that in 1984 less wealth will be produced than ten years earlier.

Instead of trying to compensate for this slump, Keynesian fashion, with more government spending, Howe is deliberately ensuring that government spending slumps as much as the rest of the economy. He aims to cut the budget deficit from 5.5 per cent of the national product today to 1.5 per cent in 1983/4. We are right back to the pursuit of the 'balanced budget' which was decried by a whole generation of apologists for capitalism as the easily avoidable 'error' that brought the slump of the interwar years.

The dominant group in the Tory leadership think that the only possible way out of the crisis lies in allegedly self-correcting mechanisms of the market. If only 'trade union monopolies' which enable workers to fight in defence of their living standards are weakened, then eventually efficient firms will expand at the expense of their inefficient rivals and everything will be rosy again.

It is an approach which big business is prepared to accept for want of any other ideas. But it does not inspire much enthusiasm: the stock exchange actually went down after the budget. The approach is creating doubts within a powerful section of the cabinet: the so-called 'wets' believe it is very dangerous indeed to engage in all-out class war while not even pretending to be able to soften the nastiest features of the system.

Those doubts are fed by the extreme unpopularity of the government's measures — witness the Southend by-election, the reaction when Joseph or Thatcher visit industrial districts, the growing support for the TUC's day of action on 14 May. But Thatcher can go on ignoring them so long as trade union leaders continue their performance in the steel strike, and allow real struggles to drag on without serious solidarity.

An Unnecessary Draw

Round one is ended. 11 months after the election of the Thatcher government, 13 weeks after striking, the steel workers return to work, bitter, but undefeated. The longest big national battle since the miners lockout of 1926 is over.

The outcome will influence everything that happens in the next few months. Neither side scored a knockout. But the government remains on its feet, with scarcely a bruise to show, after what many of its members feared would be a disastrous adventure. It can afford a certain self satisfaction as it awaits the next round with its strength unimpaired.

It is true that the strikers return to work with 17 per cent (including nasty productivity strings) as against the 2 per cent they were originally offered. It is true that they showed a determination and solidarity that no one looking at the past record of the steel unions had thought possible. It is true that in order to keep their strike isolated the government had to turn a blind eye to a number of substantial wage settlements in other parts of the public sector. But it is also true that at the end of the day the *Financial Times* labour editor could write without fear of contradiction:

'The two main unions have fulfilled the prediction of Mr Nicholas Ridley, the Tory MP, who in a private report in 1978 rated steel workers as those public sector employees least able to win in a confrontation with the government.

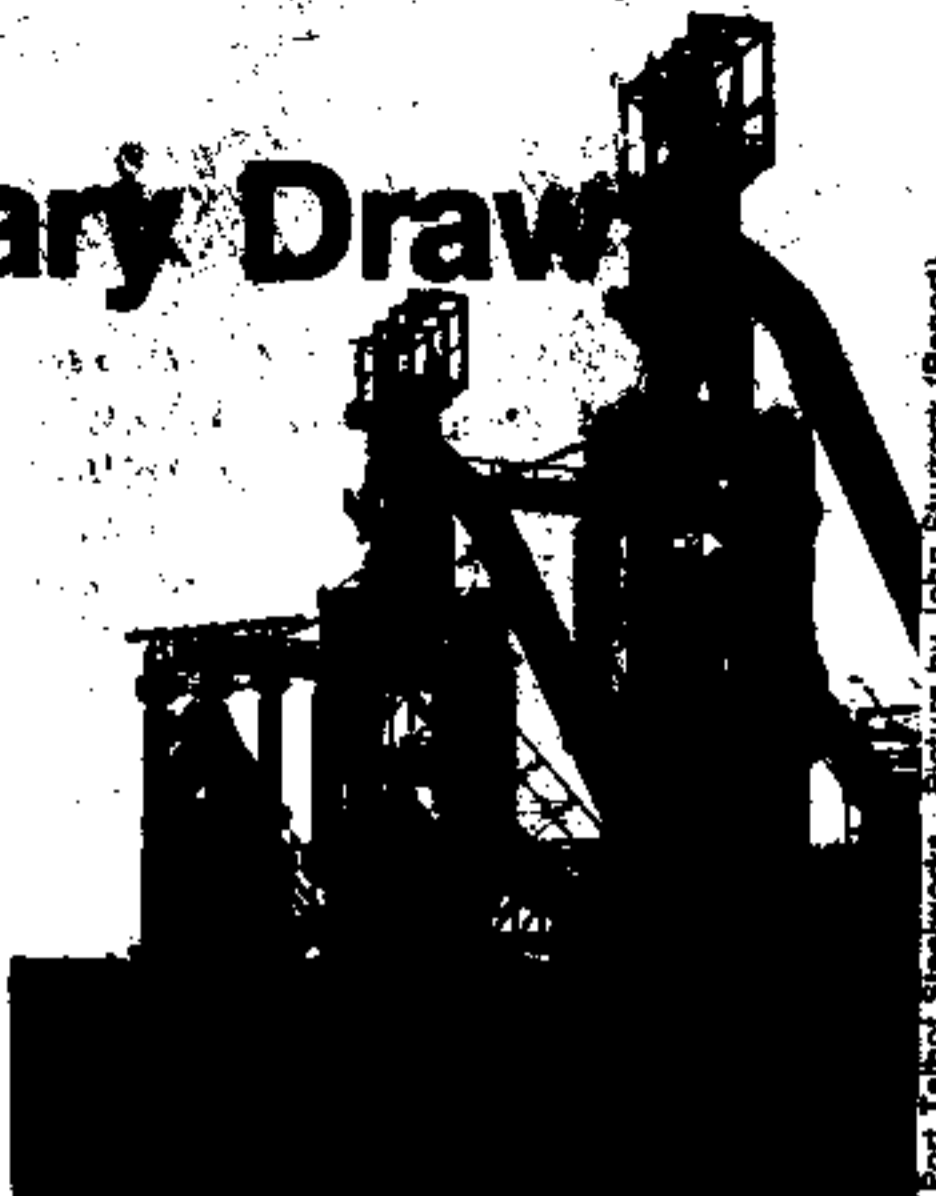
(2 April 1980)

That this has been so, despite the massive – and completely unexpected – picketing by the strikers, is a comment on the behaviour of the leaderships of all the main unions.

The steel union leaders began by giving three weeks' notice of the strike, time for industry to build up its steel stocks, then for the first weeks of the strike refused to stop all steel and gave dispensations for private steel to keep moving. Bill Sirs of the ISTC even talked of giving a dispensation to the key Sheffield firm, Hadfields, when the private sector was officially out on strike. They retreated from the demand of 20 per cent-no strings into discussions on productivity compromises at the first opportunity, and then ended up ramming through the final sell out.

Ominous for the whole struggle against the Tories was the activity of the new undynamic duo of Chapple (electricians) and Duffy (engineers). They used their key position to delay the craft unions coming out at the very beginning of the struggle, then tried to do a separate deal with the Corporation that their own rank and file rejected, and finally, at the end, ordered a return to work before even hearing what was being offered through 'mediation'.

The TUC did exactly what those of us who have examined its behaviour over the years would have expected. In the



Port Talbot Steelworks - Picture by John Sturrock (Report)

early weeks of the strike it devoted most of its efforts to warding off the possibility of a Welsh general strike against steel closures. It then studiously avoided any call for solidarity with the steel strike on its own national anti-Tory demonstration in London. Finally, it deflected pressure for real action against the Tories by fixing a date for a national day of action, including token strikes, for mid-May when the steel strike would be well and truly buried.

But in some ways the most scandalous behaviour came from the one large union that is still said to be run by the 'left' – the Transport and General Workers. The mighty TGWU allowed its local officials to give the nod and the wink – and often the written dispensation – to much of the scabbing that made the picketing so ineffective.

It was this that allowed no fewer than £300m of steel imports to enter the country during the strike. It was this that led to the most exciting display of solidarity with the steel strikers – that of the Liverpool dockers – remaining a localised affair. It was this that enabled the major sections of British industry to go on operating as if the strike hardly existed.

The lessons of the strike have to be drawn now, before Round Two against the government opens, otherwise there is a great danger that all the anti-Tory rhetoric of the union leaderships and all the genuine anti-Tory feeling among ordinary working people will amount to nothing. The most unpopular government in living memory could get away with everything it wants and more.

That is why we devote the first section of this *Review* not, as we usually do, with general news and analysis, but with looking at the longest strike and its lessons.

First, we look briefly at what happened in the 13 weeks. Then in a major investigative article Dave Beecham and Simon Turner spell out in detail the disgusting do-nothing attitude of the TGWU leadership. We then look at the intervention the much, much smaller forces of the Socialist Workers Party were able to make in the strike. Finally, Duncan Hallas looks at the prospects for the forces of the left in the aftermath of the strike.

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The 13 Weeks



CHRONOLOGY OF THE STEEL STRIKE

December

3rd British Steel Corporation offers 2 per cent only on wages.

7th Strike called by main unions, ISTC and NUB for 2 January, giving industry three weeks to build up its stocks from British Steel.

January

2nd Strike begins. ISTC leader Sirs says private steel will not be affected, even though together with imports it accounts for about 40 per cent of steel used. In Yorkshire workers turn up at plants and begin more or less spontaneously to picket private steel plants and local engineering factories. Strike committees are formed from previously passive and non-interventionist joint branch committees of ISTC, and displace full-timers in running of strike. Sirs and most full-timers still try to give dispensations to firms to move private steel.

7th Sirs' first attempt to sell out strike. With Len Murray of TUC suggest to BSC deal around 8 per cent nationally and 5 per cent 'on account' for local productivity. Talks break down after BSC offer 8 per cent plus 4 per cent in advance for three months only. Rank and file steel workers and strike committees take up call for 20 per cent — no strings.

Strike committees in most regions decide to halt *all* movements of steel, whether from private works or BSC. Clashes between police and pickets in Yorkshire and South Wales.

Financial Times reports, 'British industry is becoming less confident of its ability to withstand a steel strike of up to six weeks without a fall in production.'

9th ISTC officials 'inspect' Hadfields private steel works in Sheffield and agree it should not be picketed because 'it is not taking BSC work.' Pickets ignore this.

Call from Wales TUC for Welsh general strike against planned steel closures, to start from 21 January. This follows 9:1 vote for industrial action by Welsh miners.

14th Wales TUC postpones general strike until 10 March, but calls one day stoppage for 28 January.

15th ISTC executive persuaded by Sirs not to call out private sector for another ten days, until the 27th.

16th Jimmy Milne of Scottish TUC tells strike committees to lift 'tertiary' picketing of steel-using factories.

17th BSC announces closure of plant which will halve workforces at Llanwern and Port Talbot and lead to closures of many South Wales pits. *Financial Times* reports 'steel is still moving about the country with comparative freedom, no effective blockade of imported steel has been organised...'

18th First signs that government might be worried about impact of strike. *Observer* (20th) reports that ministers have long since stopped pretending to each other that this is not an extremely dangerous and badly handled dispute. But it also tells that 'Moss Evans and David Bassett were critical of the speed of the moderate Bill Sirs in calling the strike.'

21st Announced that government will not provide any 'new money' to end strike. At a Sheffield strike rally Scargill of the miners gets rapturous applause, but Sirs is greeted with shouts of '20 per cent, no strings'.

22nd CBI reports that industry has steel stocks to last five weeks.

26th Lord Justice Denning orders union to call off private sector strike due to start Monday 28th.

27th Craft union leaders, headed by Chapple and Duffy, begin separate negotiations with BSC, which the government hopes will isolate main unions and force them to settle too.

28th Private sector comes out, pending meeting of union executive to consider Denning judgement. Sirs says, 'I will go to jail if the executive agrees to disobey law.'

South Wales one day stoppage of mines, docks, and some transport. Huge demonstration reduces Sirs to tears and he says, 'This could be the starting point of a revolution.'

29th Sirs tells ISTC executive that to ignore the 'rule of law' is to open up way to 'anarchy'. He brow beats them into calling off private sector strike. 200 pickets march on law courts chanting 'We want Denning'. Strike hardens in Scottish private sector (not affected by Denning's judgement) and picketing intensifies in South Wales.

31st Pickets ignore union instructions and intensify picketing in Midlands and at Sheerness. Len Murray says TUC is 'close to breaking point' with government. Private meeting of Sirs and Hector Smith (of NUB) with steel bosses. Sirs says he will oppose calling out private steel again, even if Denning's ruling overturned.

February

1st House of Lords meets with near unprecedented speed and over-rules Denning. ISTC calls out private sector again. Sirs says, 'The only one who was

against the decision was me. We've had one victory today and one defeat.'

6th Secret meeting between Sirs and BSC bosses in Luxembourg. Sirs announces agreement close.

8th Formal negotiations break down after 20 minutes as 60-man ISTC negotiating committee boos and heckles Scholey of BSC. He complains that they were all wearing '20 per cent, no strings' badges. 'I do not see how it is possible to negotiate en masse, creating as it does a climate which generates highly emotive pressures.'

10th 'Major breakthrough' for BSC as leaders of craft unions (Chapple and Duffy again!) agree to 10 per cent rise in return for productivity and demanding concessions. Hadfields' workers vote to return to work.

11th TGWU delegate meeting rejects craft union deal. Steel workers mob Keith Joseph when he tries to tour industrial areas of South Wales. Ford and Vauxhall say they have enough steel to last 'some weeks'.

14th Craft union delegates throw out their leaders deal. Massive picket of Hadfields persuades workers to come out on strike again. Local police helpless.

17th Meeting between Sirs and BSC bosses at Teesside airport. Sirs says he has 'thrown BSC a lifeline'.

20th Welsh NUM delegate meeting calls for all-out action against steel closures and in solidarity with steel strike as from next Monday. Mass picket at Sheerness fails to stop main private plant still open.

21st-23rd Pithead meetings at all but eight Welsh pits vote against strike. End of idea of Wales general strike.

22nd ISTC and NUB draw up claim which goes against '20 per cent, no strings' call — instead demand is 15 per cent plus 5 per cent productivity.

25-26th Private steel strike begins to collapse as Sheffield factories like Firth Browns vote to return to work.

27th BSC begins to ballot workforce on whether there should be a secret ballot on the strike. ISTC leaflet opposes ballot, but gives workers contradictory advice, saying they can boycott ballot or vote No.

March

3rd Nearly all private sector back at work.

4th Mass meeting in Sheffield collects ballot forms and burns them.

5th Further move away from '20 per

cent, no strings' as joint meeting of all steel unions agrees to claim of 14 per cent plus 5 per cent for productivity.

7th *Financial Times* reports; 'it is an open secret that steel from Europe is beating the blockade into Britain.'

9th 'Ballot on ballot' gives inconclusive result - 70 per cent of forms returned say yes, but only two-thirds of strikers take part. So just over 50 per cent boycott or vote No.

TUC demonstration in London. No attempt to make steel strike central to it.

11th *Financial Times* reports 'points of dispute between the two sides have greatly narrowed after two days negotiating.' BSC now offering 14.4 per cent in return for productivity and job losses.

12th Talks collapse again. Very militant demonstration of thousand pickets outside Hadfields clash with police. 59 arrests. Major stockholders declare they can still meet customers requirements.

17th High court order British Rail to release steel blocked at Wolverhampton and Brierley Hill. But rail and lorry-workers refuse to cross picket lines.

Sid Weighell of NUR says his union wants national strike on 14 May day of action: 'It is not sufficient to wave banners in Trafalgar Square.'

18th Sid Weighell warns that railmen may not be able to go on stopping movement of steel, because 'transport drivers are taking work away from NUR members.'

20th *Financial Times* reports, 'a very large cross section of the engineering industry has entered the 12th week of the strike with little loss of production.'

23rd Liverpool dockers vote to strike after threats of victimisation for refusing to load Russian ship with steel. They call for national dock strike.

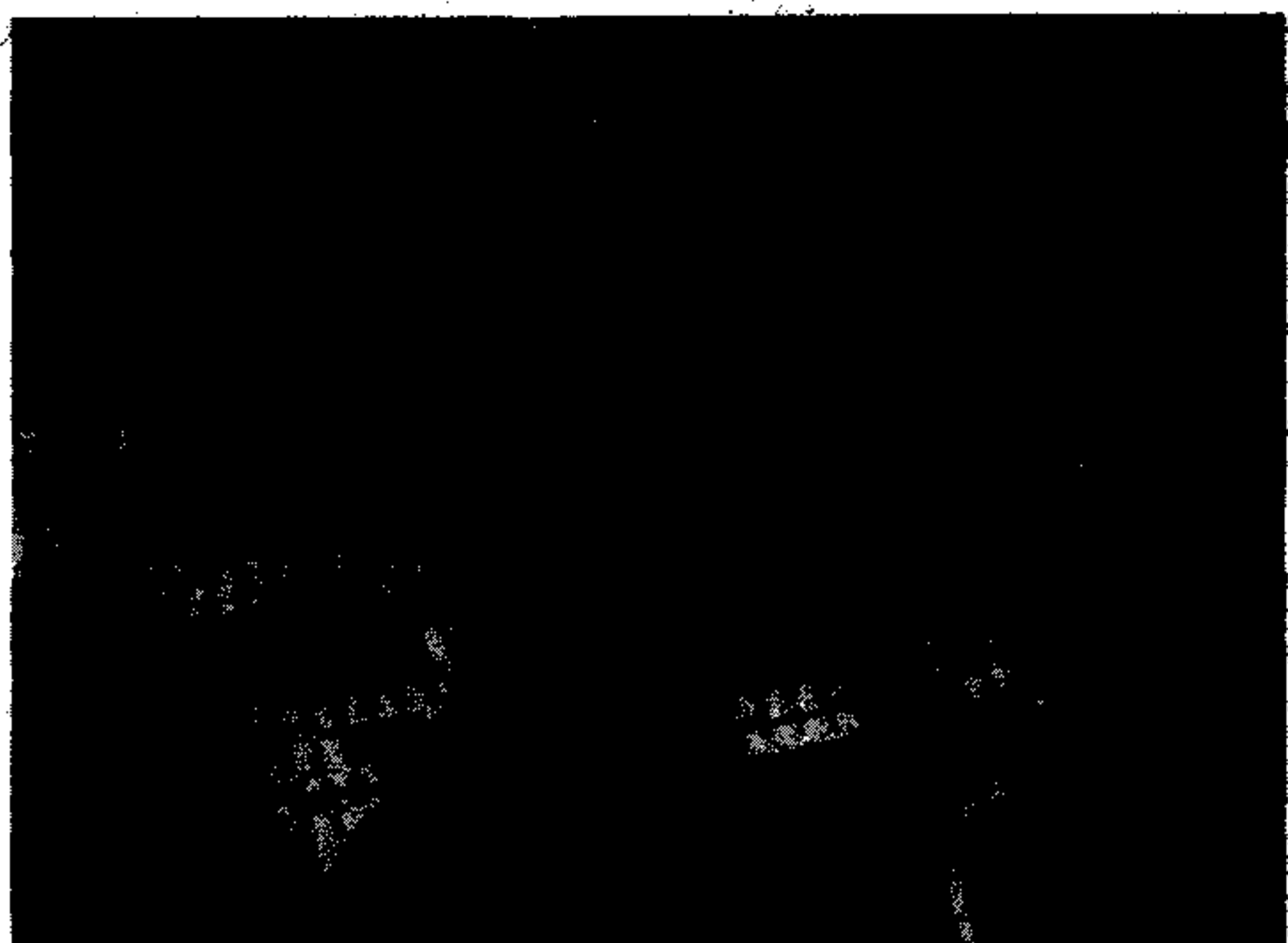
25th TGWU turns down call for a national dock strike and Southampton dockers reject local strike call.

28th Unions agree to Committee of Inquiry headed by former Labour government minister, Lord Lever. Craft unions announce in advance they will accept its findings.

31st Committee of Inquiry suggests deal of 11 per cent plus 4.5 per cent productivity - only one per cent more than BSC had offered three weeks before. Union nominee, Keys of Sogat, says, 'that is the most we could suggest.' TGWU accepts.

April

1st ISTC negotiating committee agrees to call off strike after pressure from Sirs.



Picture John Burrook (top)
Revised Steel Fisher, Birmingham

Standing on the Sidelines

The Role of the TGWU in the Steel Strike

A big national strike like that in steel cannot be won by the actions of steelworkers alone. Massive support from other workers is necessary, especially when solidarity action means putting your job at risk. In this respect the crucial element in the steel strike turned out to be the role of the TGWU - above all lorry drivers and dockers.

The TGWU leadership failed to provide any firm instructions on blacking until the ninth week of the strike. This was the result of a combination of fear of all out action against the Tories and cynical manoeuvring with the leadership of the main steel unions - the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and the National Union of Blastfurnacemen.

Local TGWU full-timers were allowed a virtual free hand until two-thirds of the way through the dispute. Reports from steel pickets from one end of the country to another tell of these full-timers refusing to instruct members not to cross picket lines. In the non-registered ports, in road haulage and in the engineering industry this 'masterly inactivity' allowed a free hand to the rotten elements who were only too ready to ignore 'advice' and 'recommendations' not to weaken the strike.

The evidence shows that a real black on steel movements by TGWU drivers would have been possible given an early lead; it would have won the strike in the first six weeks. The evidence also shows that tremendous potential for rank and file solidarity existed - in the registered ports, in Sheffield engineering, among the best-organised drivers and elsewhere - but it was criminally wasted by the official leadership at both local and national level.

Of course, all the blame cannot be laid at the T&G's door. As we show

below, full-time officials in the Sheffield Confed (mainly AUEW 'leftwingers') took a blatantly cynical attitude from the start. On the railways, while the basic level of official support was good - no steel moved by rail at all after official instructions from the NUR and ASLEF - local NUR officials were quite willing to 'forget' national instructions if members' jobs were said to be threatened.

Above all the ISTC leadership itself played a very bad role. The debacle of the private steel strike did an enormous amount of damage - first, when the ISTC did not call them out; secondly, when they were called out without consultations with other unions; thirdly, after the strike crumbled when ISTC 'dispensations' were being handed out to save face.

Throughout the dispute - bar the few days when the private sector strike was solid - the TGWU was able to claim, with some justification, that blacking was nearly impossible because of the ISTC's own contradictory position at national level. It was an excuse that Alex Kitson, acting general secretary of the T&G in Moss Evans' absence, used with the dockers to avoid moving for national strike action in support of the Liverpool dockworkers, when they stopped in support of the steelworkers and the right to black.

Excuses have a way of going round in circles. Virtually at the same time as Kitson was complaining about the steelworkers to his docks members, Sidney Weighell declared that he would lift the NUR blacking if T&G drivers did not stop moving steel that would normally have been carried on the railways. In every case these official excuses for inaction, and for not escalating support for the strike, were cover-ups

for the full-timers' fear of what might happen if the members were let loose; of how some employers might up the stakes; or of how the government might use the issue of trade union solidarity to intensify its assault on union rights.

Manoeuvres In Sheffield

The cynicism among the officials at different levels is also absolutely breathtaking. At local level the most extreme example occurred in Sheffield.

At the start of strike the Sheffield Confed district committee met to discuss blacking and the support that should be given. While the TGWU is represented on this committee, the AUEW dominates it. The policy agreed at this meeting was that no new steel should be handled or used by Confed members (ie. engineering workers). Most Sheffield factories would have shut in a month if such a policy had been implemented seriously. But there was no real intention of carrying it out.

The district committee is composed almost entirely of full-time officials. But the blacking policy, which meant certain lay offs, did not affect them directly, compared to the stewards in the plants. From the outset there was no campaign – either by the Sheffield Confed collectively, or any of the member unions, to carry through the decision. No mass meetings of stewards, no factory campaign – nothing. The decision in favour of the blacking policy must thus have been purely cynical – formally correct but left to fail.

Some of the really well organised factories did implement the blacking. Shardflows, part of GKN, kept up the blacking throughout. But GKN transferred the work to Scotland, where it was not blacked. Easterbrooks also successfully blacked. At Keetons (also GKN) workers refused to handle new steel and four were laid off. The whole factory then walked out and remained on strike for the duration of the steel stoppage. Unfortunately these excellent examples were not the general picture in Sheffield. Many stewards went to mass meetings to argue for the blacking, but in the absence of any lead from the

officials who had voted for the policy they failed to win majority support. That some considerable support have been given was later seen in the TGWU's response in the engine works when the official instruction to cross picket lines did finally arrive in the tenth week of the strike.

At that stage a meeting of all TGWU stewards was called for the Monday morning (by then the eleventh week of the strike). Despite the incredible delay, the meeting voted to accept the ruling and operate the policy – no crossing of steelworkers' pickets. On the following day there was a meeting between T&G full-timers and the steel strike committees in the area. This agreed which factories should be picketed.

On Wednesday morning 14 firms were closed as TGWU members respected picket line on their factories. This tremendous solidarity shows how the strike could have been utterly different if from the start the T&G General Executive Council and the officials had given a lead.

But the strike had already been going for nearly three months, and the total failure of the vast majority of TGWU officials to do anything to enforce the new instructions took its toll. The day after Sheffield's show of strength, a vote was forced and lost at Firth Browns, a large and influential factory. Another important factory, Doncasters, had some T&G stewards leading their members across the picket line. By Friday another stewards meeting was called in the city. It became clear that Sheffield was isolated in terms of implementing the union instruction in the factories, and under the tremendous pressure being exerted, the vote was reversed.

The T&G Delays

Given that the T&G did eventually put its name to an extremely strong instruction to members to support the strike, what caused the inexcusable two-month delay? It was after all only on 3 March that the General Executive Council met and declared that it 're-inforced the request to members not to cross picket lines' but then went on to add the crucial words 'we are instructing members that this instruction must be positively operated' (text of telex from Transport House). What world shattering events had taken place between 2 January, when the union issued its first mealy mouthed 'requests', and that Tuesday two months later when the executive suddenly got all militant?

Part of the answer, TGWU officials might claim, lies in the contradictory positions of the ISTC which started off by saying it did not intend to interfere with the private sector, except if manufacturers increased production. But this policy was changed after barely two weeks of the strike – and in any case it became rapidly clear that imports were flooding the docks, and moving out of the unregistered ports and some London wharves.

The disgraceful truth about the

T&G's flabby position right through January and February appears to be that the union thought it could improve its bargaining position inside the British Steel Corporation by playing hard to get with the ISTC until Bill Sirs agreed to joint negotiations with BSC by the ISTC, TGWU and the National Union of Blastfurnacemen (NUB).

This is not just a guess. There was great confusion inside the TGWU before the union issued its 3 March instruction. Local officials were making great play with the words 'request', 'advice', 'recommend', etc.

The union's policy up to 3 March is well illustrated by a telex to all regional secretaries on 26 February which stated that the T&G 'should continue to give maximum support' and 'in particular we should advise our drivers not to cross picket lines' (our emphasis). Dockworkers were also advised not to move steel out of compounds.

But this circular is much more significant. For Moss Evans goes on to say to his regional secretaries that 'I can assure you that no dispensations have been given from central office.' Some of the chickens – local officials giving their own dispensations – had come home to roost.

Eventually, however, we get the clue as to why the T&G – which had previously recommended a sell out deal independent of the ISTC and NUB only to be turned over by local delegates – was suddenly to develop a passionate support for a strike entering its third month. Moss Evans' explanation continues 'Brother Tom Crispin, TGWU national secretary, will in future be accompanying Bill Sirs and Hector Smith in future negotiations with BSC.'

And finally we hear 'The general secretary had discussions with Bill Sirs and Hector Smith on Thursday 21 February proposing that the TGWU joint with the ISTC and NUB as a first step for one bargaining group.'

The TGWU has always been in a minority in the steel industry, where the ISTC (and to a lesser extent the NUB) have often negotiated with hardly a thought for the other general unions, let alone the eleven unions representing craftsmen. Meanwhile the steel industry has had a lot of inter-union feuding (including one huge confrontation between the ISTC and what is now APEX, which indirectly resulted in a job as an ISTC official for 'strike coordinator' Sandy Feather. His father, Vic, was TUC general secretary at the time).


It looks as though Moss Evans thought the strike was as good a time as any to assert the importance of the T&G. It may be he has larger ambitions: the ISTC will be even less able to stand on its own if the closures go through and it has the largest assets per head of any union in Britain. The TGWU has only about 10,000 members in BSC and no steel industry trade group.

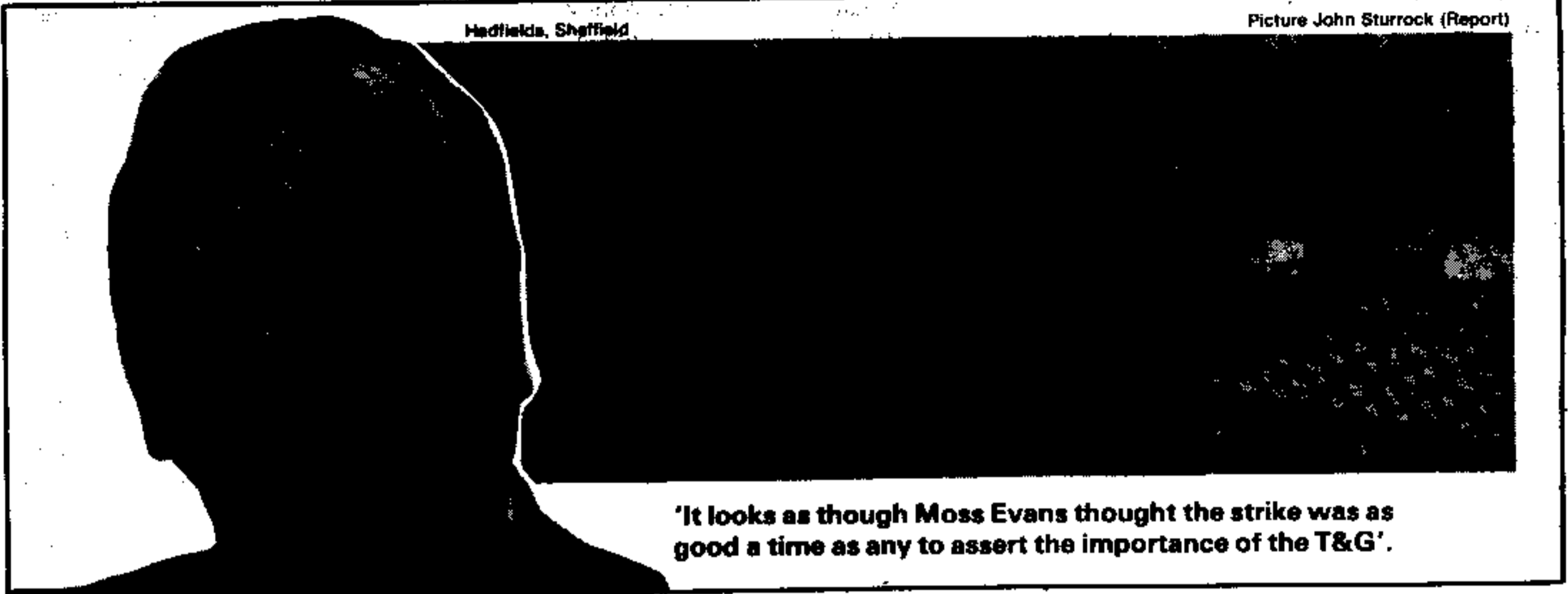
Whatever the reasons, however, it looks as though the TGWU deliberately held out for an increased bargaining role as the price for putting its massive muscle

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RUSSIA
How the revolution was lost





'It looks as though Moss Evans thought the strike was as good a time as any to assert the importance of the T&G'.

behind the strike.

The Price

The price that steelworkers – and others – have had to pay for this cynical operation and the at best half-hearted action by T&G officials is considerable.

This is shown by what happened in the docks. The total stoppage at Liverpool resulted from an extraordinary meeting of Mersey port employers which took the decision to suspend 100 workers who refused to load steel pylons onto a Russian ship. The stoppage was almost immediate – and total; involving not only dockers but other port-workers. Yet again it shows what might have been.

Although, under pressure, the Liverpool strike was made official, national officials put the block on any coordinated plan for nationwide action.

In London there have been more serious developments. Early on in the strike scab drivers were arriving at the dock, being turned away, and coming back with official T&G permits. At the beginning of March, workers at two wharves which handle steel almost exclusively – Lovells and Express Wharves – were locked out for implementing the black. There was pressure for the type of response which came later on Merseyside, but this was headed off by a deal which saw the dockers taken back on other jobs.

The problem is that a weak TGWU official policy has been used by the employers to try all sorts of stunts. This culminated with the diversion of cargoes away from the strong registered docks either to unregistered small ports or to places like Ipswich which is a registered dock but where the unregistered workforce outnumbers the dockers almost four to one. Ships diverted from London were unloaded at Ipswich, though delegations from London and finally a mass meeting addressed by national official Ron Todd persuaded Ipswich to black steel on 27 March.

The danger is that dockworkers' fight for jobs and against the erosion of the protection of the national dock labour scheme is being undermined by the employers' partial success in divert-

ing cargoes and the TGWU's failure in unregistered ports.

Almost more serious, however, was the TGWU's absolute failure to get any kind of national blacking by lorry drivers until it was so late as to be almost meaningless. It is also worth noting in this respect that the ISTC and other unions have really paid the price for not insisting in the past that drivers delivering supplies are in a union.

Once again the possibilities for effective action were there right at the beginning of the dispute, and had the T&G organised blacking on anything like the scale of the drivers' action in January 1979, the Tories would have faced with an industrial crisis by mid-February at the latest.

The story of the best-organised area shows what might have been. In the first two weeks, the key Birmingham lorry drivers branch at the containerbase voted for a policy of no crossing of picket lines. They issued their own circular which local official Jim Hunt distributed to steelworkers – but not to other drivers' branches. Subsequently the drivers' branches in Wolverhampton and West Bromwich also voted at the beginning of February for the same policy. But right up to the time that Moss Evans' circular reached officials – the beginning of the tenth week in many cases – they were giving a nod and a wink to steel deliveries. District officers such as Terry Askey in West Bromwich and David Buckle in Oxford were among the worst.

Yet the fact that the officials were quite capable, when they felt like it, of implementing a decent policy was shown when a steel stockholder, Perrys, got a court injunction against British Rail for the release of 500 tons of steel. The blacking was enforced by an instruction from regional secretary Brian Mathers. NUR drivers moved it but refused to deliver it across a T&G picket line, and finally T&G members inside the stockholder refused to touch it. The injunction died the death.

A shining, but unfortunately rare, example of solidarity came at another stockist – Herringshaw Steels. Stewards there insisted that the ISTC picketed the place. Stewards at the British

Waterways Board also agreed to black if pickets stayed and, at a lower level, stewards at the Triumph plant in Bordesley Green informed the ISTC about planned movements of steel.

Finally, there was the example of Wolverhampton drivers who attempted to block the movement of steel from one railyard by setting up their own picket line against cowboy operators. The action was ineffective but it seems to have headed off any further attempts.

Wanted – National Response

To sum up: the key weakness was a lack of a national response and co-ordination by the T&G, or for that matter the ISTC. When it came it was too little and too late – but even then it showed what could have been achieved. There were several areas around the country where even in the tenth week of the strike ISTC and TGWU officials were sitting on their hands, while local stewards and members showed quite a good response.

The case of what happened at the Chrysler-Talbot factory in Linwood illustrates the general picture. Worries about jobs and the fact that private sector ISTC members and TGWU members were still handling steel prevented a really aggressive blacking policy which would have shut the factory. Whenever an ISTC picket was on the factory – which was not that often – any deliveries of steel were blocked. But management used reject steel or the wrong grade. When the machine shop was down to one day's supply, steel from Hadfields turned up. On one occasion it was found that Chrysler drivers were crossing a picket at a stockholders – their steward was pulled up about this and it was stopped.

Had such actions been taken up generally and not isolated or undermined by local officials or bureaucratic manoeuvres at national level, an overall national response to the steelworkers call for solidarity would have emerged. The way that ISTC leaders conducted the dispute and the way that T&G leaders responded and sought their own ends ensured support was fragmented and defused.

David Beecham and Simon Turner

SWP and the Steel Strike

The steel strike was the first major confrontation with the Tory government and, as such, it was a test of the ability of the left in the labour movement to work fairly successfully in the strike.

It is important to begin with a definite declaration of modesty. The SWP was not able to lead the steel strike. When we speak of success, we are speaking of a very modest success.

The first condition for our intervention was that the SWP already had an organised presence inside the steel industry but one almost wholly confined to the Sheffield area. While it is always possible to intervene in struggles from the outside, the type and the quality of our work in this strike was determined by this existing base inside the industry.

This base did not appear by magic out of nowhere. Our comrades had beavered away in a union dominated by the right. They had produced the explicitly-SWP steel bulletin *Real Steel News* on a small but consistent basis for two and a half years before the strike (see *The Real Steel Story* in *Socialist Review* 1980:2).

A second major factor was that unlike many other sectors, there has never been, in the steel industry, an organised broad-left type movement. Here there was an entrenched right-wing bureaucracy sitting on top of an inexperienced but eager rank and file. Thus *Real Steel News* was able to provide direction and information to the workers whose experience of struggle made them into determined militants. There was very little of the combination of left-wing talk and deadering official routinism that marks a struggle dominated by the broad left.

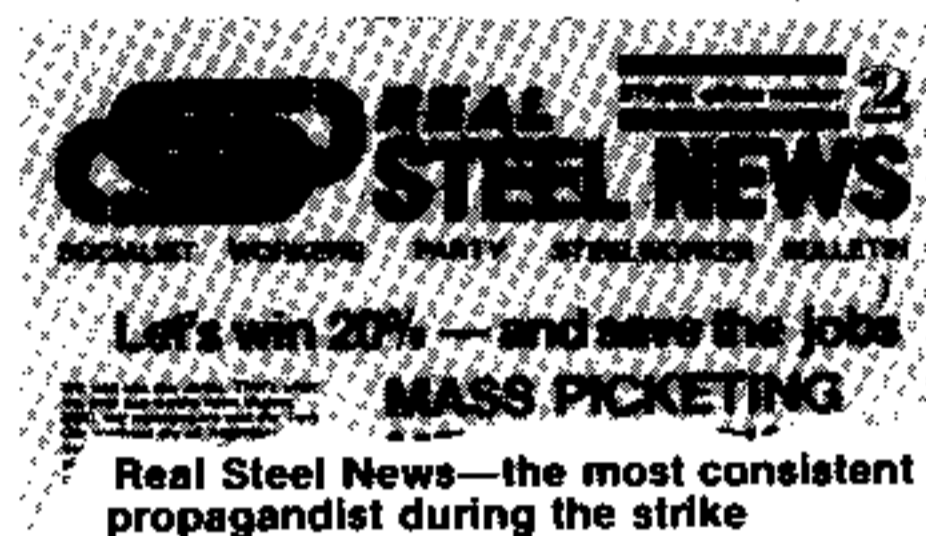
In hard terms, the strike saw nine issues of the national *Real Steel News*. The shortest run was 12,000 copies. The longest was 25,000 copies for the 'Defy Denning' issues. The average worked out at round about 17,000. These figures mean that *Real Steel News* reached just about every steel worker who was active in the strike. The fortnightly national meetings, usually attended by about 30 steel workers from most of the areas of the country, were the only national forum for the best militants of the strike.

In terms of the decisive events, this was, of course, not big enough to really control things. Thus the attempt to set up a national strike committee based on the area strike committees turned out to be unsuccessful: it met, but would not challenge Sirs for the national leadership of the strike.

On the other hand, *Real Steel News* was the most consistent propagandist for the demand of '20% and no strings'.

The local *Real Steel News* bulletins were just as influential. There were, for example, 10 in Teesside, 13 in Scunt-

horpe and 12 in Sheffield. Since many of the local strike committees did not get round to establishing their own bulletins until well into the strike, the local bulletins of the SWP were accepted as the local bulletin. They were able to concentrate on detailed local issues and, because of the wide variation in consciousness between the different areas, they were able to bridge a gap which a national publication could not do. Many of the ideas which became local policy started life in the *Real Steel News* local bulletins. The consequence was that local meetings around *Real Steel News* usually involved the majority of active pickets in a particular place.



Another feature of work around the strike was the organising of solidarity. Here the advantages of a national organisation which, because of its political orientation, had, over the years built up a knowledge of the labour movement and contacts with many of the best local militants were very clear. In many areas the SWP was the organisation which provided steel workers with somewhere to stay, with transport, with introductions to local trade unionists, etc. An example is North West London, where the local organiser of the SWP estimates that he visited about 120 factories and workplaces with steel workers arguing for collections and support.

Of course, in many areas, there was united work with other left-wing organisations. In Ipswich, for example, the members of the SWP were able to work very closely with members of the CP and the Labour Party. But however well local militants of other parties may have responded, the only serious organisation in the labour movement which responded in this sort of way was the SWP.

It is fair to say that, while without the SWP there would still have been factory visits and collections by steel workers, it would have been a very much harder and slower job. Because an organisation with a network of contacts already existed, half the job was already done.

Politics

The last point raises the question of political intervention. After all, the SWP exists not to be the organisation of the best trade union militants but to overthrow capitalism. In this context, the impact of the SWP on the political

awareness of steel workers and others is of vital significance. One index of that is the extent to which people joined the SWP: there certainly was considerable growth amongst steel workers both in the Sheffield area and in half a dozen other steel centres, but it is important not to exaggerate this and only time will tell if our organisation is good enough to hold on to those recruited when the inevitable downturn follows the end of the strike.

The strike illustrates the importance of the party in winning industrial militants to socialist ideas. Because a great deal of the support was organised by people who were committed to a general socialist world-outlook, the ideas inevitably rubbed off on some of the activists. One example was the recruitment of three pickets from Stocksbridge. While the ability of the party to find numerous places for collections in the London area was important, the fact that the party also involved them in visiting an occupied hospital, demonstrating against Corrie and intervening in the LCDTU were decisive in winning them to socialist ideas.

But the importance of a socialist party extends far beyond the relatively small numbers of steel workers who have been recruited. The SWP was also able to influence to a small extent the general political awareness of wider layers of workers.

A good example is the degree to which the politics of women's oppression entered the strike. It is, in fact, very difficult if not impossible to hold together a strike of this length without involving the women connected in one way or another with the industry. Yet it was the SWP which pushed hardest for this — many of the strike committees had never thought about it.

One of the best discussions at *Real Steel News* meetings was about the role of women in the strike. In Scunthorpe the SWP organised two meetings of strikers' wives. The SWP was involved very heavily in organising the coach of women militants to Sheerness, and everywhere argued hard for the involvement of women on the picket line.

Another aspect was the fact that steel workers on picket duty away from home constantly met women militants of the SWP who refused to conform to the stereotype of what a woman should be like and argued back about politics. The consequence was many long arguments and very considerable progress.

None of these things would have happened the way they did if it was not for the existence of the SWP. That is not to say that we did not make many big mistakes. For one thing, it is some years since there has been an opportunity to intervene in this sort of struggle and it was, for many SWP members as well as many steel workers, a question of jumping in at the deep end and finding out if you could swim. Very few people drowned. With the experience gained in this confrontation, we will do better next time.

Colin Sparks

Where do we go from here?

What are the prospects for the socialist left after the longest big national strike for more than 50 years and after nearly 12 months of the Tory government? What is the significance of the national 'day of action' called by the TUC for

14 May? These and many other questions have been in the minds of many militants over recent weeks. *Socialist Review* talked to Duncan Hallas, of the SWP Central Committee, to get his opinion.

What do you think is the balance of defeats and victories in the fight against the Tories over the last year?

The election itself marked a significant shift to the right, the lowest Labour vote since 1931. Naturally, the result was not very surprising, given the abysmal record of the Wilson/Callaghan government, and it might well be reversed in an election now.

Much more important is the evidence of deep erosion of shop floor leadership and the ability of the government and employers to use the media to influence workers against both stewards and unions. There has been a decline in solidarity.

The magnitude of the defeat with BL's successful victimisation of Derek Robinson should not be glossed over. Of course, as *Socialist Review* has shown in detail, the rot set in long ago but the demonstration of the impotence of the stewards against the combination of Edwards, Duffy and the media is itself an important victory for the capitalist class.

How does the steel strike fit into what you have said so far?

It showed the government on the offensive. The government provoked the strike on the calculation that it could defeat and humiliate a major section of organised workers. It was meant to be a re-run of the defeat of the Postmen in 1971.

Of course, the thing backfired. The magnificent determination of the steelworkers ensured that the result was not a repeat of the UPW defeat. BSC was forced to substantially up its offer — remember the UPW was forced back on exactly the terms offered before the strike.

At the same time, the outcome could only be regarded as a partial victory, in a strictly defensive sense, and a three months strike was a very heavy price. And the closures still threaten.

Two things stand out about the strike. It showed that there are limits to what the government can get away with. Given sufficient provocation, workers will fight and fight with great tenacity — this strike was easily the longest national strike since the war.

The other thing is the speed with which rank and file consciousness can change quickly and elements of rank

and file organisation develop. The ISTC will never be the same again, and the SWP can justly claim that its intervention around *Real Steel News* played a certain role here.

At the same time we have to say — lack of solidarity dragged out the strike. Effective solidarity could have won it in six weeks or less.

What do you see as the prospects for the industrial struggle now?

Immediate outlook uncertain. We should be cautious about detailed prediction. A great deal depends on the calculations — and miscalculations of the other side and of the union bosses. Some of us were very sceptical about the prospect of last year's engineering strike taking place at all — I certainly was. Well, we were wrong.

We had this discussion in the SWP about the balance of class forces — the whole 'upturn or downturn' argument. It was necessary and important to come to a realistic appreciation of the situation and that meant recognising the *reality* of the downturn. But we should not suppose that this *general* appreciation, which is undoubtedly correct in my opinion, enables us to predict very specifically.

It does not. No assessment does or can. There are *two* sides in the struggle (and the union leaders are another half of a side) and the interactions are complicated.

What can be said in general terms is that, though the enemy has scored some victories and the state of our forces is not what it might be, the government has not been all that successful in its own terms.

The average level of wage settlements, whatever the detailed arguments about the statistics, is unacceptably high for the government. It is more or less in line with the rate of inflation. Thatcher and Co. have not so far been able to repeat the success of Callaghan and Co. in actually reducing average real wages.

They will certainly keep trying. Therefore conflicts will occur. But where and in what form will only become clear as events unfold.

What is your reaction to the TUC call for a day of action on 14 May?

It is *very* important. A real national mass strike, even though a one-day



Duncan Hallas in Brick Lane

Picture Colin Sparks

affair, can make a big difference to the confidence of militants and can begin to shift the consciousness of large numbers of workers.

The demonstration on the 9th was big but not very militant on the whole. There is deep scepticism about the TUC leaders — well justified scepticism. But a successful *action* on the 14th can change the mood into a more aggressive one.

We have to work hard, in every workplace and union body we can reach, to make the 14th big and militant. The Employment Bill will become law. The fight to prevent its *implementation* will be greatly strengthened by a national strike.

Should the slogan of a 'general strike' be central to our agitation and propaganda around 14 May?

Let's call it a national strike. A one day stoppage is really a particularly militant form of demonstration. That is the objective, not an easy one but a realistic aim. For Marxists in our tradition a *general strike* has the connotation of an *unlimited* mass strike to decisively defeat the government. If that were on



As necessary now as then: leafletting the Austin Longbridge canteen in 1976

the cards, even remotely, at present we would of course make the general strike slogan central. It is not. This may change in the future. The point is to try always to raise the relevant slogan, relevant to the particular situation. Of course we won't quarrel with people who are actively working for the 14th but use the general strike slogan to mean what we mean by national strike.

With rising unemployment, the question of the right to work is once more moving to the fore. How do you see the Right to Work Campaign responding? Are there any lessons we can learn from the experience of past years?

The Right to Work Campaign has taken the decision, I believe, to organise a march from South Wales to London and Brighton later this year. No doubt other schemes will be considered too.

There is a difference, isn't there, between 1980 and the years of the Labour government? Then the Right to Work Campaign was, most of the time, the only body raising the right to work. Now big sections of the labour movement are beginning to denounce the government on the issue. And the economic outlook is grim. The whole Right to Work issue is going to grow. Perhaps a much broader operation will be possible in the near future. Certainly the Right to Work Campaign itself will work for one.

The Labour left seems much more significant now than it did in the years of the Heath government. Do you think there is anything qualitatively different

about the Labour left now and what we've known in the past?

During the Heath government the Labour left was quite successful in terms of objective it set itself. The aim was to get a left-wing programme adopted and *Labour programme '73* was described by *The Times* as 'the most radical platform ever put before the British electorate'. Naturally, it was junked once the Labour Party regained office in 1974.

There is a change this time because the lefts are trying to weaken the organisational hold of the right on the party — re-selections of MPs and so on. It is also clear that the people around the Labour Coordinating Committee see the need to build their own machine on a national basis. How successful they will be is another question.

The really crucial thing is what happens to the active membership of the Labour Party, especially its working class membership. It has been declining for a quarter of a century and this decline was *not* reversed during the years of the Heath government. If this long decline is really being reversed, as various people claim, then maybe the lefts can recover the sort of constituency base the Bevanites had in the fifties. But we should not confuse a drift of tired Trots and weary ex-revolutionaries into the wards with an influx of radicalised workers.

There is an enormous gap between the appeal of Benn's *ideas* — they do appeal, I am convinced, to hundreds of thousands — and the extremely feeble *organised* forces of the Bennites.

Past Labour lefts — in the twenties,

thirties and fifties — rested to a significant extent on the CP influenced union left. That is weaker now — weaker, indeed than during the Heath government. And the Labour Party youth, always important for the left, seems to be well sown up by the *Militant* so the 'genuine' Labour lefts have an uphill struggle — even in LP machine terms.

Politically they have not changed. They are the same left reformists. They are our competitors. Naturally, this does not exclude cooperation on specific questions. It necessitates it. We will stress united *actions* eg, the fight against the Employment Bill, the Right to Work and so on.

How big the Labour left will turn out to be in the end is not yet determined. *At the moment*, the SWP probably has as many *activists* as they do. Personally I tend to think that only criminal mismanagement can prevent them growing with Thatcher in office. But a *qualitative* difference with the past? That would mean a real centrist current, moving left. It is not apparent so far and it is by no means inevitable that it will appear. A lot depends on our own rate of growth. If it is big enough we *may* be able to short-circuit the process.

The SWP is easily the biggest group on the revolutionary left. But at the 'debate of the decade' between Tony Benn and Paul Foot a sizeable section of the audience was clearly more attracted to the sort of non-party notions preached by the *Beyond the Fragments* people. How do you evaluate such currents?

How many were attracted in a *positive*

THE new issue of the SWP's quarterly journal features a major analysis of Cuba, Castro and Socialism by MIKE GONZALEZ and PETER BINNS, plus The New Untouchables: the international migration of labour, by NIGEL HARRIS.

Contributors to debate in the journal include BOB ROWTHORN on the Alternative Economic Strategy and RICHARD HYMAN on the current British trade union movement.

JACK FULLER also provides an extended analysis of the Politics of the Italian Autonomists.

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sense is a question, but there is no doubt that *Beyond the Fragments* has become a focus for 'apartyist' and indeed anti-party sentiment.

Perhaps focus is not quite the right word. It implies something too definite, too clear. In fact there are at least three different strands or tendencies that, for the moment, rally behind or at any rate use the *Beyond the Fragments* banner.

There is the specifically feminist current which thinks primarily in terms of sex rather than class. They are, for the most part, highly educated, highly articulate, petty-bourgeois women who are in a relatively privileged economic situation with respect to the vast majority of working class women and also with respect to the majority of working class men as well.

Unlike the so-called 'radical-feminists' they have some insight into the realities of class society, but they have a foot in each camp – the camp of the female half of the educated 'professional' class (represented very well in *The Guardian's* women's page) and the very different camp of the strikers at Chix or Grunwick.

Some of them can perhaps be won to revolutionary politics; the majority cannot. Like the corresponding men, their 'rebellion' is limited, constricted, by their class situation. Individuals can transcend this; social layers cannot.

Then there is a quasi-libertarian trend which provides most of the substantial arguments for *Beyond the Fragments*.

There is nothing peculiarly feminist about them. Most of the arguments they use were put long ago by either Proudhon or Bakunin against Marx himself. They are the arguments of the (male dominated) nineteenth century anti-Marxist left. Nowadays these arguments are called 'anti-Leninist' although most of them were advanced before Lenin was born. Their social basis was, and is, petty bourgeois.

'Have these gentlemen (and ladies too – DH) ever seen a revolution?' asked Engels over a century ago, 'A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will on the other by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon – authoritarian means, if such there be at all...' There is really nothing that can be added to this – from a revolutionary point of view.

However, the most important component of the 'apartyist' current rallying *Beyond the Fragments* belongs to neither

of these two trends. This majority component is what Paul Foot calls the NANA – non-aligned, non-activists.

Amongst the children of 1968 and their successors there are many, a great many, who have made the transition from radicalised student to 'lefty' – or not so very lefty – polytechnic lecturer, civil servant or whatever. Some have broken completely with their past but many seek to reconcile the revolutionary aspiration of their youth with their present growing income, comfort and conservatism.

The solution? Formal leftism (and often 'academic Marxism') combined with a sharp, even venomous, hostility to any serious revolutionary organisation – which means, above all, the SWP.

The future of the *Beyond the Fragments* current? Insofar as it is a question of building a serious tendency – and a conference is being called for this purpose – we can say with complete confidence that it will come to nothing. It will come to nothing precisely because of the divergent trends within it, the majority NANA trend being organically and violently opposed to any revolutionary organisational commitment, however 'libertarian', and this trend has a real social basis, it is not merely a difference of views. Many, if not most, of these people will end up supporting the Labour Party.

But as an unorganised political current *Beyond the Fragments* will survive its organisational collapse. It will survive for a long time because it is one of the more important forms of 'left' hostility to the revolutionary party and therefore has its uses for various reformist tendencies, left and not so left.

How do you see the SWP building in the months ahead?

I would rather talk about a year or two ahead. Nobody has a reliable crystal ball and short-term predictions are peculiarly unreliable.

What is quite clear is that the immediate prospects for the left, reformist and revolutionary alike, are uncertain but that enormous possibilities are opening up for us in the years ahead.

Possibilities are not certainties. We need to remind ourselves of Trotsky's words, written to certain ex-revolutionaries who were relapsing into centrism (half hearted left reformist) or left reformism as such, because they thought 'the masses' were going that way.

'You can have revolutionaries both wise and ignorant, intelligent or mediocre. But you can't have revolutionaries who lack the willingness to smash obstacles, who lack devotion and the spirit of sacrifice.'

Naturally, will-power alone is not enough to build a movement. If the circumstances are unfavourable then revolutionary will can only create an organisation of cadres. That is itself a very important step forward. But now we are in a situation where, over a year or two, much more is possible. Given 'the willingness to smash obstacles', given 'devotion and the spirit of sacrifice', the SWP can and will become the real heart and centre of the hard left in the British workers' movements.

Of course that is itself only a step towards the overthrow of capitalism in Britain. But it is an essential step forward. It is the step we have to fight like hell to achieve in the next year or two.

Socialist Workers Party

**FOR WORKERS
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TRADE UNION

TELEPHONE

Budgeting the Crisis: US Style

That the world economy is slipping into a major recession is widely reported in the press. What is less talked about is that our rulers haven't any real idea what to do about it.

The confusion and crisis was summed up by the introduction of the latest US budget proposals last month. For not only did they replace other proposals that were only six weeks old (making them the shortest lived budget plans ever) but the president's aides admitted to adding up the various figures in the car as they travelled to the press briefing.

To cap it all, Carter misread budget cuts of \$13 billion as \$18 billion and finally skipped a page in his speech. The chaos was symptomatic of the fact that the US government doesn't really have any real strategy to deal with either its own or the world's economic crisis.

The world's and the US's economic problems can be relatively simply stated. The world boom of 1976 to 1979 is rapidly running out of steam. Growth rates throughout the world have been falling. Thus growth rates of the seven most industrialised states fell from 4.2 per cent in 1977 to 3.2 per cent in 1979. The reasons for this slump include massive overproduction in areas such as steel, ship-building, cars etc; a fall in productivity; a fall in profit rates.

At the same time inflation has begun to rise again in all the major industrialised countries as raw material prices have risen.

On top of this re-emergence of 'stagflation' from 1978 onwards came the oil-price rises of the last 14 months. In that time, oil prices have risen from \$13 per barrel to around \$30. The effects of this oil price rise have been dramatic.

In 1980 the economies of the seven biggest industrialised states are expected to grow by less than one per cent. The economies of the USA and Britain will actually decline. The USA by 1 per cent, Britain's by around 2½ per cent. At the same time, inflation has been given an enormous boost. Since the turn of the year, the inflation rates of the US, Britain, Italy and France have all been increasing at 20 per cent or more per year. For the first time ever, the OECD is predicting double-digit inflation for the industrialised west - 12½ per cent for 1980.

Faced with this, the major states are retreating into economic policies which will boost unemployment at home and pass on inflation to their competitors.

Carter's cuts

Basically, Carter announced two changes. First, taxes were raised and spending was cut back, which can only lead to increased unemployment in the US. Secondly, and perhaps even more signi-

ficantly, the supply of money was cut back, credit was squeezed and interest rates forced up. This, much more than the budget cuts will push up unemployment and bring down growth.

Unemployment in certain areas is likely to be catastrophic; 2 million building workers alone could be unemployed by this time next year. 200,000 car workers are already laid off. Further, Carter seems to be following the line of Thatcher here. Hospital spending is to be cut, as are school meals. Yet arms spending is to be expanded. The aim of these measures is to get inflation down but even the government's advisers are saying that inflation is unlikely to fall below 10 per cent for at least a year.



Carter Looking to heaven for solution?

The effect won't be confined to the United States. The slowdown in the US economy will mean fewer exports from the rest of the world. Fewer exports will mean increased unemployment which in turn will lead to a slow-down in trade. A vicious circle could easily start up of increasing unemployment leading to less trade leading to more unemployment.

It is in this context that the rapid moves to protectionism should be seen. As trade becomes more difficult and unemployment rises, different economies are rapidly putting up barriers to protect their national economies and to 'export' unemployment. The problem is, though, that if every state tries to do this then unemployment everywhere increases still more.

A second result is even more damaging to employment prospects. The rapid rise in US interest rates (they rose from 9 per cent to 16 per cent in nine months) has led to a rapid rise in the value of the dollar as 'hot money' has poured into the economy from speculators. This has sparked off an interest rate war around the world with Japan, Germany and Britain pushing up their rates. The effects of this 'war' within each of these

states is that the money supply will be cut back, leading to an increase in unemployment as investment dries up and borrowing falls.

Today's crisis is a classic example of the anarchy of that economic system. The strong dollar, created on the back of growing US unemployment prospects has led to higher inflation in Germany and Japan.

In Japan, for example, prices of imports, especially oil, have risen by 78 per cent in a year. So Japan pushes up interest rates and cuts down economic growth in Japan. But that slowdown in Japan weakens the US who retaliates in turn by further slowing the American economy down.

The end result is no longer national recession but a world recession. Not unemployment in a single country but around the world.

The hardest blow

But if prospects for the industrialised states are grim, the future for the 'Third World' looks disastrous. Governments throughout the industrialised world are cutting spending on aid to cure inflation, as Britain and the US have in the last two months.

Second, the rise in the price of oil means that many 'Third World' states just won't be able to buy oil or will have to stop other desperately needed imports to make sure of paying for it.

If they can't afford to buy oil they'll have to borrow to pay for it. But the rocketing interest rates mean they'll be paying through the nose.

Some countries are perilously close to bankruptcy. Mexico, for instance, has to pay 57 per cent of export earnings in interest on its debts. And that is before taking into account the rise in interest rates.

While the recession and the actions of the various governments mean unemployment and falling living standards in the industrialised west, in the 'Third World' the prospect is one of famine and collapse.

Of course, it doesn't have to be like this. Unemployment in the west is currently wasting in lost production \$250 billion per year.

Unemployment could be eradicated if governments had the will. Inflation could be halted if governments were prepared to abolish those institutions and systems which feed it. But they will not. For to do that would be to abolish the very dynamic of capitalism itself.

But this crisis shows something new. It marks a break from the post-war period where the major world governments made at least some attempt to regulate the world economy, through such institutions as the IMF or the World Bank. What we are beginning to see now is the breakdown of that system, as national governments attempt to save their own patch and solve their problems at the expense of their rivals. The problem is that there is no way along that road either.

Ken Kidd

Crisis in El Salvador



The murder of Archbishop Arnulfo Romero on the steps of his altar has drawn the attention of the capitalist press to the situation in the tiny Central American state of El Salvador.

In fact, the murder of the Archbishop is only the most newsworthy of a long string of brutal assassinations by the army and right-wing death squads. On 21 January this year the army shot down forty striking workers when it broke up a 300,000 strong demonstration. In the countryside a virtual civil war reigns with the regular murder of peasants. El Salvador is the country in which the flames lit by the Nicaraguan revolution burn most brightly.

The crisis in El Salvador has been many years in the making. The main products — cotton, coffee and some sugar — have kept the bulk of the population on the land. The cotton harvest in particular needs large numbers of landless seasonal labourers. In the coffee-growing areas the small farmers have been tied by the credits and distribution monopolies of the major growers and their financial backers. Over half the cultivatable land has been in the hands of less than one per cent of the population. More recently the growth of some industrial production has brought a mass of semi-employed and unemployed crowding into the capital.

The wealth of the tiny elite has contrasted so sharply with the misery of the vast mass of the population that, in July 1979, even the assistant US secretary of state, Viron Vaky, was forced to admit that: 'El Salvador has one of the most rigid class structures in the world.'

And that elite was kept in its power and privileges by a bloody military dictatorship. After the crushing of the first big attempt to organise a workers' movement, in 1932 the country was ruled until late 1979 by the military. Another bastion of the 'free world', repression was so severe that it was more than thirty years after 1932 before it was possible once again to organise trade unions.

But the overthrow of Somoza and the victory of the Sandinistas in nearby Nicaragua changed everything. It forced the local rulers and their US backers to think again about the stability of dictatorial regimes. And it gave hope to the opposition, from the progressive bourgeois politicians to the masses of the poor.

Over the years a number of opposition groups had formed. The Christian Democrat Party, formed in 1960, legal and holding some offices like mayor of the capital San Salvador, has a programme of agrarian reform, capitalist development and liberalisation. On the other hand, the rise of new trade unions, particularly amongst rural workers, led

to mass support for a number of armed revolutionary groups.

The response of the right-wing was to set up death squads like *Orden* (Order) and the UGB (Union of White Warriors). These had the open support of the government; for example, the defence minister said of *Orden* that 'the President is the *ex officio* head.' Since at least 1977 these groups have conducted a campaign of open terror against all opposition.

But everybody could see the writing on the wall. Viron Vaky, for one, could see that the 'prospects for avoiding insurrectional violence are increasingly diminishing.' The US began to put pressure on the local military to broaden their base and make concessions to the moderate opposition. At first they resisted but they were unable to stem the tide of mass protest and militant opposition.

The President, Romero, and his cronies tried to hang on to power but the left, inspired by Nicaragua, kept up the pressure. In May last year, the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR) occupied the main cathedral in the capital; the army responded by shooting 19 demonstrators. In June 137 people were killed by the National Guard or the terror groups. In July, under US pressure, Romero lifted the State of Siege; yet the killing continued and *Orden* continued to operate unmolested. More demonstrations, kidnappings and murders of political prisoners followed. In late September the 28th of February Revolutionary Leagues (LP-28) occupied the Ministry of Labour; on 4 October, 12,000 people demonstrated after the murder by the army of four peasant union leaders.

By the 15th, Romero and his Cabinet had left El Salvador for the safer fascist homeground of Guatemala. In El Salvador, a new junta took power, with the explicit support of the USA.

The New Regime

The junta consisted of a number of civilian politicians and so-called 'moderate' soldiers; the new minister of education was a Communist. Their promises of democracy and reform lasted one day; the demonstrations and armed confrontations continued, and the new government imposed a State of Siege on 16 October. With the occasional pause, it has remained in force ever since.

Occupations of land, of public

buildings and embassies followed in quick succession; the government responded by promising to release political prisoners (176 were known and named), to raise wages and freeze prices, and to dissolve the right-wing terrorist squads. But the government controlled nothing; and it could not dissolve fascist terrorist groups which not only had military support but were part of the structure of the armed forces themselves.

At best, it could make gestures. It established diplomatic relations with Cuba and the USSR and broke them with South Africa. It arrested 60 National Guards for their involvement in the Cathedral massacre. But it could not stop the developing struggle between left and right which was being waged in every town and village. In November the armed left-wing groups announced that they intended to form an alliance. They claimed the ability to mobilise 200,000 people between them and this was, if anything, a gross underestimate. At the same time, the armed forces showed open contempt for the new policies and continued with their murders and shoot-outs.

The end of the new junta came in January. The three 'progressive' ministers resigned from the government, protesting that none of the reforms they had proposed were being implemented. The army and the right were systematically blocking any attempt even to nibble at the wealth of the 'fourteen families' that make up the El Salvadorean ruling class. In the streets the middle-classes, organised by the supposedly dissolved *Orden*, were demanding 'the restoration of law and order' and calling for the crushing of the workers, under the slogan of 'a new 1932'.

The next junta was headed by Mario Andino, whose loyalties are indicated by the fact that he is the local director of the US Phelps-Dodge company. But a mere change of faces could not solve the situation. General strikes, battles on the land and armed conflicts continued. Another re-shuffle, leading to the appointment of a prominent Christian Democrat to head the junta, led, in early March, to the announcement of agrarian reform and the nationalisation of the banks. This, too, solved nothing because, whatever the government might decree, the real decision to the conflict lay in the outcome of the armed struggle between the army and an armed people.

The US, too, were beginning to have second thoughts about reform. Carter's new representative in Central America is one William Bowdler. Among his past achievements are organising the invasion of the Dominican Republic by US Marines in 1965 and representing the US in South Africa between 1975 and 1978.

The Alternatives

That is the background to the US government's decision to send 'non-lethal military aid' to the government of El Salvador. In reality, the US are pro-

viding arms directly to an army openly at war with the workers' movement.

The alternatives are clearly posed. A new 1932 massacre, or a mass insurrection that will make El Salvador the second Central American domino to fall. The Christian Democrat promise of a

thriving agrarian capitalism inside a new bourgeois democracy is meaningless in a country where repression of the working class has been the order of things for nearly fifty years. The gulf between rich and poor is too deep to be amicably bridged.

remains in private hands, the working class has not yet resolved the problem of the conquest of power. That being so, the continuing independent organisation of the workers and peasants is the central issue for socialists. Their interests may coincide with those of the Sandinista government right now, but it will not always be so — in fact, they are already beginning to diverge. The strike of 2,000 workers in Managua in mid-March over wages was vigorously condemned by the government. In general, the Sandinista government has emphasised production and kept wage rises to a minimum.

The attitude of the Sandinistas towards other organisations of the left has also been very unclear. A few days after the fall of Somoza, some forty Latin American revolutionaries who had fought in the Simon Bolivar brigade were expelled from the country. Their role and attitudes were certainly very ambiguous — yet their offence seems to have been to call for an acceleration of the process of land expropriation. In February the newspaper *El Pueblo* was closed and condemned as 'Maoist and counter-revolutionary' and described as the 'organ of a group preparing for armed struggle'. The mothers of those arrested subsequently began a protest hunger strike at Red Cross headquarters in Managua. Since then, there have been reports of the arrest of a number of Communists. (*Latin American Weekly Report*, 21.3.80)

Given Nicaragua's enormous problems, it may seem gratuitous to criticise the Sandinista government. Obviously, since 1979 production fell 25 per cent below the 1978 figure, it is urgently necessary to raise production levels. Yet for socialists the question of who controls the process is central; accumulation and productivity are not the measures of socialism.

The marked reluctance of the Sandinistas to form a mass revolutionary party exposes the different political views the movement contains. It also suggests that the organs they have created (local base committees etc.) are *not* structures of mass political participation but forms of local government, representing the leadership at the lower levels. In fact, the only political organisation that has been mentioned is a Patriotic Bloc which will include both bourgeois and workers interests.

What is at issue is the future course of the Nicaraguan revolution, of workers control over economy and society. There have already been huge improvements in the realm of social justice; and economic development is clearly urgent for a country locked in poverty and dependency. But that is the formula for a social democracy. For socialists, the key question is who controls that economic process — and that remains unclear; the test is the ability of workers to express and organise around their class alternative. That has still to be fought for and won.

Mike Gonzalez

Nicaragua: Year One

There can be no doubt that the overthrow of Somoza last year changed the face of Central America. For the dictator was overthrown by a mass movement of workers and peasants, and the lesson has not been lost on the population of the neighbouring military regimes.

Now, nine months later, it is important to remember that it was not just a military victory, but a *political* victory for the mass movement. In the aftermath of Somoza's overthrow, the key issue was how that political victory would be expressed. Would the Sandinista regime sustain the mass movement and make it the leading force in the process of reconstruction?

Somoza left behind a devastated country with a high level of illiteracy, staggering poverty and a scarcity of capital; Somoza and his cohorts had taken at least \$100 million with them. So the immediate problems faced by the Sandinista regime were enormous.

The government's first measures attacked Somoza's personal economic power. 1½ million acres of land were nationalised, as were 52 industrial companies. A Bill of Rights was announced and the supporters of Somoza sent for trial in the new courts. A new trade union confederation (the CST) was formed and the Sandinista Defence Committees established to organise the reconstruction at local and regional level.

The problem of the 20,000 armed Sandinista militias would be resolved by incorporating some of them into the new Sandinista army.

The Economy

At the economic level, the new government looked for aid abroad. The Inter-American Development Bank provided \$55m in emergency relief; between July and September 1979, US aid amounted to \$23½m. Carter had intended to send \$75m. in aid, 60% of which was earmarked for the private sector.

The circumstances of the US loan, and its conditions, are very revealing. First, what is the *private sector*?

By the time he was overthrown, Somoza had lost the support of every social group except his own entourage. The bourgeois opposition (around the Group of Twelve and the Conservative leader Chamorro) joined the Sandinistas, but continually tried to control and limit their activities. Today, Sandinismo still represents that coalition of a mass movement and private capital.

Since July 1979, the bourgeois organisations have mounted sustained pressure on the new government. The ruling Sandinista junta (despite a Cabinet reshuffle in December) still reflects the uneasy compromise between different sections of Nicaraguan society — it includes both conservatives and radicals. In November 1979, COSEP — the organisation that speaks for private enterprise — threatened not to reinvest unless trade union activity were curtailed and other guarantees given of the continuation of private enterprise. Orlando Nunez, of the National Agrarian Institute, set their minds at rest:

'In the past most working capital came from State loans. We'll find it for them now as well. All we want private capital to do is to guarantee production.'
(*Latin American Political Report*, 21.12.79)

The 1980 Plan for Economic Reconstruction recognised the 'vital role' of private capital and left the bulk of the cotton-producing lands (Nicaragua's main export) in private hands.

Thus the \$490m foreign aid to reach Nicaragua up to February 1980 has been divided between the state — to rebuild the economic infrastructure — and private enterprise, reinforcing the key role of the capitalists in the economy.

During the course of the struggle against Somoza, various political currents developed within Sandinismo. The clearest political position also represented the coalition of class interests which were represented in the post-revolutionary government; these were the Terceristas, whose main spokesman is the Defence Minister Humberto Ortega.

Their political vision is expressed through the Bill of Rights — a radical constitution which recognises the rights of women, of trade union organisation, of education etc. — and an economic programme which sees the State as an important actor in the reorganisation of the economy; the State, however, is a *regulator* of the economy and *not* its controller.

Social Forces

Those who argue (as some on the left do) that the Sandinista government is a 'workers and farmers government' insist that control has already passed into the hands of the workers. Yet Nicaragua today is a mixed economy where private capital has emerged unscathed from the fall of Somoza.

Where 80 per cent of the property

Russian Women Speak Out

Women in Russia Introduction by Anna Paczuska Translation by Vera Slutskaya

Marx wrote that the degree of emancipation of women in a society was a key to the general level of emancipation. And it is true that whenever women have begun to organise this has been the herald of great political changes in society. The modern women's liberation movement which arose in the West during the late sixties and the seventies was an indication of a fundamental change in women's lives caused by changes within capitalism itself.

Up until now women's liberation ideas had been articulated only in the West. Their absence in Eastern Europe and within Russia itself led some people to believe that women there enjoyed a greater level of emancipation than women in the West. Writers in this *Review* have argued that this was not the case. But the absence of any organisation that expressed women's discontent made the argument theoretical rather than real.

But a recent development has made the argument concrete at last.

Last September a new *samizdat* journal appeared in Leningrad. It was an important departure for the dissident movement for the journal *Women in Russia* was the first sign of a women's liberation movement in Russia since the 1920s.

In the heady post revolutionary days of 1919, Alexandra Kollontai wrote 'the family is ceasing to be a necessity for its members as well as for the state.' The situation for women in Russia has changed a great deal since then.

The rapid industrialisation of Russia, the consequent labour shortages, the lack of household and consumer goods, and the total lack of control that working class people have over their lives, has led to a massive political and social reliance on the services traditionally provided by the family. This in turn has meant a tremendous burden on women who have been forced into work outside the home as well as taking all the responsibility for childrearing and housework. Over 98 per cent of women go out to work in Russia. Yet one recent Soviet study estimated that a woman's working week is over eighty hours while a man's totals only fifty, due to the different amounts of domestic responsibility.

There are striking similarities between the situation of Russian women, and that of women in the West. Women will recognise the agonising conflicts between childrearing and work which were described by an article in the official Russian magazine *Novy Mir* in 1969:

'I'm scared for the children and I'm scared for my work. Measles, mumps, German measles...and chiefly flu's and colds, everlasting colds. From a badly tied cap, from crying on a walk, from wet trousers, from a cold floor, from draughts. The doctors are in a hurry, I'm also in a hurry, and we



The Official Image—A long way from the samizdat reality

take the children to nursery school and creche while they're still coughing and their colds don't go until summer.'

Domestic responsibilities have to be fitted in with the work routine.

In a country where there are few washing machines and endless food queues all this is difficult to bear. But the lives of Russian women are grim for other reasons too.

Male chauvinism in Russia is worse than anything Andy Capp could aspire to. Women are treated as inferiors in all ways sexually, socially and at work. They work in poorly paid, unskilled jobs. They are expected to serve men and sacrifice their lives for them. One resentful woman wrote to *Novy Mir* in 1974:

'In the evening he shuts himself up with a book and she cooks, washes and mends. Her sex puts an obligation on her... That mangy skirt, it obliges her to serve.'

The male attitude towards women is encapsulated by the use of the Russian word 'mat', meaning mother. As well as

mother it is one of the dirtiest swear words in the Russian language. And it is also the word for swearing in general. Thus the giver of life, the childrearer, and the worker, is also the most degraded person in the society. Women have no sexual freedoms. Contraception is crude. Abortion is available, but a nightmare. Men have no understanding of the situation. Thus one man wrote arrogantly to the *Moscow Literary Gazette*:

'After all I am a man and my family duty is to work, not to fool about with cooking and washing — and especially when my own wife is alive and thriving. I am thinking of throwing her out. What do I need a healthy lazing moon in my family for.'

Up until now Russian women have not organised against their situation. But they have acted individually in the only ways available to them. The birthrate has dropped dramatically. There are a million fewer children born every year now than in 1960. And the divorce rate has risen tenfold in the last twenty years. Over half the petitions for divorce

are filed by women. That is a statistic of some significance in a country where a population imbalance has led to a severe shortage of men.

Women in Russia is more than such individual kicks at the system. It is a call to organise and change. Written by a collective of ten women from as far apart as Archangel and Novosibirsk as well as Leningrad itself, the journal is a positive step forward for Russian women.

Like many other dissident publications it is written by members of the intelligentsia. And like them it shares the contempt for the 'conservatism of the alcoholic masses'. But that does not mean that it is necessarily reactionary, nor that it should not be supported by socialists.

For while *Women in Russia* expresses ideas we may question or disagree with, it is an important attempt to express an aspect of Russian life which is rarely discussed or understood.

The relationships between men and women described in the journal show a society that is a million miles from socialism. And its authors have consequently fallen into the pitfalls of other feminists in the West. Disillusioned by what self-styled 'socialists' have done to socialism, they have concluded that men have no useful part to play in the emancipation of women. So they look instead to a new world based on female values. In reacting against men, they praise traditional and even religious values. They conclude by calling on women to come together and generalise their experiences 'We can be sure that no one else but ourselves can help us'.

The journal is a cry of despair as well as a call for change. But read the article on childbirth and you may understand why. Here is a society that has a desperate labour shortage. The bureaucrats call for women to have more children in every publication, from every poster. But the same bureaucrats force women to bear those children in humiliating and unnecessary painful circumstances. It is not a society that values human beings.

The powerful radical feminism of the writing is reminiscent of a tendency that is already well developed within the western women's movement. But where in the West do women write so vitriolically of the pain of childbirth? With ante natal classes provided by the National Health Service, and by the Natural Childbirth Trust for the more privileged, childbirth in Britain need no longer be the indescribable agony which the Russian woman tries to convey. Of course we all experience pain — but rarely the uncontrollable horror. A similar theme emerges from another article in *Women in Russia* about abortion, where the author appears to be opposed to abortion — a position which follows logically from the descriptions of the way that abortion is conducted in Russian hospitals, where pain killers are not used in abortions unless you pay.

The authors of *Women in Russia* have developed a separatism in their

analysis of women's situation which is perhaps inevitable given the nature of the society they live in. They have realised their oppression. But nowhere is there a movement, or a tradition which can relate their situation to the structure of society at large. The dissident movement itself has, of course, involved women. Over half the members of the Free Trade Union were women. But the dissident movement never takes up the question of women's situation. And the movement in general tends to look to the West and to liberal reform rather than to a fundamental change in the way society is controlled. So, in the absence of a working class

movement fighting for general emancipation, these women have looked to themselves, to self activity, as the way forward.

All the authors have now been arrested. We support them because they are struggling towards organising women for emancipation. They cannot achieve that on their own, with their confused and often reactionary ideas about the working class. But the fact that they are organising is a tremendous achievement both because it will inspire other women, and because it broadens the dissident movement fighting against a society that has discredited both women's liberation and socialism.



Childbirth

'I would agree to stand in battle many times, rather than one time to experience the pangs of giving birth.'
(*Euripedes, Medea*)

This nightmare has not ended. It now never ends. It has remained in you. As the scandalous offence remains, when the horror dies down, death enters our consciousness. This is a more terrible a death because you continue to feel. You have died, but you feel pain. You are exhausted, but it continues to torment you. You weren't capable of yelling, you were ashamed to yell and you didn't yell, you sobbed like a mortally wounded animal. This is reality.

This is not the excitement you imagined, which was frightening but which held some comfort for you. You suffered but were not soothed. Reality seemed hopeless. You might find the open door but you would not ever escape from your burden. The hopelessness inside you. You fell into complete dependence on those whom you at first despised — they did stupid crosswords — on those who you then began to hate — they talked about something else while you were screaming with horror.

To achieve the position of a man,

you have (even if you are more talented) to make superhuman efforts, pushing yourself forward, proving yourself, fighting for recognition. But even the most worthless man, is a priori better than you. If you reach the same position as he does, your victory is a hundred times greater than his, for at every step you have to overcome obstacles he has no idea of. Even if we leave the mental aspect aside, your body itself is battered by ailments and dangers unknown to man. Your body is prematurely aged through the procreation of the species. Of course you can prevent this by denying yourself love and posterity. You might escape pregnancy if you managed to avoid being raped.

You can avoid the procreation of the species, but not the 'opinion' of society, an opinion formulated exclusively by men. If you are not a mother (they give this sacred word the vilest associations) you are either an 'old maid' or a whore.

You protect yourself from these unendurable burdens and unsolvable problems, by becoming insensitive. These insults and cares turn you into a stone. The gulf between you and man only widens. He is always right. You, who gave birth to him, are always wrong.

Pregnancy undoubtedly a parasitic phenomenon, destroys your youth. Your faith. The meaning of your own existence. All for posterity which is preferably male! Patriarchy somehow or other always forces woman into a cage.

Woman is not so much persecuted as crushed. Isn't pregnancy a sweet desirable time. The man persuades not only himself, but also the woman of this. And no one can dissuade him. Even the legislation on abortion, which has revealed that woman will often undergo this unpleasant operation (and without anaesthetic for economy's sake) in order to escape from the joys it offers her. Hypocritically, he goes on glorifying motherhood. He presents you with this deformity, this sickness, and you are happy to accept his gift, in order to obtain at least some sort of recognition in this hostile society. You quickly become devalued. You're always the loser.

You may even begin to despise your sex, running down other women and elevating the man whom you loved, or to whom you gave birth, but even this self-denial won't put you on the same level as them. You'll just be doing your bit to prop up patriarchy. Man couldn't care less about your sacrifice, he is separated from you by a thick glass wall, which he relies on to protect him from the noise you occasionally create (in your few spare moments).

Sometimes your voice reaches him from behind the glass wall (when you scream too loudly). 'Change the world.' 'Make the world just,' but there's no reason for man to change the world. Such a system is comfortable and profitable for him. He would rather start a new war which will exterminate your children. He would rather invent a new rocket, than to take the heavy chains from you. What use is your emancipation to him? Your liberation only creates inconveniences for him.

On the 8 March (once a year!) he dusts the sideboard. He declares 1975 women's year and invents various formalities to go with this.

'You carry your stomach as if it was the whole world,' and you stoop under its weight. What awaits you? You wait as if for an earthquake, a catastrophe, you want to forget yourself, feel nothing, but the catastrophe is inevitable. Slow rumblings precede the crash. You feel the ground gives way under your feet and you curse love. Three sleepless nights, forty-eight hours revulsion from food, constant exhausting contractions — all this tears your body from the power of reason. Panic-stricken and covered in blood you writhe in convulsion, run into the corridor in search of someone, but the gynaecologists and midwives change, shift after shift, without taking any notice of you.

From your first minute in the 'maternity home' (this is the respectful name for Golgotha) you freeze with fear. The groans, sobs and pleas of the women in labour have a traumatic effect on anyone the first time they go there. To the question:

'How can you permit this?'

The doctor answers:

'Our aim is children.'

'Women will put up with anything.'

Then trestles of beds, on which the unfortunate victims of patriarchy writhe. Bloody sheets. Eyes huge from pain. Bitten lips (they prudently cut your nails on your admission), soaking wet night-gowns, dishevelled hair.

'Why all together?'

'There are so many of them'

'But they are human beings.'

'Forget the philosophy. Lie down and get on with it.'

'You're being rude.'

'There's no alternative here.'

'On the contrary these women need attention and a kind of word like no one else.'

'We've got lots of work to do.'

You lie down. You close your eyes tight. For all these groans tear you to pieces. An unbearable sight for a normal mind. Delirium. Horror personified. A nightmare which shatters the nerves. Bloodstained trestlebeds. You clutch your head. You try to immerse yourself in oblivion. The contractions wake you. The contractions return you to this room, to this ceaseless groaning reality.

Your stomach is transformed into an alien body. It moves by its own will. It is no longer under your power. Your hands try to contain its jerks. You can hear again. One cry, then another pierces your brain:

'Doctor, you promised to help me, Doctor' — a skinny girl cries in a broken voice.

'Midwife dear, Klavochka, come to

me please' — this is the voice of the woman in the next bed, who you try not to look at.

'I don't want to live, I don't want to' — a voice from the other corner ward. A voice which ends in a heart trending shriek.

'Mother, why?' gasped someone else.

Your heart stops. Your throat dries up. A thought as penetrating as a yell: run from here. But a new lot of contraction nails you to the bed. Minutes. Hours. The lights go on. The groans follow, one after the other. A trail of blood from the bed, from the prenatal to the labour ward. A trail of blood, which dried up before they have time to mop it up. You can lift yourself up and look out of the window. Your time still hasn't come. There below, through the branches of trees you see another world. You hear care-free laughter. They bring in a new patient. She wears glasses and is noticeably calm. In half an hour her glasses fall on the stone floor and she is terrified for her sight.

The foul face of patriarchy. Its convulsions. Agony. One of the prophets foretold its near speedy end. 'The power of woman will come on Earth.'

The original Russian text was supplied by Labour Focus on Eastern Europe. This is a journal which republishes many dissident writings. It is available every two months price 45p plus post from:

136 Kingsland High Street, London E8.

**Anna Paczuska's name was inadvertently left off 'Daughter of Earth' in the last issue.*

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Striking at the Root

'It is as if the African working class has become temporarily submerged in the broader national movement in Zimbabwe. The question is, how long they will remain submerged?'

Socialist Review March-April 1978

The answer was not long in coming. Mid-March, barely two weeks after ZANU (PF)'s runaway election victory, saw the beginning of a major black strike wave. Some 16,000 workers were involved, in five major industrial centres were hit — Salisbury, Bulawayo, Gatooma, Umtali and Gwelo. Among the 41 workplaces hit were Danby Mine (1,500 workers), Cone Textile (900), Bata Shoes (900), and David Whitehead, a textile company owned by Lonrho (1,500).

The strikers' demands reflected the expectations produced by Robert Mugabe's election: higher wages (including the demand for a \$75 a month minimum wage), shorter working hours, the sacking of white foremen. Black workers have put up with a 40 per cent fall in living standards between 1975 and 1979; they want to benefit from the victory of the liberation movement.

The response of the ZANU (PF) government was to seek to dampen down the mass movement. Mugabe appeared on television to appeal for a

return to work. Kumbirai Kangai, the minister of labour, told workers to observe procedure — the Industrial Conciliation Act which binds black trade unions hand and foot and the emergency regulations which prohibit strikes. Some employers, reassured by the government's backing, got tough: for example, 180 strikers were sacked at the Crittal-Hope plant in Salisbury.

The situation is especially interesting because the strikes have put the ZANU (PF) left in the hot seat. Kangai had been associated with the Hamadziripi-Gumbo 'marxist-leninist' faction inside ZANU who were detained in Mozambique in 1978. (It wasn't a very left faction: when its leaders, Hamadziripi and Gumbo were released under the Lancaster House agreement they went off to join up with the corrupt and completely discredited former ZANU leader Ndabaningi Sithole and were swept into political oblivion with him.)

Mugabe made Kangai labour minister presumably on much the same principle as Harold Wilson appointed Michael Foot secretary for employment in 1974. And Kangai has performed. He declared that 'discipline at work must remain part and parcel of the freedom we have attained.'

Another leader of the ZANU (PF) left wing, Maurice Nyagumbo, a former member of the South African Communist Party who spent 20 years in Rhodesian prisons and is now minister-designate of mines, told the Chamber of Mines that

South Africa Update

It will soon be the fourth anniversary of the uprising in Soweto. For nearly eighteen months after June 16, 1976, the struggle of black youth raged across our television screens, giving us a glimpse of an angry alternative to South Africa's poker faced rulers.

ZANU's spectacular election victory in Zimbabwe has again turned attention to Southern Africa. And to the struggle being waged by black workers in South Africa itself.

During 1978, recognition disputes in two British owned South African engineering plants, an international day of solidarity, a Labour government white-wash of British firms and a mine riot demonstrated the amazing resilience of the unofficial black trade union movement that sprang up after the great strike waves of 1973.

One of the main organisations that emerged was the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). In its one year of existence FOSATU's activities have continued to expose the hypocrisy of European governmental concern for black workers.

It is significant that South Africa's rulers have not used their repressive powers to ban FOSATU yet, particularly as last year was marked by near rebellion by white workers against the government for 'going soft' on Apartheid's discrimination in their favour.

Arrie Paulus, the white miners' leader, graphically showed how white workers remain the buttress of apartheid capitalism: 'You have to know a black. He wants someone to be his boss. They can't think quickly. You can take a baboon and learn (sic.) him to play a tune on the piano, but it's impossible for himself to use his own mind to go on to the next step.'

The most famous of the disputes which FOSATU had a hand in was against the American multinational giant, Ford.

Unrest at Fords began with the 'resignation' of Thazamile Botha, a trainee draftsman and chairman of the newly established Port Elizabeth Black Civic Association (PEBCO). This is the latest renaming of South Africa's constantly reorganising post-Soweto town leaderships. It is similar to the Soweto Civic Association.

Ford had given Botha an ultimatum to resign from PEBCO or his job. This led to the first strike and his reinstatement.

But then white workers threatened to go out on strike against his reinstatement, and over blacks 'dirtying' canteen facilities and being 'cheeky'. Black workers responded with a second walk-out and demanded the reemployment of a black foreman on equal pay for equal work, Ford's much heralded public

policy.

The union involved was the Auto Workers' Union, a member of FOSATU and supposedly recognised by Ford — but in practice ignored for fear of white workers' objection.

By January this year, stonethrowing and petrol bombing in support of the Ford 700 had begun to make Port Elizabeth look like the beginnings of another Soweto. Thozamile Botha was arrested in the midst of tension at the impending removal of 6,000 black workers from the city's black township, Walmer.

But after Botha's arrest, 3,000 PEBCO members in Port Elizabeth's Zwide township decided at a rally to propose a general stay-away strike in the city until his release. This forced Ford to reinstate those of the 700 who had not found other jobs...It is solidarity action not the rhetoric of stooges like Buthelezi — a South African Muzorewa — which the employers listen to.

But there are other implications. Once again South Africa's black workers have shown their actual and tremendous potential power. The power not only to take on their employers, but to bring the whole system to its knees. And it is this power that is the key to challenging all the rulers in the region — in Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, Angola and even Zimbabwe.

May 1978

One man is refused extra meat with his

the government would support 'continued private ownership in the mining sector' and attacked the strikers: 'We never promised instant pay increases. We said the only way to get results was by working hard' (*Times*, 22 March 1980).

The ZANU (PF) government's attitude to the strikes is consistent with the rest of its actions. The actual cabinet line-up reflected Mugabe's dual strategy - to conciliate the whites and foreign capital and to secure the real levers of power for ZANU (PF). He kept the defence and security portfolios for himself; Joshua Nkomo was given the ministry of Home Affairs, but its most important responsibility, control over the District Commissioners who run most of the country, was transferred to the minister of local government, Edson Zvobgo (ZANU (PF)); Bernard Chidzero, a technocrat now working for UNCTAD, has been put in charge of the economy.

To reassure the settlers, Lieutenant-General Peter Walls remains commander of combined operations, Denis Norman, president of the white Commercial Farmers Union, was appointed minister of agriculture and David Smith, leader of the rather feeble 'moderate' wing of the Rhodesian Front and minister of finance under both Smith and Muzorewa, is to take on the portfolio of commerce and industry.

Top of the government's agenda will be a substantial land reform. Unless more land is found for the 675,000

African peasants who farm the same amount of land as 5,900 white farmers Mugabe will be in trouble. Actual responsibility for the land reform is not in Norman's hand, but has been allocated to a separate ministry of rural resettlement.

The Economist in a recent article (29 March - 4 April 1980) suggested that there was considerable scope for a land reform within the framework of existing social relations. Some 11-12.5 million acres could be distributed without dispossessing any white farmers (total European land comprised 44,831,233 acres). Furthermore, 6 per cent of these farmers account for nearly half of all commercial farm output, while 43 per cent account for less than 10 per cent. In 1976, 60 per cent of the European farms were too unprofitable to pay any income tax, while 271 farming concerns (out of 6,682 farms) accounted for 52 per cent of all taxable income.

So we could well see a land reform like that in Kenya after independence, where the big foreign owned ranches and plantations were left alone, while the white 'mixed farms', much smaller and less efficient, and dependent on state subsidy, were expropriated (with generous compensation) and transferred to Africans, contributing to the creation of a layer of rich black peasants.

Undoubtedly such a reform, whatever its limitations, would buy social peace in the countryside for a spell, even if in

the long term it led to bitter class warfare between the African farmers and the landless majority. Mugabe is unlikely to enjoy this sort of breathing space in the towns, as the strikes show.

Any urban mass movement would run slap bang into the settler-controlled state apparatus. The integration of the two guerilla armies and the security forces is taking place under Walls' firm control. The black soldiers who make up 80 per cent of the regular army are drawn mainly from the Karanga of Victoria province, a heavily ZANU (PF) area and will almost certainly find little difficulty in serving under Mugabe (even during the election I saw a troop carrier full of black soldiers doing the ZANU (PF) *jongwe* salute).

The elite units, such as the Rhodesia Light Infantry and the Selous Scouts, are a different matter. Although a coup d'état would probably not succeed (if only because it would not have South African support), the firepower and discipline of the security forces make them a formidable obstacle in the road to genuine majority rule.

Mugabe will be forced to balance between on the one hand the settlers and foreign capital and on the other the African masses. This situation will necessarily lead to political instability, zig-zags to left and right. There may well be a 'left' turn by ZANU (PF) in the near future, lest mass discontent in the townships become uncontrollable.

Alex Callinicos

canteen meal at the President Steyn mine near Welkom. Five dining halls and other buildings burnt down as 14,000 black miners take out all the pent-up frustrations against their conditions.

June 1978

British owned Glacier Bearings of Pinetown, near Durban, refused to recognise Metal and Allied Workers Union as representative of its 190 black workers.

October 1978

International Union of Food and Allied Workers Association succeeds in calling token strikes and shop floor meetings throughout Unilever European plants and factories in protest at Unilever's refusal to recognise the 5,000 members of the South African Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union working for it.

November 1978

British owned Ever Ready plant in Port Elizabeth refuses to recognise the National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers representatives at a mass meeting of 1,000 African and Coloured workers demanding an extra 31p an hour starting rate, better conditions and more promotional opportunities. Of 300 women who strike 200 are sacked.

January 1979

Labour government in Britain admit

that Glacier Bearings and Every Ready are just two out of thousands who have openly ignored Dr David Owen's European Code of Conduct over the treatment of black workers in European owned South African firms.

March 1979

The cause of the 200 sacked Ever Ready women is taken up by a new coordinating body of the unofficial black trade union movement in which their union is a prime force, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU).

March 1979

In the most serious conflict between white employers and white miners for 57 years the Afrikaner government refused to back the white miners. A strike starts at the O'Kiep mine when 120 white miners are sacked for refusing to work as equals with two Coloured miners. When they are sacked 10,000 white miners throughout the country strike in racist solidarity.

April 1979

Black miners show that they are a far stronger force to be reckoned with by the employers than their white overseers. Hundreds deliberately wreck newly built changing houses, hostels and beer gardens the day Harry Oppenheimer, South Africa's chief capitalist, arrives to officially open Anglo-American's New Elandrand gold mine.

May 1979

When the Botha government announces that it supports the Wiehahn proposals to allow skilled black workers to do jobs previously preserved for whites on lower wages than whites (under pressure from big business to cheapen labour costs) a rattled Paulus claims that this is proof that the employment of two Coloured workers at O'Kiep had been: 'the biggest treason toward the white workers in white South Africa since the days in 1922 when white mineworkers were shot dead on the rand by General Smuts.'

September 1979

9,000 black commuters boycott buses in protest against fare increases to and from the black townships and the industrial centre of Ladysmith, Natal. Striking workers are teargassed at nearby Marburg.

November 1979

Ford recruit scabs to replace 700 black labourers who strike at Port Elizabeth's Cortina assembly plant. This is the fourth unofficial walk-out in three weeks over poor conditions and racist remarks by white overseers and it sparks a wave of other strikes in Port Elizabeth. At the American owned General Tyre and Rubber 635 strike for recognition of the same union as represents the Ford 700. They are sacked along with 50 paper mill workers striking for recognition of their union and higher bonuses.

The Green and the Red

The development, out of the anti-nuclear movement, of a 'Green Party' to fight the forthcoming West German election has produced a fair amount of sympathetic coverage in the left and liberal press in this country. Sybil Cock writes on the background to the Party.

'This movement is in many respects heterogenous. Conservative nature lovers and communists, pacifists and sympathisers of individual terrorism, advocates of sensible discussion with the Atom Mafia (the pro-nuclear lobby), confused moralists prepared to go as far as individual suicide, all these have existed and exist in the anti-nuclear movement.'

Such is an account of the ecology movement by the German revolutionary socialist group, the SAG.

What holds these people together is first of all opposition to state attempts to force through nuclear power regardless of risk. Second, there is a much wider set of issues to do with the general destruction of the environment.

Socialists in Britain have not yet progressed beyond a general feeling of support for all of these campaigns. In most cases, we can take a class position on, for example, the building of motorways through densely populated working-class areas. Around some issues, like the use of asbestos, we have played a much more prominent role, and we are beginning to do the same on nuclear power.

But, whatever we may think, the majority of those who become involved around these issues do not see them as class issues. In Germany and the USA the anti-nuclear movement has often been influenced by those who put forward arguments as to why a particular nuclear power station should be built on somebody else's back doorstep rather than their own. Again, in Germany, nuclear power is opposed by right-wing individualists as yet another example of state interference in the economy. Much more sinister is the fact that the German anti-nuclear movement involves organised fascist groups who use the classic rhetoric of 'national heritages' and such like.

The anti-nuclear movement took off in the course of the 70's and by 1978 had active groups in every town, whether or not it was directly threatened by a nuclear plant. These local groups were often kept together by middle-class elements but, on demonstrations, could mobilise hundreds of thousands including many workers. In 1976 they got 20,000 to demonstrate against a reactor at Wyhl. In 1977, 20,000 at Grohnde, 60,000 at Brokdorf-Itzehoe.

These last two demonstrations were attacked by the police, and the German Police, armed to the teeth with machine guns, can make the SPG look like a vicarage tea party. One of those arrested at Grohnde was charged with attempted murder of a policeman and several others were given heavy prison sentences.

These arrests had important consequences. The state and the media seized the opportunity to brand the anti-nuclear movement as terrorist and as sympathisers of the Red Army Faction. Those on trial were offered lighter sentences if they renounced 'violence'. This they refused to do. As a consequence of this, the movement split over the issue of 'violence' and whether or not to campaign for the defence of those arrested. This split was deepened by the elections of 1978 and 1979.

None of the major parties in Germany will accept an anti-nuclear position. The German TUC has taken an extreme pro-nuclear position and threatens to expel prominent militants for taking the opposite line. Indeed, they have organised demonstrations in favour of nuclear power, taking place during working time and with no loss of pay. So, although many trade unionists have been active against nuclear power, there has never been any question of formal trade union support either locally or nationally. Consequently, the movement was forced to put forward its own candidates at elections.

Most activists seem to see electoral intervention as an end in itself. Green lists, encompassing a wide range of ecological issues, have stood in a number of areas. In Bremen in Autumn 79 they got six per cent of the vote and more recently 5.3 per cent in Baden-Wurttemberg — enough to get them seats since, under German law, any party that gets more than five per cent is entitled to seats. In Lower Saxony, the area around Hannover, they got only four per cent, and here the political problem came to the fore. In order to get this result a left-wing group called the 'Communist League' (KB) did a deal with a right-wing ecological group which included among its members open fascists. This was an example of unity at any price simply in order to get elected.

The only principled electoral intervention came from the SAG. In Autumn 1977 they concentrated their efforts and their small resources in one election near the Grohnde nuclear site in Hameln, near Hannover. They built a local group on the basis of explicit working-class opposition to the state's nuclear strategy. One councillor was elected with two per cent of the vote. She was elected on the basis of her recallability by the local group — a position which

the other Green lists refused to endorse. This open political approach has enabled the group to broaden its activity into areas like the struggle for the 35-hour week, support for the striking printers and anti-fascist activity.

One of their statements spells it out:

'In the platform...it is naturally the case that the fight in the factories and offices, in the fields, streets and building sites, that is the actions of the workers, blue-collar and white-collar, farmworkers and small farmers and their families, will be decisive. Not only because it is they who are the actual victims of the nuclear policy, but because they, through their position in society are the only people who can decide to use the weapons which can really damage the nuclear strategy — the strike, the boycott and the occupation, the traditional means of struggle of the working class..

The SAG were denounced as splitters and wreckers by the rest of the left for taking this position. But those who argued this have found that alliances with the right lead to trouble.

For the 1980 elections, a national Green Party has emerged. A great deal of its thinking is based on the notions that 'consumerism' is to blame for environmental havoc. Consequently, workers who strike for more money are not only causing 'conflict' but also demanding more ecological devastation.

Connected with this is the idea that there is a 'third way' between capitalism and socialism. One of the main proponents of this, Rudolph Bahro, recently released from an East German jail. At a recent congress he said:

'The psychological revolution that we all see as urgently needed is precisely directed against the mode of consumption of capitalism...We must develop a policy for transforming the state machine...into an instrument for social control over all the separate monopoly interests...

Bahro's speech ends with a call to unity — including Christian groups. But that unity has definite limits: his speech was a prelude to a decision to exclude members of left groups from the party. This he and, sadly, the late Rudi Dutschke both acquiesced in, to say the least.

The Green Party is scarcely even radical on the issue it sprang from — nuclear power. It is not demanding the immediate closing of Germany's nuclear power stations — a pathetic position for a party which emerged from such a radical and militant mass movement. Internal dissent is rife within the party as it tries to appease every conceivable shade of liberal opinion.

The German experience is a warning to the left of the twin dangers of ignoring the ecological movement and of being drawn uncritically behind those who have definitely non-socialist politics. Sybil Cock

Walking on the water

Arthur Scargill, president of the Yorkshire area of the NUM, Great Red Hope of the Left for national presidency when age and the lure of directorates finally force Joe Gormley to resign, scourge of the Tories and the most-feared figure in the demonology of *Daily Telegraph* leader writers, is the union leader who comes closest to many people's ideal of perfect militancy. That section of the left that loves to build its hopes around prominent officials can see in Scargill a magnificent replacement for other tarnished heroes.

At one level, he really is a good candidate. A glance at his record shows just how good Scargill is ready to fight the Tories. He says publicly that he is ready to break the law restricting picketing and go to jail. He supported the Anti Nazi League. He was arrested at Grunwicks. He is an active opponent of nuclear power. He says, in his presidential address to the Yorkshire miners, that any attacks on the closed shop in the pits will mean an instant and total strike. He fights the cuts. He looks as though he will get rid of that swine Roy Mason.

And he is no nine-days wonder. He has always stood for the working class. He made his name leading unofficial strikes. He organised the famous Battle of Saltley Gates in 1972. He stands for the regular re-election of full-time officials. He even opposes phoney notions of 'workers' control' and argues that:

'The trade union movement should oppose any attempt to introduce worker control and/or participation, and fight for a socialist society. It is only under socialism that we could have worker control.'

Of course, his fan-club admit, there are one or two little local difficulties. He does defend the use of sexist pin-ups in union journals. He does seem to have been rather quiet about the war in Ireland. He is rather fond of his image and does tell jokes about how God thinks he is Arthur Scargill. Perhaps he is a bit of a careerist and he certainly does want to be NUM President. But, after all, better to have a good left winger in that job than Joe Gormley. And there is a good chance that, with a bit of persuasion, we can convince him about some of his lapses. All in all, he is the right sort of person to have on the front of your paper.

There is a convincing, if rather tired, reply to all of that starry-eyed enthusiasm. It is to point to others like Scanlon and Jones and to show how fast they moved to the right once they had got their hands on the top jobs and how the 'terrible twins' ended up as the chief salesmen of the social contract. Why should Arthur Scargill be any different? That seems a pretty good argument but it lacks credibility even with large

numbers of people who should know better.

The reason for this credibility gap is not just to do with the incurable naivety and optimism of the left. It is also because Scargill really is something rather different. It does not look as though he has yet made any of the dirty deals or sell-outs that usually mark the rise to power of the ambitious bureaucrat. There is little doubt that he is a sincere and committed socialist and that he really does hate the Tories. Not only that, he does not, like Murray and company, hate them because they will not play the old game of talks in the corridors of power but because they are attacking the working class and therefore have to be fought.

In fact, if we look a bit closer at the record of Scargill, then we can see quite clearly that the pressure which goes with the job of union bureaucrat is starting to take its toll of Scargill too. There is no divine dispensation which makes him immune from the sort of factors that led Scanlon and a thousand others into the House of Lords. It is true that there are no dramatic betrayals to which we can point and say 'we told you so'. Rather, there are straws in the wind, pointers to the future which make it doubly important for the rank and file to keep their distance and to fight the tendency to hero-worship.

Arthur Scargill began his career in politics rather than the union. He joined the Young Communist League at the age of 15, according to him because the Labour Party failed to get in touch with him. It was only that political commitment which led him into union activity. In fact, his earliest successes were in the YCL, where he, along with other notables like Jimmy Reid, ran what was then a large and proletarian organisation. In 1960 he was the CP candidate in the Worsbrough Urban District Council Elections and got 138 votes against 700 for the Labour Party candidate - not a bad result by CP standards.

But already he was starting to drift away from the idea of political action. The reasons he gave for this are very significant:

'...I gradually began to be interested in the union itself because it appeared to me that irrespective of what I did politically in the Young Communist League...or any other political organisation, the *real power* - and I say that in the best possible sense - the real power lay either with the working classes or with the ruling classes. Now the working classes were obviously identified with the trade union movement and not directly identified with the Labour Party which in my opinion had, and indeed still has, lost complete contact with the basic problems of the movement...'

That identification of the power of



the working class as lying in the organisations built around the point of production was a crucial point in his development. It explains why he chose to fight for years as a working miner in a series of petty battles against the right-wing leadership both of his pit and of the Yorkshire area of the NUM. It explains why he has always, up to this very day, remained a firm proponent of the idea that it is only by strike action, by the use of power, that the working class can hope to win anything. He still believes that it is 'a class war between them and us'.

It also explains why the persistent

rumours that Scargill is angling for a safe Labour seat have never come to fruition. The move against Mason is only the most recent of a series of opportunities that he has had. In February 1978, for example, Dick Kelly, Labour MP for Don Valley, announced his retirement and, as one miner put it: 'Arthur would only have to lift an eyelash' to get the nomination. The capitalist press, which seems to believe that a seat in the House of Commons is the summit of everybody's ambition, could not understand why Scargill could not be bothered to lift an eyelash.

But the idea that power lies in the trade union movement can have a double edge. It is an idea with which we agree when it means that only by action as a class can the worker change the world. But it can also mean that the route to power for the ambitious and talented young militant lies through the career ladder of the trade union bureaucracy. That is an idea with which we disagree. Not so Scargill. It is clear that for him both meanings are valid. His career is marked from the start by that second sense.

The evidence for that is not just his obvious wish to get on; the reason he gives for leaving the CP is just as significant:

'Basically it was because the CP insisted I should work in a certain way when I became a trade union official. They wanted me to sell the *Daily Worker* and promote CP ideals through the pit branch of the NUM. I resented this. It meant I wouldn't be exercising all my efforts for the men as miners.'

(Interview with *The Observer* in 1980.)

Now, whatever truth there may be in the belief that working as a CP official was not the best way to serve the interests of the working class, there is also in that statement the rejection of the collective control of any party as an impediment to the views of Arthur Scargill.

Those two beliefs - that the unions are where the real power lies and that therefore the task is to get your hands on the levers of power in the unions - are the marks of Scargill's career to date.

For many years, that meant a bitter battle against the right-wing. It was a battle in which both sides used every possible tactic. And it was a battle in which Scargill was quite prepared to lead unofficial action. The 1969 strike was an example. Scargill was the leading light in an unofficial strike committee based on the Yorkshire coal-field which took the lead in organising flying pickets to get other fields out.

In the period after the 1969, Scargill became more and more the leader of the left in the Yorkshire coal-field. In the run-up to the 1972 strike there was substantial rank and file involvement in the area, and it was Yorkshire that took the initiative in the militant picketing in that strike. Scargill was prepared to fight very hard indeed - Saltley was a genuine

battle with the police, and there were many other less legendary confrontations in which Scargill and the miners were to show real determination and courage.

He unashamedly recorded the reason for his militancy:

'You see, we took the view that we were in a class war. We were not playing cricket on the village green, like they did in '26. We were out to defeat Heath and Heath's policies because we were fighting a government. Anyone who thinks otherwise was living in cloud-cuckoo land. We had to declare war on them and the only way you could declare war was to attack the vulnerable points. They were the points of energy: the power stations, the coke depots, the coal depots, the points of supply. And this was what we did.'



Up until June 1972, when he was elected full-time Yorkshire area compensation agent - a very important post in a union a great deal of whose activity is bound to be concerned with sick and injured miners - Scargill was still, nominally at least, a working miner. Since then, he has been a full-time official, rising very rapidly to Area President, a post to which he was overwhelmingly elected only a few months after becoming compensation agent.

With the election of Scargill's ally Owen Briscoe to area secretary in 1973, the old right-wing in the Yorkshire area was on the run and Scargill has dominated the union there ever since.

Up to this point, Scargill had been a leading figure in the Barnsley Miners' Forum, of which he had been secretary. This had acted very much as a rank-and-file body. It held regular meetings once a month to which militant miners from all over the coal-field were welcome. It discussed the industry, the union and socialist politics. It provided the unofficial organisation for the rise of the left. But, after Briscoe's election, meetings became less and regular until, in 1976, it finally sputtered into oblivion. Whatever organisation the broad left maintains in the area is now secret. SWP miners, for example, never get to hear about it.

In fact, what Scargill has done, whether he wanted to or not, has been to narrow the base of the organised broad left to branch officials alone. The new generation of militant young miners who are the modern equivalent of those who got their education in the struggles of 1972 and 1974 are completely neglected by the new arrange-

ments. The consequence of this secrecy is to play into the hands of the right-wing.

In the NUM, more perhaps than in any other union, the pressures towards bureaucratisation weigh very hard on full-time officials. They begin at the pit level. Because mining is such a dangerous and demanding job, the post of full-time branch secretary, working in an office on the surface, is relatively a very privileged one and there is a tendency for the other branch officials, too, to begin to spend more and more of their time in this comparative comfort. At the local level, there is a degree of control since there are regular elections, but the area and national officials are there for life, far away from the strains of the job.

By the standards of other union leaders, Scargill is hardly touched by corruption. Although he gets a union Rover and the usual trips to Cuba and the like, even the most scurrilous hounds of the capitalist press have been unable to dig up any real dirt on him. When accused, by the Coal Board official, of accepting a free meal from the NCB, he insisted on paying for it himself and he is quick to sue any paper that starts spreading lies. However, even if the pressures have not marked his personal life, they have had an impact on his overall position.

He certainly does not think that officials should be paid the same as the people they represent. As early as 1974 he voted against the rest of the left in favour of a big rise for officials. Even on the re-election of full-time officials every five years, the 1979 conference saw Yorkshire vote against a motion from Derbyshire on the dubious grounds that 'it did not include all the amendments that would have made the new situation unambiguous'. Rank and file miners in Yorkshire argue that, if he was seriously committed to regular re-election Scargill could easily set a precedent by resigning and offering himself for re-election - there is no doubt that he would win!

Much more serious is the way in which he has started to temper his militancy with the demands of office, and the possibility of higher office. Like every other trade union leader, the time that this showed most was during the Labour government.

This was despite his declaration that: 'We have so many people inside the TUC, inside the NUM... who because it is a Labour government are prepared to accept treatment and decisions that they would never tolerate from a Tory government. This seems to me totally inconsistent with trade-union principles.'

The decisive year was 1978. For a long time, Scargill had led NUM opposition both to incomes policy and productivity dealing but, at the end of 1977 the right-wing over-ruled both a conference decision and the result of a national ballot, and negotiated a productivity deal with the NCB on a local basis. To

force it through they wound up right-wing pits to sign local deals and organised a ballot on an area by area basis. Unlike previous occasions, Scargill chose not to run a big campaign against this second ballot even in the Yorkshire area. One miner told the press: 'He wants to lose'. The deal was ultimately forced through and miners have been suffering the consequences ever since.

But Scargill's real mistake was not the failure to run a campaign during the second ballot, or even, as some militants suggest, to organise the more militant pits to act unofficially for the original claim. The crucial failure was not to mobilise the rank and file earlier when the right-wing on the NEC flouted the decision of the members. Instead of a massive campaign, the best that Scargill could manage was that hoary old trick of the right-wing - court action over the interpretation of the union rule book.

The defeat marked a turning point and 1978 was the year in which rank and file miners began to notice the shift. The best example was the rescue men's dispute that summer. The rescue brigades had a long-standing grievance over pay which the Yorkshire area council claimed to support. But they kept putting off action. Eventually, the three Yorkshire rescue brigades took matters into their own hands and struck. Those at Rotherham and Wakefield failed to win strike action from the NUM branches to which they are attached, but the men at Armthorpe did, with the whole pit coming out.

Flying pickets were sent out and started to pull out other pits. Under intense rank and file pressure Scargill called a special area council and claimed to be having secret talks with the NCB. On the basis of that, he was able to persuade the two weaker rescue brigades

to vote for a return to work, isolating the militants from Armthorpe. The secret deals and the arm-twisting left a very sour taste in the mouths of the best militants.

From 1978 onwards Scargill's eyes have been set ever more firmly on Gormley's retirement and ever less on the rank and file.

But the fact that Scargill sees the unions as his area of activity does not mean that he is 'unpolitical'. He is an active member of the Labour Party and has supported Benn for leader of the party since at least 1975, although this support has increased in the last year. He continues to make that support public even though it was Benn who, as energy secretary, was the driving force behind the productivity bonuses, campaigning for the same higher productivity that Scargill rightly claimed was taking an increasing toll of miners' lives and limbs. The fact that the energy secretary signed an appeal for higher productivity which was published in every pit does not seem to matter too much.

In fact, support for Benn is more than a matter of personalities. There is a very strong similarity between Scargill's view of how to save 'Britain' and the various 'alternative strategies' of Benn and his camp followers. As early as 1977 Scargill was calling for cuts in defence spending, restoration of cuts in social services, extended public ownership and immediate import controls in order to save both Britain and the Labour government. Even his opposition to nuclear energy is based on a detailed plan for the expansion of the coal industry.

But Scargill is no 'Bennite' - he is independent of all political currents in the labour movement.

Even Scargill's publicised coup in Roy

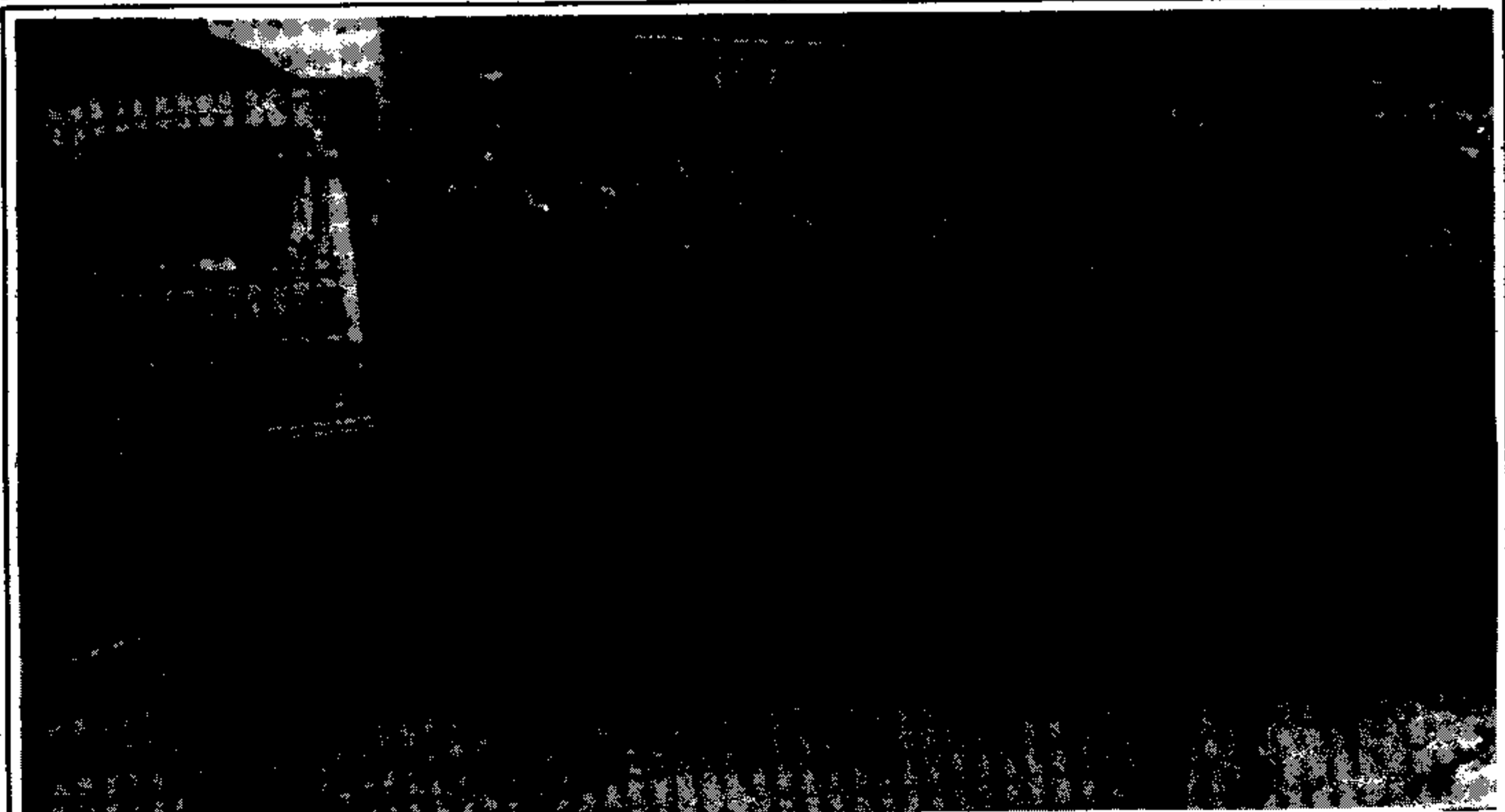
Mason's constituency does not really represent a determined attempt to recruit to the Labour Party. So far, at least, all that Scargill has done is to mobilise the official union apparatus in the area into attending local Labour Party meetings.

Scargill's political independence is a strength in that he does not share the parliamentary cretinism of a normal Labour left-winger. Thus, while Scargill welcomes the changes in the Labour Party constitution he has not been singing panegyrics as though it amounted to the Second Coming in the manner of your normal left Labourite.

Again, if you read the 1980 presidential address, it certainly does have the usual left Labour slogans against Thatcher and demands for alternative policies. But these are far outweighed by the talk of militant action to fight the Tories here and now, and there is little doubt that they are sincerely meant. What is strikingly absent is any of the usual guff about the struggle in parliament or waiting for the election of the next Labour government to solve all the problems.

The overwhelming stress is upon the ability of the miners to use their power to smash any Act of Parliament or ministerial decision. That is the old Scargill and it is something which sets him off from the usual bran of Labour left leader.

But the independence from organised political currents is also a weakness. It means that there is no discipline over him even from a flabby caucus like the Broad Left. Even Scanlon, for example, owed a debt to the CP-organised Broad Left in the AUEW which meant that, once elected, he had to pay a little attention to people much closer to the rank and file. To the limited extent that there is a Broad Left in the Yorkshire



Saltley Gates, 7 February 1972

NUM it is entirely the creature of Arthur Scargill and, in these circumstances, the tail tends to wag the dog.

It also means that he has no mechanism for organising a political fight. It means that, in the end, he is the prisoner of the Labour left and not their master. It means that when they get into government and start their inevitable slide to the right he will have no option but to follow them. Whatever personal agonies he may suffer, he will be unable to avoid the logic of his position. The belief that trade union militancy is enough always means that reformist politics will dominate the scene.

Scargill is fond of comparing himself with A.J. Cook, the militant South Wales miner who was elected general secretary of the old Miners Federation of Great Britain in 1924 and who led the miners at the time of the general strike. It is a good comparison. Like Scargill, Cook had a meteoric rise to fame, being elected to the national secretary's job at the age of 41. Like Scargill, Cook had made his name as a leader of real struggles, and he fully understood the fact that the power of the working class lay in its position in production. Like Scargill, he was well to the left of the other official leaders of the movement and for that he, too, was revered by militants.

But there is a less flattering sense in which the comparison is striking. Although he began as a 'syndicalist', rejecting all forms of political action, Cook joined the Communist Party at its formation. But he soon found that its discipline was irksome for a full-time bureaucrat and when he resigned he claimed that the CP was:

'a hindrance to the whole of the British trade union movement... They are causing division inside the ranks of the whole movement and I am of the opinion that we shall, as a trades union movement, eventually have to fight the Communist Party.'

Unlike Scargill, however, he remained active in the CP-led rank-and-file group, the Minority Movement, and he was their candidate for general secretary. Unlike many other, right-wing, trade union officials he did not regard the first, 1924, Labour government as salvation for the working class and the golden opportunity for personal power. But even the man who had led the most bitter struggles in working class history could not avoid the logic of political life.

After the sell-out of the general strike in 1926, for example, although Cook led the miners in continued resistance to wage cuts, he let off the hook the TUC leaders who had sold out the strike. When there was a meeting of the executives of all unions to conduct a *post mortem* on the general strike Cook refused to make waves by denouncing the leaders who had killed it and left the miners to fight alone. However left his rhetoric, he was a trade union bureaucrat and could not escape the pressures.

By the time of the second Labour

government in 1929 Cook had moved a long way to the right. He split from the rump of the Minority Movement - which was anyway by this time completely ultra-left and was busy denouncing the Labour Party as 'social fascist'. Cook supported the new Labour government to the hilt, and backed Sir Oswald Mosley - then the equivalent of Tony Benn as a left leader - in his plan to bail out British capitalism. (Cook, of course, did not follow Mosley into the camp of fascism.) All of the revolutionary words of the 1920's disappeared under the need to save British capitalism rather than replace it with socialism.



What this shows is that when trade union leaders with the sort of political ideas that Cook and Scargill have are forced to make up their minds about a Labour government there is very, very little to stop them moving to the right. It is down to Arthur Scargill to show us why he is privileged to be immune to the pressures which broke his chosen hero.

But that is merely the probable shape of the future. Right now we are fighting the Tories and, compared with the 'more political' leaders of the Bennite left, Scargill is fighting very hard indeed. He was the only leading figure to oppose both cuts and rates rises in the South Yorkshire area. He has given personal and trade union support to the striking steel workers. He has been concerned with action against the Tories rather than fine speeches. But, even here, there are chinks in the armour of King Arthur.

In the 1974 miners' strike the level of picketing was comparatively low. Scargill once offered an interesting justification:

'The '74 dispute brought a whole new feature into our struggle. We launched our main attack in Yorkshire on this occasion, at the giant Anchor steel works complex in Scunthorpe: because it was clear that if we could stop the huge Anchor works we could stop British industry. We had a right cat-and-mouse game...while they had prepared very well on the power stations, they hadn't prepared well at the steel works and we stopped all the steel works on this occasion.'

'Historians, when they look at this, will see that the real crunch came in the '74 strike with the steel works.'

Holding that view, you might think that the first piece of advice that Arthur

Scargill would give to steelworkers striking in 1980 would be to picket the pits. You would be mistaken. The Yorkshire area certainly took action on the issue. On 4 January they sent out a circular which read, in part:

'Our members should not handle any steel which comes to the NCB from any source which is not a normal source of supply.'

'Branches and members need not object or take exception to the movement of steel etc. from one Coal Board unit to another.'

Taken together, those clauses make a nonsense of things. BSC steel, being from a 'normal source of supply', was OK. And all that the NCB management had to do was to find a pit or workshop where the union leadership was so right-wing that they would let scab steel in and then ship it out again as 'internal movement' to any place they chose.

This did not escape the attention of the rank and file of the best organised pits, and area HQ has been bombarded with demands for better instructions ever since. Scargill's claim was that he had done everything that the ISTC leadership had asked him to. Not quite the attitude that he took in 1972 or 1974.

But the story goes on. In the middle of March the Stocksbridge strike committee decided that, official invitation or no, they were going to picket the pits. The best organised pits actually sent invitations asking for pickets.

The next step was to win the support of the South Yorkshire divisional strike committee, which was easily done, but the local ISTC official - rule-bound as ever - added a rider that Scargill should be informed before picketing started. Initial contacts between steelworker militants, Scargill and NUM branch officials gave the impression that while Scargill was in favour of the pickets himself there was a lot of pressure from some of the officials, worried about their election prospects, not to do anything that might rock the boat.

There was an angry response from the more militant pits who threatened to publish an open letter denouncing the sell-out. Under the contrary pressure from the rank and file, Scargill bent back to the left and promised action on the issue.

The truth is that Arthur Scargill is a left-wing official, but he is still an official. Like all officials, he bends to the pressures that are put upon him. Neither he nor anyone else can act as a substitute for a strong rank and file movement.

There is no way that Arthur Scargill on his own can fight the Tories, any more than can Tony Benn or any other leader up on high. The extent to which he can and will play a role in that fight will be the extent to which the membership are prepared to have a go. The task is to organise there, not to flirt with the great men.

Colin Sparks



Looking Back at the Lockout

Management got a bloody nose...didn't they? Leave aside the complacency of the in-the-know stalwarts of This Great Movement of Ours: do you know who won at *The Times*?

Probably not. It was the most spectacular lock-out in decades -- and yet a curious silence has fallen over its outcome. Which is less than helpful for anyone who understood it to be the first great showdown of New Technology and saw stamped across it the lip-smacking motto of every employer in the land: We have seen the future and for you it doesn't work.

Thankfully we can now turn to the Fleet Street branch of the Socialist Workers Party for the facts. They have produced a pamphlet* which lights up the final scoreline. Seven per cent job cuts for NATSOPA machine minders, 40 per cent for NGA compositors. Clearly, this was less than a mauling for management.

The lock-out began in November 1978, but its roots lay in a decade or more of international struggle over New Technology. The new techniques open up the possibility of massively increased leisure, but with the ownership of industry in private hands the likeliest outcome is a massively increased dole queue. In the same month that *The Times* lock-out began, a secret government report leaked to the *Financial Times* predicted unemployment levels of up to 15 per cent or 'roughly the peak of the 1930s depression'. Technology progress, social disaster. But for the owners, paradise...especially if they accepted the logic of New Technology to de-skill workers and destroy trade unions.

That is exactly what happened in a series of bitter battles in the American newspaper industry. There and elsewhere, the pattern was set by 'rogue' employers who felt they had found a mission in life: bosses such as the French ex-Nazi Robert Hersant (Quote: 'The first week I shall ask them [the print unions] permission to piss. The second week I shall piss without permission. And the third week I shall piss on them.') or Robert H. Spahn, whose Oklahoma strike-breaking school has secretly trained 2,500 scabs, or even our very own Christopher Pole-Carew, whose *Nottingham Evening Post* has won so many admiring and envious glances from provincial proprietors. The 'rogues' are more accurately the employers' advance guard, and it was to their example that *The Times* turned for guidance on strategy and tactics.

Just as *Washington Post* workers

experienced months of petty harassment before their lock-out in 1975, so now their colleagues at *The Times* were to be similarly tormented. A machine belt might tear, and for the first time workers would suddenly find themselves presented with a bill for needle and cotton to sew it up. It sounds trivial, but for the employers it was essential: this was the 'attrition' phase, exhausting the enemy before moving in for the kill.

Yet, thankfully, the management made mistakes, serious mistakes. Quick to draw the general lessons of their American cohorts, they passed over the small print. Their strategy had gaping holes. As the pamphlet puts it: 'Confrontation with the unions had started and deadlines for closure had been announced, yet preparations for the consequences of closure were nowhere near as planned as the Spahn-type lock-out at *The Washington Post*...Scab training...only got under way at the end of January 1979, two months after the start of the lock-out. *The Washington Post* had secretly started sending its management for training two years before it began its lock-out.'

But what of the weaknesses on our side? Predictably, the leaderships of the print unions were appalling. Officials who had tried unsuccessfully only two years earlier to sell their members a job-cutting Programme for Action could hardly be expected to lead a crusade against this new onslaught. And who could be happy with a general secretary like Joe Wade conceding, in the thick of the fight, the central issue: 'The NGA has always recognised the inevitability of staff reductions arising from technological innovation.' Wade and his friends, irked by management's sudden disdain

for the great god Procedure, and riled by rather unsubtle attempts to rub their noses in the dirt, no doubt could still nurture a sneaking regard for management's desire to bring the chapels into line -- something the officials had been trying and failing to do for years. When the do-as-you're-told-or-be-locked-out ultimatum came, it brought this response from Bill Keys of SOGAT: 'I welcome this move by Times Newspapers if it is a catalyst to bring order into Fleet Street.' And from NGA president Les Dixon: 'It is time something was done about Fleet Street and we are all opposed to unofficial stoppages.'

Can anyone be surprised that the campaign against the lock-out was so low-level? That one union had key members working throughout (and has yet to discipline them), that another allowed 'essential workers' to carry on at management's convenience, or that a third actively persecuted members who refused to install the new technology and temporarily suspended their branch because it supported them and refused a deal with management?

It was perhaps fitting that the high point of the dispute should have been the action of print workers 1,000 miles away. The solidarity of Turkish and German printers in Cologne blocked management's plan for a scab international edition of *The Times* at a time when the paper's journalists were wobbling over whether to produce it. It was the nearest the management came to a major breakthrough...and the nearest our side came to throwing off the suffocating conservatism of the print union leaderships. When was there even a hint of that imaginative militancy which, for example, had led French printworkers locked out in 1975 by *Le Parisien Libere* to occupy the building, produce pirate editions, send flying pickets to railway sorting rooms to confiscate imported scab papers, invade the French Stock Exchange and, most exciting of all, to launch the rodeo...the nightly ambush of delivery drivers that

socialist

REVIEW

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led to 700 arrests (but millions of management headaches) in 29 months? For Wade & Co. there was none of this: no sympathy strikes...no action against *The Times*' chain of provincial papers... not even, for long periods, a picket of *The Times* itself.

The lock-out did create some unity across the unions, a crucial advance in an industry with one of the most divided workforces in the country. But the level of struggle was too meagre to carry it forward, and almost inevitably it was undermined as some of the worst of Fleet Street's reflex actions re-emerged. Jobs were sold for money and, when that cancer began to eat into the NGA's traditional craftist differential, an official was heard to complain that that was 'more than flesh and blood could stand'.

It was difficult, if not impossible, to resist *The Times*' onslaught without casting off this legacy of Fleet Street, that every job is a nest-egg for its owner and a bargaining ploy for the chapel. As Fleet Street workers, the authors of the pamphlet are right to emphasise this weakness as virulently as they do. But it must be said that in one crucial respect, *The Times* management failed. They set out to do a *Washington Post*, to emasculate the print unions, to break their backs, and they did not succeed. Of course, they made serious inroads into union strength, of course our 'leaders' are still ignoring all the warning signs of what New Technology means to trade union organisation. But, in a year-long lock-out, Fleet Street trade unionism, with all its glaring weaknesses, was let off the hook by a management which thought it had everything worked out. In what could still become seen as the most crucial dispute of the New Technology era, we have played badly and won a replay. Management will have learned from their mistakes: let's hope we've begun to do the same.

"Jobs Under Attack: The Employers' Offensive and the Lessons of The Times. Fleet Street SWP. 50p.

Nalgo's First National Action

The steel strike quite rightly overshadowed everything else that happened in the class struggle in the first three months of this year. But some other interesting developments did take place and not all were as depressing as events in Leyland. One was the fortnight of selective strike action by the white-collar local government union, NALGO. Two SWP members in the union tell what happened.

NALGO is the largest white-collar union in the world. It has 750,000 members, half of whom are women, and a history stretching back 75 years. Yet it is only this year that the first national dispute involving the half million members in local government has taken place.

Two major disputes preceded this one — the London Weighting strike of 1974 and the social workers strike which began in 1978. The present battle is somewhat surprising and the issue which triggered it is, on the face of it, equally surprising.

The fight was about comparability — part of last year's pay agreement. For the low-paid, the study indicated a 10 per cent increase. After dragging their feet for a long while, the employers offered just 6 per cent. To everyone's surprise, things began to happen.

But let us first go back a bit. In 1952, my mum watched the coronation on the only television in the street. The proud owner worked for the local council. Compared with the rest of the street, he was very well off. He was a 'cut above average' socially, very secure in his job and had had the benefit of training in various skills. Prime material for building a sleepy, conservative 'association' — but not much else.

In the period of massive expansion of public services after the war, up until the mid-seventies, local government

expanded enormously. At the same time, the position held by 'public servants' was eroded. The result was a steady increase in NALGO membership. More recently, the cuts with their heavy impact on job security and public sector wages have accelerated the process.

The inflexible, bureaucratic Whitley procedures, with their 'staff' representatives, time-wasting mechanisms and remote negotiations, began to sag under the weight. With the enthusiasm of an influx of radicalised graduates from the university 'bulge' of the late sixties as a catalyst, a 'union' outlook began to replace the 'association' image. This was particularly noticeable in the main urban areas — London, Newcastle, Manchester, Glasgow, Liverpool.

The struggle for a higher London Weighting allowance in 1974 tested the new shop steward structures and encouraged the development of more. Overwhelmingly, they grew first in social services departments, around the social worker network. The concentrations of low-paid in Treasurer's, Administration, Engineers' Departments etc. remained (and usually still are) poorly organised. The national strike of social workers in 1978 reflected the steady development, but showed up the very real isolation of the social workers, even from the low-paid in their own sections.

The comparability struggle is remarkable because the traditionally 'backward' clerical workers have spearheaded the action, although their management stood to gain nearly ten times as much out of the claim. In a whole series of local struggles, the low-paid have in fact been fighting back for some time. Some, including residential workers, typists and telephonists, have taken action in different areas simultaneously. In militant Camden, the majority of members have been involved in individual or sectional claims for re-grading higher on the salary structure, often successfully. Small scale wage battles, with disputes over staffing, health and safety, hours etc. have contributed to a situation where an official call to action met an immediate, almost 100 per cent response even in the rural areas.

The example of Gloucester County branch says a lot. The City branch agreed on a local settlement early on — but, against advice from branch officers and representatives, the computer section in the County branch refused to lift any of their action until the local Tewkesbury council withdrew suspensions. The myth that NALGO members are 'not proper trade unionists' is finally put to rest.

The other myth — that NALGO members have no power — is also exploded. Islington Council alone lost

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£5m (£10m at today's prices) out of the London Weighting dispute. Much of this was through non-collection of rates. In addition, NALGO members can shut motorways and airports, close schools, stop all meat supplies, even close the Mersey tunnel!

Comparability arose so that the negotiators could fob us off with 9.4 per cent last year. At 10 per cent for the low-paid and 22 per cent for the high-paid, it was much worse even than a simple percentage claim. Nevertheless, the rank and file has moved as never before. The right-wing union leadership will have picked up a lot of credibility, just before the union elections. But with the new-found confidence of the membership, they will find it a lot harder to sell us out when it comes to this year's pay claim.

Lionel Starling (Islington)

According to Mike Blick, NALGO's chief local government negotiator, the recent comparability settlement justifies the initial comparability exercise and vindicates the union leadership. The final settlement gives £189 at the bottom and £1,716 at the top – almost the full amount of the claim. But can this be called a victory? To some extent, yes. But as the dust settles, many members will compare their wage packets with those of their bosses and then ask who fought for the spoils.

The annual pay claim usually reflects the domination of the union by higher-paid officers, and the cry of 'maintain our differentials' rules. This year was almost the same – except that there was a fight. The low-paid members felt the pinch money-wise but also felt the employers had ratted on an agreement.

Some branch and district officers did not want to upset the 'sweetheart' relationships they had built up with councillors over the years. In several branches the policy of no contact or co-operation with councillors was not supported because 'the dispute is not with our local employers – they are sympathetic'. Even in branches where activity was played down, however, there were many examples of the low-paid pushing branch leaderships to step it up. Generally, it was these members whose action was most effective and most enthusiastically taken up. Highly-paid professionals often claimed 'professional conduct' meant they had to break the action. At the same time, many in this group supported action, provided that it was taken by someone else, somewhere else.

In areas with strong shop stewards committees, particularly in the metropolitan areas, the industrial action committees were quite effective. The experiences gained by these committees must not be lost. The difficulties of organising activity, rather than discussing policy, became very apparent. Next time, the response must be quicker and firmer.

Why didn't the employers put the boot on us? Well, for one thing they had already budgeted for an average 13 per cent increase, roughly the level of the final settlement. The 8 per cent offer was really a try-on. Second, they were caught with their pants down, not expecting action to be called and even less expecting that NALGO members would respond. They were split early on as several local authorities signed local agreements. Although the employers' association threatened mass suspensions, only reactionary Tewkesbury actually carried out the threat. In this case the NALGO members involved swiftly moved to pickets and walk-outs – actions that a few weeks earlier they would have considered unthinkable. Solidarity from around the country – telegrams and substantial collections – was building up just as the

dispute was settled.

This is a brief, initial account. A Nalگو Action Group pamphlet is in the pipeline, which will look at the dispute in more detail. For now, a few lessons can be learnt.

1. The effectiveness of the action was partial and a huge number of members were hardly involved. For the future, action must hit harder and draw in the whole membership.

2. The amounts paid out to the top dogs are not far short of the wages of the lowest-paid. We need a claim of £25 from July 1st.

3. There is an increased potential for militancy among the low-paid in the union, most of whom are women. This opens up new possibilities for building Nalگو Action Group.

Phil Jones (Forest of Dean)

Calling for the Police?

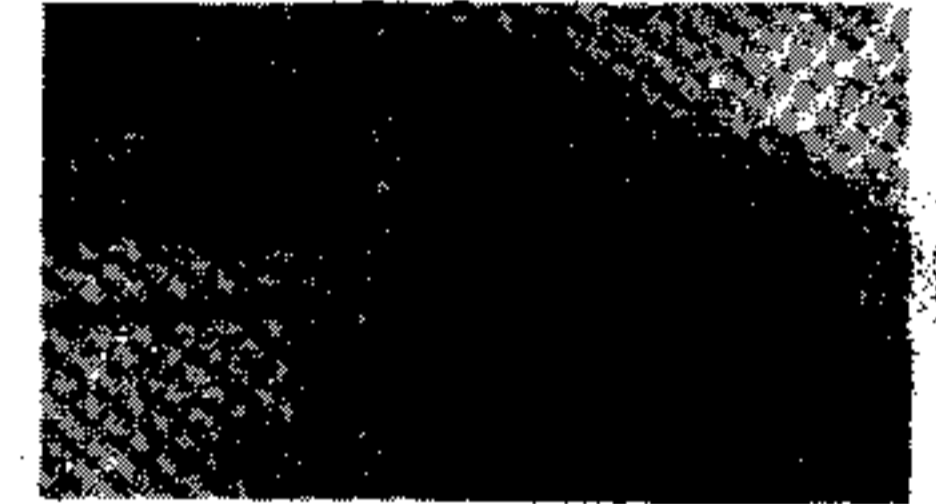
The attacks upon rail workers at Neasden and the subsequent one-day strike of the London tube workers has raised again the question of what socialist on the buses and tubes say in such situations. We are in favour of strike action in pursuit of the safety of the workforce. But what if the demand of the strike is for more police to enforce 'law and order'? Steve Cusbion, a London – and formerly a Midlands – busman gives his views. We would be glad to hear what other socialist bus or rail workers think.

Many London busworkers will remember the name of Brother Ron Jones to their dying day, for there but good fortune goes anyone of us. Brother Jones was savagely beaten to death by two passengers while trying to collect the fare for their dog. The response of the crews was magnificent – on the day of his funeral, the entire fleet struck, not a wheel turned. But where do we go from here, what do we demand?

The immediate response from most busworkers is for stiffer penalties, the birch, more police, etc. The derisory sentences handed out to Bro. Jones' murderers were certainly an insult, months rather than years. 'After all', you could see the judge thinking, 'he was only a bus conductor, and he wasn't even white.' But in the long run it will not be in any worker's interest to join the 'Hang-em, Flog-em, Brigade'.

In Coventry, the crews operated a successful policy for some time. If there was an assault on a route, the union would enquire if the other passengers had gone to the aid of their member. If they had not, the route was withdrawn the next day. It did bring home to the other passengers their responsibility to defend the crews.

In Birmingham, there was one notorious pub where, every Saturday night, the regulars would pile onto a bus, and



if it had an Asian conductor, they would beat him up. The police took scant notice of this. One Saturday night, 20 busmen met in the town centre, dressed in their own clothes carrying walking sticks. They boarded the bus concerned, and when the louts got on the bus and attacked the conductor, we set about them and gave them the thrashing of their lives. Word soon spread amongst the roughnecks in the city that you don't mess with busworkers.

However, these responses are basically fire brigade jobs. We need to get to the bottom of the problem. It may sound like the response of a left-wing hack, but the basic cause of most assaults starts with the abysmal level of service. Terry Allen, TGWU bus section district officer said: 'The garage with the greatest number of assault in 1976 was New Cross with 69. This garage was also the highest for lost mileage with 13,500 duties cut during the year.'

You wait for three quarters of an hour in the cold or wet, you are late for work and your temper gets frayed. The reason you hit the conductor may be completely trivial, but it becomes the last straw. Even quite reasonable people thrash out in such circumstances. As the cuts increase, so will the assaults and all the radio's, assault alarms and the police in the world will not stop it.

When you see the anger and frustration that builds up in a bus queue when the bus is late, you can begin to see why the Russian revolution started in a queue.

Swinging back to the left

There was a time when the *New Statesman* was an essential part of any aspiring leftist's apparel. In the period between the Suez debacle and the formation of the Labour government in 1964 it was the first introduction to anything like left-wing ideas to many thousands of young, mainly middle class people. They would march annually from Aldermaston to London against nuclear weapons, make the occasional pilgrimage to the Academy to see the latest French New Wave film, timidly ask for the *New Statesman* in the local Smiths, and wonder whether they ought not be buying the more turgid *Tribune* which, allegedly, was organising the left in the local Labour Parties. It was said that if you wanted to get into the sociology departments at universities, a *New Statesman* sticking out of your duffle coat pocket would see you through the interview.

All that changed in the mid-sixties. The young radical upper class writers who had shocked their parents in its pages became older and decidedly more right-wing. The duffle coated droves who had read their articles with glee subsided into marriage, mortgage repayments, middle class incomes and respectability. Borne along by its writers and readers, the *New Statesman* was uninvolved and uninterested in the issues that stirred the next generation of radical youth, from Grosvenor Square to Crunwicks, from the Sorbonne to the Saltley Gates. Its aim became, as the then editor told a young Paul Foot when offering him a job in 1965, 'to win more Tory readers'.

It bore — and bored with — the imprint of mediocre editing by the rapidly rightward moving Paul Johnson, the failed cabinet minister Crossman, and the ephemeral political columnist Anthony Howard. Its circulation sank from close to 100,000 right down to 37,500 as those who moved on from duffle coats to denim jackets found what they wanted — from way-out rock and Singhalese restaurants to instant armchair activism — in *Time Out* (in London, at least). The *Statesman* was left desperately trying to hold its own in a middle ground already crowded out by the 'quality' Sundays, the *Literary Supplement*, *The Guardian*, *The Economist*.

The *Statesman* was bound to realise sooner or later that it had taken a wrong turning. This occurred about two years ago. After dubious reports (in *Private Eye*) of backstabbing and betrayals that made the antics that sometimes occur in left-wing sects look like child's play, the unlikely figure of Bruce Page was placed on the editorial throne.

In itself that did not seem to portend any great change. Page was a founder

member of the *Sunday Times* Insight team and an excellent investigative journalist. But he was hardly identified with the left — trendy or otherwise.

But if the king did not have a radical past, some of those around him did. They had been at Grosvenor Square before moving on to the fleshpots of Fleet Street, exchanging revolutionary enthusiasm and youthful looks for fat expense accounts and premature flabbiness. It soon became clear that they saw the *New Statesman* as a platform for their sort of politics — flabby in parts, but with a vigorous streak of radicalism.

Around the escapees from the Insight team and the refugees from the revolutionary left coalesced an editorial group that was soon two-timing *Time Out* and out-levelling *The Leveller*. In the *Statesman's* pages stars of the ABC trial have regularly been ripping the lid off some of the nastier bits of the state machine; Chris Hird (who once wrote an excellent city column for *Socialist Worker* over the by-line T.H. Rogmorton) just as regularly exposes leading companies and nationalised corporations; Mary Holland — too honest a reporter for Conor Cruise O'Brien's *Observer* — has moved in as Irish editor. The guest contributors now are the likes of Paul Foot, Fred Halliday, E.P. Thompson, Tariq Ali, rather than Paul Johnson.

Some of the old housewriters seem to have been reborn: Patrick Wintour who three years ago had no compunction in doing a typical Hack Fleet Street job on an imprisoned Andy Strouthous ('the face of a student Dave Spart stared out at bourgeois Britain') now pens very useful articles with Chris Hird.

There has even been some shift in the 'literary' back half, which under successive editors had been a sanctified retreat for the same bores who praise each others reminiscences of the Bloombury group week after week in the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer*. There is still an element of that — but also increasingly discussion of ideas, arguments about Marxism, accounts of what left historians are trying to do, even occasional reviews of books you might want to read.

All this is to the good. It means that after buying your *Socialist Worker* and *Socialist Review* you could do worse than to spend any spare few shillings on the *Statesman*.

Yet behind the silver lining there's a cloud. The *New Statesman* says a lot about what is wrong with things. But when it comes to what should be done about them, all you get is an unvoiced hint that perhaps those who have broken with reformism and the Labour Party should go back to them.

The nearest thing to an explicit putting of the answers was in the Christmas issue. An article from a war-time *States-*

man by the veteran radical journalist H.N. Brailsford was republished, with a note from the editor saying its ideas were still relevant. The ideas called for a rebuilding of society, for a challenge to the narrow upper class group who control the state machine, for a break with the politics that leaves real power in their hands as governments come and go, for an end to an economics that produces dole queues and social welfare cuts.

Yet the break was to be accomplished by... radical action through the existing political structure by 'drastic reform' to 'our Parliamentary system', by new hands on the same levers of power, by a new movement to pressurise the same enemy. And the people from whom it was to be built were not those who sweat it out on the assembly line and occasionally battle it out on the picket line, but rather the sort of well intentioned people who read the *New Statesman*.

In his editorial note on the piece, Page explicitly distanced the *Statesman* as much from those who believe 'no change is possible short of millennial cataclysm' (and who refuse 'any allegiance to the existing institutions of an imperfect democracy') as from those who believe in 'the impossibility of change'.

The futility — and the dangers — of this approach are shown most strongly when the *New Statesman* deals with economic issues. Here article after article pours well-deserved derision on the monetarist fantasies of Thatcher and Joseph. But what alternative is offered? Nationalisation of the commanding heights? Workers' control of the great corporations? Occupy, nationalise? Nothing so 'crude'. Instead, the only half explicit suggestion is a revamping of the Keynesianism that seemed to work in the golden age when unemployment was two per cent and arms ate up ten per cent of the national product.

Much the same applies to the police and foreign policy. There are marvellous exposures of the phone tappers and the secret policeman — indeed, if anything there is an overestimation of the ability of the state to act independently of wider social forces — and a belief that the way to deal with this danger is through the traditional parliamentary forms provided by the state itself. There are brilliant denunciations of the new generation of nuclear missiles that are being deployed — with calls for 'Britain' (no worry here about *whose* Britain) to 'take a lead' in pressing for a neutral Europe.

There is the radical onslaught on the politics of Thatcher. The emphatic assertion that things can and should be different. But when it comes to *how* they should be different, you get a collection of outdated reformist nostrums that do not even begin to come to grip with the real forces controlling British society.

It is an approach to politics which can be expected to increase in popularity

within the milieu to which the *New Statesman* has traditionally appealed. It fits in with all the prejudices of those who Paul Foot calls the Non-Aligned Non-Activists (NANAS), the drop-outs from the post-68 euphoria, those who sympathise with all the left-wing causes as they watch them on TV, but who would not be seen dead on a picket line. It ties in with the 'new' politics being pushed by *Beyond the Fragments* (much inspired, like some of the *New Statesman* writers by the brand of militant populist reformism preached by E.P. Thompson) and the rather older (and increasingly old hat) politics of the Eurocommunists. It cross-cuts neatly with many of the arguments used by the Bennites.

Indeed, it is almost as if the *Statesman* is consciously trying to become a vehicle for taking aboard all these differing groupings. Certainly, the list of the contributors to any issue reads like it.

But where, if anywhere, does it want to take them all? Political logic would seem to indicate towards the Labour left. If you want radical reform, you need a reformist agency, and the Labour Party is the only viable parliamentary reformist agency in Britain today. Some of the *Statesman's* staff and contributors clearly see Benn as some sort of answer: even Robin Blackburn has insisted in its pages that 'Labour is shaking off its Fabian tutelage', and the message of a recent exchange of correspondence about the 'Militant' group was very much that the group gave the rest of the Labour left a bad name.

Yet the *Statesman* as such is holding back from endorsing the Labour left perspective. No doubt there are relatively accidental reasons for this; some of the editorial team probably still remember a little of what they learnt as young revolutionaries; Page is said to have an intense dislike of Benn. But there is something else involved as well.

The *Statesman's* milieu has always been the *fellow travelling* milieu in British politics — those who would go along with the CP in the thirties, with CND in the late 1950s, with Wilson in the mid-60s — but whose lives were too comfortable and secure for the bother of organising anything.

The post-68 part of this milieu is a bit tired of fellow travelling with the revolutionary left or a bit bored with the CP (witness the decline of the Communist University of London) but is not yet quite enamoured with Benn. In time that mood could shift, and the milieu could well throw itself behind Benn, dragging in its wake, the *New Statesman* (and *Time Out*, *The Leveller*, most of the *Fragments* and, probably, bits of *Socialist Challenge*, the more steadfast people around the *Statesman* will then have to choose whether to go along with the milieu, or to try to construct a different sort of vehicle, relating to a different sort of milieu.

Chris Harman

LETTERS

Middle Class Muddle

There is a marked tendency in *Socialist Review* and *Socialist Worker* for any reference to the women's movement to be accompanied by the description 'middle class'. This is a misleading characterisation and if the term is going to be used it should be employed in a more precise way. The implication of the description is that feminists are somehow all part of a cultural stereotype which is alien to that of the working class. So in SR March/April Anna Paczuska reviewing Agnes Smedley can say:

'Today the word feminism conjures up an image of a well-educated, confident, middle class female, the very model of a modern college lecturer.'

What about all those women SWP college lecturers? Are they all to be dismissed as 'middle class'? Or have they been mysteriously proletarianised by being in the correct political organisation? College lecturers, of course, are workers and as workers they are at present in the forefront of the attacks on education (see the article on NELP in the same issue of SR). This is true whether they are men, women, feminists, ecologists or fascists.

Many women who sympathise with the ideas of the women's movement are workers. Although most will be white-collar workers (as are most worker members of the SWP), it is also true that the ideas of women's liberation have been a crucial factor behind the militant action of many women manual workers. The equal pay disputes of the late sixties and seventies are a case in point. In this context the term 'middle class' has no meaning in a Marxist sense.

However, if *Womens Voice* is to be built then it is necessary to stop typifying the entire women's movement as middle class. When Lindsey German describes the conflict in NAC as being between the soft-peddling reformists on the steering committee and the militant activists around SWP and *Womens Voice* she misses out the large number of militant activists not around the revolutionary left. After all there were a lot of women involved in the January 8th Parliament Square

demonstration.

It is time to knock on the head any shades of the old reactionary 'petty bourgeois deviationist' notion of women's liberation.

Henry Blaxland
North London

The articles on trades councils in the last SR were interesting in that it highlighted the problems which many militants come up against in general trade union work. Being active in largely passive meetings ensures that you are first in line to be delegated, elected, etc. and whilst it is a good thing to be leading struggles, it is not always a good thing to be leading meetings. Bureaucratic meetings can sap your energy and bog down your politics until eventually you are just going through the motions.

In Oxford, the trades council, with an average attendance of about 80, is possibly unique in having no rights to challenge the chair. What the chair says, goes and if you don't like it, tough! This clever little device, backed by the TUC after the council was reconstituted in July 1976 (because it was too militant) ensures that militants get ruled out of order along with resolutions calling for action. It is impossible to discuss what the hospital workers can do about cuts because that is 'interfering in the affairs of an affiliated union', branches are told they can't support a local Sinn Fein march because the TUC doesn't back it.

The result is a polarised council, polarised that is between orthodox Trotskyists intent on turning every debate into an exposure of Stalinism, and a frightened Broad Left pushed rightwards by the left-wing's hostility. The majority of alienated delegates, who are sick of the ortho-trot wrangling, side with the right — who are laughing. Initiatives are diverted into safely reformist 'enquiries' which lead nowhere except to another committee.

Working as a revolutionary socialist in this mess is frankly a waste of time — even the branches can't be adequately represented because of the iron hand of the chair. The present situation is one where TUC are still to rule on the acceptability of a rules change permitting delegates to challenge the chair. I ask you!

Bob Lloyd
Oxford

Marxism Today

Theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party Published monthly 50 pence

April issue includes:
World Capitalism in Recession
Eurocommunism - can it regain the initiative?
Women and Children First?

A Backward Looking Vision

D.H. Lawrence, best known as the author of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, died fifty years ago this March. He is often presented as the one major modern novelist who, born into a working-class mining family, forcefully exposed the degradation of personal and sexual life brought about by industrial society.

The literary establishment treated Lawrence, both before and after his death, with characteristically English snobbishness and stupidity. Even at the obscenity trial in 1960, when Penguin books were being prosecuted for bringing out a cheap, unexpurgated edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the prosecuting counsel could still, in all seriousness, wonder whether this was the kind of book one should give to the servants.

But just because Lawrence was hounded and victimised by the class system does that mean we should endorse what he wrote? Not every protest against industrial society is necessarily a progressive one; it can also be a backward-looking one, as Lawrence's ultimately was. Take *Sons and Lovers*, published in 1913, and in many ways a fictionalised account of his own early life. The warmth and spontaneity of a working-class home is shown with an intimacy new to English fiction. What is also registered is the continuous pressure threatening to break up the home. The paradox is that the mother, in seeking to protect the family against these pressures, ends by destroying it. The children exclude their father because of his 'coarseness' and drunken bullying. But by being emotionally tied to the mother they side with her values, which push them out of the community and up the social ladder.

Lawrence suffered real persecution during World War One. His next major novel, *The Rainbow* (1915) was suppressed by the authorities who obviously thought that its 'obscenities' — particularly the heroine's lesbian relationship with her college teacher and the unflattering depiction of her soldier-lover's ideas — would undermine the war effort. Lawrence himself was forced to leave his Cornish cottage because of his German-born wife. Not surprisingly, he developed a deep loathing of his fellow human beings as well as a violent desire for apocalyptic change.

His wartime correspondence shows him anxious to found 'a little colony where there shall be no money but a sort of communism as far as the necessities of life go, and some real decency.' He also talks about the need for a 'real revolution', which will begin by the 'nationalising of all industries and means of communication, and of the land...'

However, workers are not to control this. Quite the contrary: 'The artisan is fit to elect for his immediate surround-

ings, but for no ultimate government,' and the whole system must work up to 'a Dictator who controls the greater industrial side of the national life', and to 'a Dictatrix who controls the things relating to private life.' The classes must unite: 'Prime Ministers and Capitalist and artisans all working in pure effort towards God — Here, tomorrow, in this England.'



D.H. Lawrence 1924 from a self-portrait

The closeness to fascist ideas is evident. Lawrence wants a 'third way': 'We must not have Labour in power, any more than Capital.' Although later on Lawrence was specifically to reject fascism, his protest against 'modern civilisation' was, like fascism, a backward-looking one.

What does this mean for the depiction of the working class in his fiction? *Women in Love* (written partly during the First World War but not published till 1920) shows workers as fearful and loathsome. This, for example, is the reaction of the two sisters, the leading characters, as they walk through the poorer district of the colliery town where they live:

'Women, their arms folded over their coarse aprons, standing gossiping at the end of their blocks, stared after the Brangwen sisters with that long, unwearied stare of aborigines; children called out names... Together the sisters approached the group of uneasy, watchful common people. They were chiefly women, colliers' wives of the more shiftless sort. They had watchful, underground faces.'

For Lawrence, the only group truly protesting against the degradation of the age is an isolated elite of visionaries (like Lawrence). And Lawrence's post-war work and heroes narrow their concerns to two interrelated themes: Leadership

and Sex.

It's already there in *Women in Love*. In the end the only answer to the destructiveness of modern society is a perfect, isolated relationship between Man and Woman (or possibly — Lawrence can't make up his mind — between Man and Man). Its precise nature is obscured by Lawrence's quasi-mystical language. What is clear, however, is that woman, to be true to her nature, must be subject to the true nature of man; the heroine of the novel, Ursula, has to shed her feminine possessiveness and submit to Birkin, the school-inspector hero.

These obsessions are present in probably the nastiest book Lawrence ever wrote, *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), which celebrates the imaginary revival of the old Mexican religion of the 'dark gods' as an antidote to the democratic/socialistic tendencies of the modern age.

One of the novel's more revolting touches is the heroine having to forego any sexual satisfaction that is 'clitoral' unless it results from her total yielding to her husband's phallic power.

Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928), Lawrence's last novel, retreats from this inhumane extremism. In returning to English society it shows an attempt to deal with the actualities of industrial society. However, yet again the solution is one of retreat — this time to the woods — into a relationship between two people in isolation from the world. Although there is not the cruelty of *The Plumed Serpent* in sexual relations — the emphasis is rather on tenderness — Lawrence is still insistent on the need for Lady Chatterley to learn respect for the Phallus. Her ultimate personal regeneration seems to involve anal intercourse (the language — for censorship reasons — is unclear). Presumably Lawrence viewed this as the most purely phallic sexuality attainable since it doesn't involve the female sexual organs.

The only surprise, perhaps, is the original characterisation Lawrence intended for the gamekeeper-lover of Lady Chatterley. In the first version of the novel he is much more firmly part of the working-class — after he loses his job on the Chatterley estate, he becomes a steel worker and branch secretary of the Communist League. For once Lawrence seems to have contemplated sympathetically the possibility of Soviets as the means to a better society capable of satisfying personal needs.

The ex-gamekeeper's attachment to his class makes the question of Lady Chatterley's emancipation without a general social emancipation much more problematic. Time and again in the first version, the realities of class society force the characters up against the realisation that the way to get rid of the distortions of personal and sexual life can never be via retreat into sexual utopia. The refusal to use Lady Chatterley's private fortune as a solution to the problem testifies to that perception.

However, Lawrence was clearly determined to make his dreams come true. In the final version, the figure of the game-keeper is almost totally transformed (he even gets a new name) into the familiar Lawrentian hero. He may initially have been of the people, but now distances himself from them as being unworthy of his concern (he's certainly no communist). He is 'refined', almost gentlemanly.

His non-social role, of sexual liberator, is given much more prominence. In this version, when he loses his job on the estate, he goes not to the town, but, appropriately enough for one who represents 'nature', to the country. Significantly, too, Lady Chatterley's money is used to purchase a farm.

The tragedy of Lawrence the writer is that, apart from some of his early

work and some of the first version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which are exact and sensitive to the realities of class society, he caved in under the pressure of social isolation. In responding to the degradation of modern class society he simply reproduced, in fantastic and escapist form, the dehumanisation of his age.

Gareth Jenkins

THE MOVEMENT

Students: Down But Not Out

'Students are revolting' was a bad joke much loved by readers of the *Daily Telegraph* in the late 60s and early 70s. It seemed then that students would occupy and demonstrate at the very mention of the word Marx. Occasionally they went further as when some Essex students tried to burn down Barclays Bank. Things got to their most extreme in France, but all over western capitalism students rebelled against the alienating system of higher education and protested at the ravages of imperialism in Vietnam and South Africa.

The children of 68 grew older. For many of them the revolting seems to have stopped.

And the people who were children in 1968, to whom the Sorbonne and LSE are at best distant memories of the TV news, face a very different sort of student life. They live in a world of rising prices, fares, rents. Their future is overshadowed by an unemployment rate pushing two million and being deliberately forced up.

Many ex-students believe that earlier periods was the golden age and that since then the student struggle has gone rapidly downhill.

Yet last autumn term over 50,000 students took action, usually occupation, in more than 100 colleges against the proposed increases in fees. On 5 February, 10,000 students including many from FE's marched against the Corrie Bill.

Clearly the student movement is not dead. Yet most observers agree that union general meetings are at an all time low; several colleges have disaffiliated from NUS; and the national leadership is attempting to end all militant campaigning.

The problem is that most students see the problems facing them as insuperable. Virtually every teacher training college occupied against teacher unemployment in 1976. Teacher unemployment continued to rise. The following year saw the biggest ever number of students in occupation (many, many more than in the 'glorious days' of 68) over fees, but fees still went up.

People feel there is nothing they can do about the cuts, that they are up against a brick wall, and that they don't even have the power trade unionists have. The prevailing mood isn't apathy, it is lack of belief in our ability to

change things.

When a lead is given in the colleges the outcome can be very different. This term there have been occupations over fees at Warwick, Hull and Essex universities, and Portsmouth and Coventry polys. Socialist Worker Students Organisation (SWSO) members argued for the first four, and unaffiliated socialists for the Coventry one. The occupations showed that where socialists are willing to put forward militant action, it can get a good response.

The occupations were big and very well organised. They politically revitalised the students unions where they took place. But they were all isolated and so could end without achieving anything. They were very sporadic, and there was no solidarity action between colleges. The only example of linking up was in Coventry, where the poly and Warwick University went in at the same time.

The attitude of many students now is, 'What can we do?' The response of many is to look outside the student unions by linking with local trade unionists, leafleting town centres and so on. But the most successful interventions have been those organised through the students unions, as in Hull where 250 students marched on Thatcher, and Sheffield where students organised round the steel strike.

The vacuum which exists at present has to be filled. The danger is that right-wing ideas and influence can grow. The move to the right in NUS has in reality been a gallop by its Broad Left (now renamed Left Alliance, so as to include the Liberals) leadership. Left Alliance

policy is the same as Federation of Conservative Students policy three years ago. NUS wants to end its active involvement in any militant campaigning and just become a pressure group for educational development. This academic year could well be a watershed for the national union.

The largest left organisation in the colleges, the Labour clubs (NOLS) seemed to be taking off in a big way last term, but it hasn't made the impact that people thought. Where we have SWSO groups we are able to exert some influence as at Hull, Sussex and Essex. If socialists are to begin to fill the vacuum in student politics we have to start looking outwards, trying to relate what is happening in the college to the working class struggle. Our comrades at Essex university were in the forefront of supporting the steel workers who were staying at the university to picket Harwich despite the Labour Club backing down following threats from the authorities.

Trying to generalise from particular struggles and relating them to our politics of world crisis is going to become increasingly important. Socialist students have to try to get across our ideas in ways which will appeal and relate to as many students as possible. This means a return to regular public meetings, bulletins, debates, which often have gone by the wayside as socialist activists spend more and more time propping up weak union meetings.

The experience of the last 13 years is that the student movement can move from a very low ebb to a very high level of militancy very quickly. Socialist students can only take advantage of such changes when they come if previously they have seized every opportunity to put across their distinctive class policies.
Ric Cole Stuart Hepburn

Gay Rights at Work

Back in 1974, the annual conference of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality called on its members to take up gay rights through their unions. The call went out to form gay caucuses, and one of the first to react was Howard Hyman, a NALGO member.

The simple initiative of writing a letter to the union journal brought an immediate reaction - a few letters from bigots screaming 'Sodom and

Gomorrah' and a flood of letters from lesbians and gay men throughout the country saying 'Great - let's do it!'

The quotation comes from the pamphlet *Gay Rights at Work*, produced jointly by the Nalگو Gay Group and Nalگو Action Group. After six years of hard work and cooperation between the two groups there is an established union policy on gay rights, and the membership of the Gay Group numbers over

200. The pamphlet discusses the work which has been done and the lessons learned. Since it appeared last August, nearly 2,000 copies have been sold.

It was against this background that the Nalگو Gay Group took the initiative in calling a Gay Rights at Work conference, which took place on 29 March. Despite two major demonstrations and a tube strike that day, nearly a hundred people turned up. This first concerted effort to bring trade unionists together to discuss gay rights drew official support from 26 trade union branches, as well as Edinburgh trades council. A fifth of those attending were women, and in all there were 36 shop stewards. 17 unions were represented.

The statistics are only part of the picture, obviously, but they show quite dramatically how far we have come since that letter to *Public Service* six years ago. Hidden behind these statistics is the fact that almost a quarter of the conference was composed of NALGO members and that manual workers were in a very tiny minority. This has nothing whatever to do with the distribution of lesbians and gay men – coming out in a steel works is just a lot more difficult.

Although there was a fundamental agreement on many issues, there were

also conflicts of opinion. A danger, as one delegate saw it, was 'an iron fist in a velvet glove, trying to smash the autonomous Gay Movement' – a reference to the rank and file groups. Yet without the willing cooperation of the Nalگو Action Group, the achievements of Nalگو Gay Group would be very meagre. Instead of being a thriving group it might easily have become defunct. Redder Tape and the Civil Service Gay Group have worked together consistently. Rank and File Teacher has been crucial to getting wide support for a gay motion at this year's NUT conference. The gay groups are open to all lesbians and homosexual men; the rank and file groups are open to all trade union militants. They overlap but retain their independence – they cooperate and each benefits.

Whatever the reasons for this suspicion and hostility, it is more than coincidence that it was expressed mainly by teachers. They, unlike gay civil servants and NALGO members, are organised more as a profession than as a trade union caucus. Much of their emphasis has been on the nature of education itself, rather than on trade union militancy. The parallel with social workers and their various nationwide

forms of organisation over the last ten years is obvious. From a standpoint of emphasising the possibilities of a 'radical' professionalism, social workers too have often rejected trade union based rank and file organisation as 'interfering' and 'economistic'. The obstinate reality, though, is that the role of radical education and radical social work in a capitalist framework is very limited and that professional chauvinism, radical or otherwise, is ultimately destructive.

Despite disagreements, the conference has laid the basis for a much stronger response in the trade unions against the oppression of homosexuals. Out of the conference, a Gay Rights at Work committee was elected, including within it a representative from each of the unions involved. Outside of the white-collar unions, it will need to build up support from scratch. Gay firemen and textile workers are going to find the going very difficult – but the established groups will be able to give support.

One of the first functions of the committee will be to produce a broader, improved version of the *Gay Rights at Work* pamphlet. It is then up to all socialists to see that it is put to good use.

SWP Gay Group

BOOK REVIEWS

Fighting the cuts the Poplar way

Poplarism, 1919-1925

Noreen Branson

Lawrence and Wisbart, £7.50

The dictionary definition of Poplarism is 'the policy of giving generous or (as was alleged) extravagant outdoor relief' (ie. the dole). Poplar was a working class London borough whose councillors fought not just against the 1920s equivalent of spending cuts but for a *better* living standard for the unemployed.

Poplarism showed how a cuts campaign that mobilises the mass of workers in an area can become a political force to be reckoned with. On the other hand it contrasts today's pale pink Labour Party with its middle-class dominated GMCs and pathetic inaction (whenever they don't need your vote) with the courageous militant reformism of people like George Lansbury.

Noreen Branson's book traces the story of the new borough council brought to power on the wave of radicalism after the First World War. They were inspired by the belief that the Labour Party was really about the achievement of socialism (with a capital 'S'). As Lansbury's paper, the *Daily Herald* put it: 'This sky is brighter...at long last the workers are coming into their own.'

But the grip of capitalist crisis was soon upon this borough. The Poplar councillors, believing that the rich should pay for the crisis their system had made, maintained high wages for

council employees and high unemployment payments (or outdoor relief as it was called). If this was at the expense of the rich boroughs of London, too bad. For remaining true to their electorate they were jailed, but soon had to be released because of popular pressure.

The book brings these campaigns alive, and the arguments they used at the time should be shouted out in today's council chambers when Labour whines that there is nothing that can be done about cuts.

The main weaknesses of the book lie in its concentration on this one borough and its legal wrangles to the exclusion

of the national context, an aggressive upsurge of class conflict after the war. Such a limited outlook was not shared by the Poplar movement which saw very well how their fight was linked to workers' struggles not only in Britain, but internationally. The reformist outlook of the author means that the role of the young CP which then worked inside the Labour Party is not examined and the Poplar working class tends to appear as a stage army which is wheeled on when necessary.

Poplarism is a part of our history which, in these days of spending cuts, should be remembered as a shining example of just what can be done, as a lesson in – how the welfare state was won!

D. Gluckstein

The case of comrade Kollontai

Alexandra Kollontai, a biography,

Cathy Porter, -

Virago £4.95

This book is a complete apologia for Alexandra Kollontai, Alexandra Kollontai was an extraordinary woman. She was not someone you could be indifferent to – people either loved her or they hated her.

The Bolsheviks, on the whole, disliked and distrusted her. To start with, she came from the upper class, was the daughter of a Tsarist general and lived off a private income. Even after she became a revolutionary she kept up her expensive wardrobe, before 1917 ordering dresses

from Paris, after 1917 expropriating them from aristocratic homes. She became involved with the left very much as an upper class woman playing at philanthropy. When in 1906 she joined a revolutionary party it was the Mensheviks and not the Bolsheviks who attracted her.

Her politics were libertarian, idealist and ultra-left. This is why she joined the Bolsheviks (in 1915) over opposition to the war, why she boldly spoke out alone to support Lenin's April Theses, and why she opposed the 'cowardly' treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Her ultra-leftism made her politically unreliable. She had no sense of reality. Appointed Commissar for Social

Welfare, she proceeded, with incredible folly and insensitivity, to try to evict the monks from the Aleksandr Nevsky monastery, one of the holiest places of pilgrimage in Russia. In her infatuation with the sailor Dybenko she supported his insubordination and desertion from the army of the Ukraine. In 1921 she remained blind to the fact that after years of civil war the tiny working class was shattered, the economy in ruins, the country on the verge of collapse. Joining the workers opposition, she fought bitterly against the introduction of NEP, against any concessions to the peasants, and demanded the instant introduction of communism.

The Bolsheviks tolerated her because of her extraordinary brilliance as a speaker. When they wanted someone to harangue the sailors it was either Kollontai or Trotsky they chose.

They were largely hostile to Kollontai's main achievements: her lone agitation among working women; her dogged insistence that the Party needed a special woman's bureau; her determined struggle for legal measures to help women; and her writings on women, which remain today one of the few serious attempts to tackle the problem of love and socialism.

The Bolsheviks' attitude to women was scandalous. Socialist feminists are right to complain and to try to give Kollontai her due. But, unfortunately, this is not all they are trying to do. They have elevated almost to the point of a cult, not only Kollontai's work among women, but also her ultra-leftism and libertarianism, her hostility to the party.

Cathy Porter's biography of Kollontai is well-researched, readable and in places extremely exciting. But it is completely uncritical of Kollontai. Everything she did is justified, even the way in which in the thirties she abandoned her principles and sucked up to Stalin. But above all, she is justified as a party-hater. According to Cathy Porter, she was right in being suspicious of Lenin's 'dogmatic narrow mindedness', in opposing the crushing of the Kronstadt revolt, in joining the Workers Opposition. In Cathy Porter's eyes, as early as 1922 'the authoritarian nature of the Party was making life impossible in Russia', the Party had become 'sick, corrupt and murderous'. This is a book to be read with care.

Claire Herschfeld.

Euro-Stalinism from within

Communism in Spain in the Franco Era
Jorge Semprun
Harvester Press

A bestseller in Spain, this book takes the lid off the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) during its bleak clandestine years. Semprun is a former underground leader of the Party, expelled along with Fernando Claudin in 1964. He is also a well known writer of, among other

things, the screen play of the film 'Z'.

The book gives a frank view of the party's leaders – in particular general secretary Santiago Carrillo – of their manoeuvres and their Stalinism. It also provides an often enthralling account of the party's secret activities inside Spain in the 1950s, which Semprun helped organise.

The Spanish CP has one of the most ignoble histories of all the Western European parties. Hardly more than an irrelevant sect before the civil war, it rose rapidly to prominence due both to Russian aid to the beleaguered Republic and to its ruthless organisational abilities. During the war it built its base among small businessmen and former army officers and bureaucrats, launching from it a bloody assault against the most radical sections of the working class. Its subservience to Russia became inevitably stronger in the years of illegality. Semprun charts the party's post-Stalin developments, arguing that despite their apparent conversion to Eurocommunism, its leaders remain essentially Stalinist today.

The post-war purges in Eastern Europe are illustrated with the case of the former assistant general secretary of the Czechoslovak CP, Josef Frank. Frank, like Semprun, was an inmate of Buchenwald, where the two worked closely through terrible years of imprisonment. In 1952 he was executed by the Czech regime as a 'former gestapo agent'. The horror and absurdity of the deed shook Semprun, but he didn't break with the party. At a time when the party had its back to the wall – illegal in Spain and persecuted in France – the need for solidarity was reinforced by the Cold War. Semprun quotes Carrillo, 'It is better to be wrong with the Party, inside the Party, than to be outside or against it.' The Party (always with a capital P) is everything,

there is no life outside the party.

The all pervasive nature of Stalinism runs through the book, graphically illustrated by the dreadful Stalinoid poems of the author's youth, by the purge of the Spanish Titoists and by the Carrillo yes-men on the central committee.

The completely unreal perspective of a party in exile – clinging to a triumphalist belief that the regime is about to collapse and ignoring the reality of Francoist Spain – is apparent. The failure to see both the strength of the dictatorship and the extent of the working class's defeat crystallised in the party's panacea: the Peaceful General Strike – which Semprun attempted to organise in Madrid in 1959. It predictably was a failure and a turning point for the author: in 1964 he was expelled along with Claudin for challenging the strategy.

The semi-religious devotion to the party and the USSR was only matched by the party's own personality cult around Dolores Ibarruri ('La Passionaria') the person, in Carrillo's opinion, 'who represents the spirit of our nation'. We also get a glimpse of the opulent life style of the Eastern European bureaucrats – a life style shared by some of the exiled Spanish leaders. On top of this, there is an amusing account of Semprun's meeting with Fidel Castro and of the equally absurd personality cult that surrounds the Cuban leader.

The book is not a chronological history; neither is it an analysis of Stalinism and the social-democratisation of the Western Communist Parties. What it does provide is a series of often fascinating insights into the post-war activities of one of Europe's most important CPs and a serious attack upon the honesty and credibility of its leader, Santiago Carrillo.

Doug Andrews

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Getting ready to come down hard

Policing The Police, Volume 2

Peter Hain (Ed.), Martin Kettle, Duncan Campbell, Joanna Rollo
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'Crime is never likely to be more than the conventional costly nuisance it is today, and terrorism as today, is in reality a comparatively insignificant issue. Freedom (to operate) and public order, in the widest sense, must be the priorities for the police of tomorrow.'

Sir Robert Mark, former Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.

It is hardly surprising that a government committed to a punitive attack upon working class organisations and living standards should have recourse to law and order as a major plank in its policy. The social peace which existed from the fifties to the mid-seventies was in historical context the exception, rather than the rule. What is genuinely new is that the police in Britain today, are no longer simply content to act as a political tool. The police nowadays are in the business of making policy, they have become an independent political force in their own right.

The police, and in particular the chief constables through their professional body, ACPO (the Association of Chief Police Officers), are in the forefront of public debate and agitation to push through legislation in three major areas: jury vetting, public order – the right to demonstrate in particular – and rights on arrest. In each they seek significant erosion of basic legal freedoms which have existed in Britain for hundreds of years. They want power to stack juries on the grounds that they would then be more 'impartial'. They seek to take over the powers at present vested in local district authorities to restrict or ban marches or demonstrations; and they would remove the arrested person's basic rights: silence, right to call a lawyer, and right to go free unless charged.

On public order their reasoning runs: 'Today the right to demonstrate is widely exploited...irrespective of the peaceful nature of the processions... a general annoyance is created to the normal process of everyday life.'
(ACPO evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs.)

In short, in ACPO's world, the right to demonstrate would no longer be part of 'everyday life'. When ACPO representative, Barry Pain, Chief Constable of Kent, was asked on television recently whether the proposal incorporated in the Scottish Criminal Justice Bill to remove the arrested person's right to silence didn't strike at a basic assumption of British Law, that the accused was innocent until proved guilty, he replied, with infinite patience, that if



an accused person was innocent they had of course, nothing to fear.

All this would not matter any more than as further evidence of the traditionally right-wing views of senior police officers, were it not for changes that have been going on in the position of the police in Britain, changes that have put the police in a far more powerful position than they have ever enjoyed, and one which they are using to telling political effect.

The increasing power of the police has come about as part of the process of centralisation and amalgamation of forces which occurred in the years '65-'75, following the 1962 Royal Commission on the Police, and the resultant 1964 Act. In a decade the numbers of police increased by almost 50 per cent, the number of chief constables shrank by two-thirds to 52, and each became a powerful baron running a force of, on average, 2,500 men policing a population of about one million. The old form of local control, the watch committees, composed of senior members of the local elite, were replaced by police authorities. The former bodies represented the restraining hand of the local bourgeoisie exercised as much through informal little dinners with the chief constable, as through their statutory powers. The latter have little informal control and no statutory power whatsoever. And they face in the new assertive, PR-conscious breed of chief constables from Mark to McNee, Anderton to Alderson, major public figures whom they would do well to keep happy.

It is this unprecedented power which turns the views of the chief constables

from crank opinions into the savage and concerted attack that has been mounted on civil liberties in Britain for many years.

The process of aggrandising power by stealth, and then using the newly gained power, to grab even more power is the major theme of this book. So too is the secrecy of the process.

Duncan Campbell's piece is concerned with the use of advanced technology, in particular computer networks, to increase the police powers of surveillance. It is a characteristic Campbell essay, and a complement to his work in the *New Statesman* and elsewhere about telephone tapping and other aspects of 'intelligence' work.

He charts the development of computerised policing, and shows that much if not most of the information being gathered cannot be justified in terms of crime catching but is directly related to political control of the population.

The development, methods and history of the SPG, the third force between police and army, designed for political confrontation, be it picket line, demonstration or assaults on the black community, is the subject of Joanna Rollo's concluding essay. She shows how the establishment of the SPG too was only revealed by accident, when they shot dead two teenagers holding toy guns at India House in 1973. Was parliament's response an outraged demand to disband the SPG? It was not, it was to congratulate the officers who shot the kids down at point blank range without offering them the chance to drop their 'weapons', and ...a call for a ban on toy guns. Yet again, the police had increased their power behind the back of parliament. This was the road that led to Southall, and the murder of Blair Peach, and who knows where next.

If there is another theme in this book, it is that what is happening now in Northern Ireland is on the agenda for the rest of Britain. ACPO's evidence on public order justified their demands by pointing to the success there of similar measures, enshrined in the 1978, Emergency Provisions Act.

It is important to notice, that the political attack on democracy is not confined to the hard cops, of the stamp of Anderton and McNee. John Alderson, Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall, is currently being held up by some sections of the left as a 'progressive' copper. He is the soft core version of McNee or Anderton. He counterposes to the current panda car based reactive policing, a return to the copper on the beat, what he calls 'community policing'. But this goes hand in hand with a powerful PR campaign, and more insidiously, a system whereby the police get representation in many areas of local government. The result is a system where the police, under the guise of community liaison, usurp the role of elected councillors. The aim as Alderson has explained himself, is the same: 'to reinforce our control'.

Mark Paget

FILM REVIEWS



Hard music—soft politics

Rude Boy

Directed by Jack Hazan and David Mingay

Watching *Rude Boy* is a bit of an odd experience if you are a revolutionary. Not often do you go along to a feature film and suddenly see lots of people you know on screen — perhaps yourself. But that's the case with this film. *Rude Boy* offers three levels of interest: firstly, documentary footage of NF demos and counter mobilisations, the first ANL carnival, police harassment of black kids, and Thatcher's election campaign. Secondly, the Clash and their music. And lastly, the rude boy himself, Ray Gange. But the three strands never really come together to make any sense.

Gange, unemployed except for the occasional stint in a porn shop, hangs around the Clash who finally take him on as a roadie. As he stumbles alcoholically through the film, he develops an incoherent hatred and resentment of the Left. Finally, the Clash abandon him, disliking his growing racism and incompetence back-stage. Critics have suggested he is a potential NF recruit, but he seems too apathetic even for that. He's no hard nut of the football terraces as the title might suggest. Just a rather pathetic and lonely slob.

What's most frustrating is that we never really see what pushes him into hating the Left. It's in this sense that the film fails to integrate its material. The documentary sequences never lock in with what's happening to Gange. None of his own experiences seem particularly relevant either. Is it his job in the porn shop or the experiences of being nicked unexpectedly on the way home or being done over by bouncers at a gig that turn him into a racist and push his attitudes to the Right? Perhaps the moment when he is thrown off stage by the organisers at Carnival is a turning point in his life. Who knows?

In fact the film would be much better if Gange were removed entirely. It would still not be a film with hard socialist politics, but at least it would put across a strong anti-racist, anti-police line. That's the clear message of the documentary sequences and the parts showing the Clash both on stage and off. The music is excellent and the filming of the gigs impressive for its simplicity, with only a single camera being used. None of your psychedelic, top of the pops revolving heads. But in the end the music softens the politics. It allows the film makers to pull their punches. The implications of the documentary scenes are weakened, the tensions are eased and transformed into rock mythology. The audience can sidestep the issue, sit back and enjoy the song.

So go and see *Rude Boy* if you like the Clash. Go and see it if you want to recall what happened on the streets over the past three years. Go and see it to get a good look at South London's shitty tower blocks and crumbling estates free of the usually patronising voiceover of television documentary. You can even quietly relish the thought that the film made the *Daily Mail* apoplectic. But don't expect anything more.

Jane Ure Smith

Who pulled out the fuse?

The Electric Horseman

Directed by Sydney Pollack

Rumour had it that Jane Fonda was trying to politicise Hollywood. First, *Coming Home* attacked the Vietnam war. Then *The China Syndrome* hit the audience with a powerful anti-nukes argument. Now, in *The Electric Horse-*

man, we seem to have a 'Save the world's animals' film.

The animal in question is a horse, rather more dignified to my mind than the pathetic seals we've seen slithering around in the RSPCA cinema advert, and a lot more attractive than a dolphin. Anyway, the horse is being doped to the eye-balls to quieten it down, and pumped full of steroids to muscle it up — all so it can be used by the big multinational Ampco to sell its breakfast cereal.

Robert Redford, as Sonny Steele, five times winner of the Number One Cowboy award, is supposed to sit astride the horse illuminated like a Christmas tree, vouching for the product's mind-and-body-building qualities.

One day he decides enough is enough, for the horse rather than himself, and walks off with the steed. Fonda, in a failed attempt to parody her role as investigative reporter in *The China Syndrome*, pursues him in search of a story.

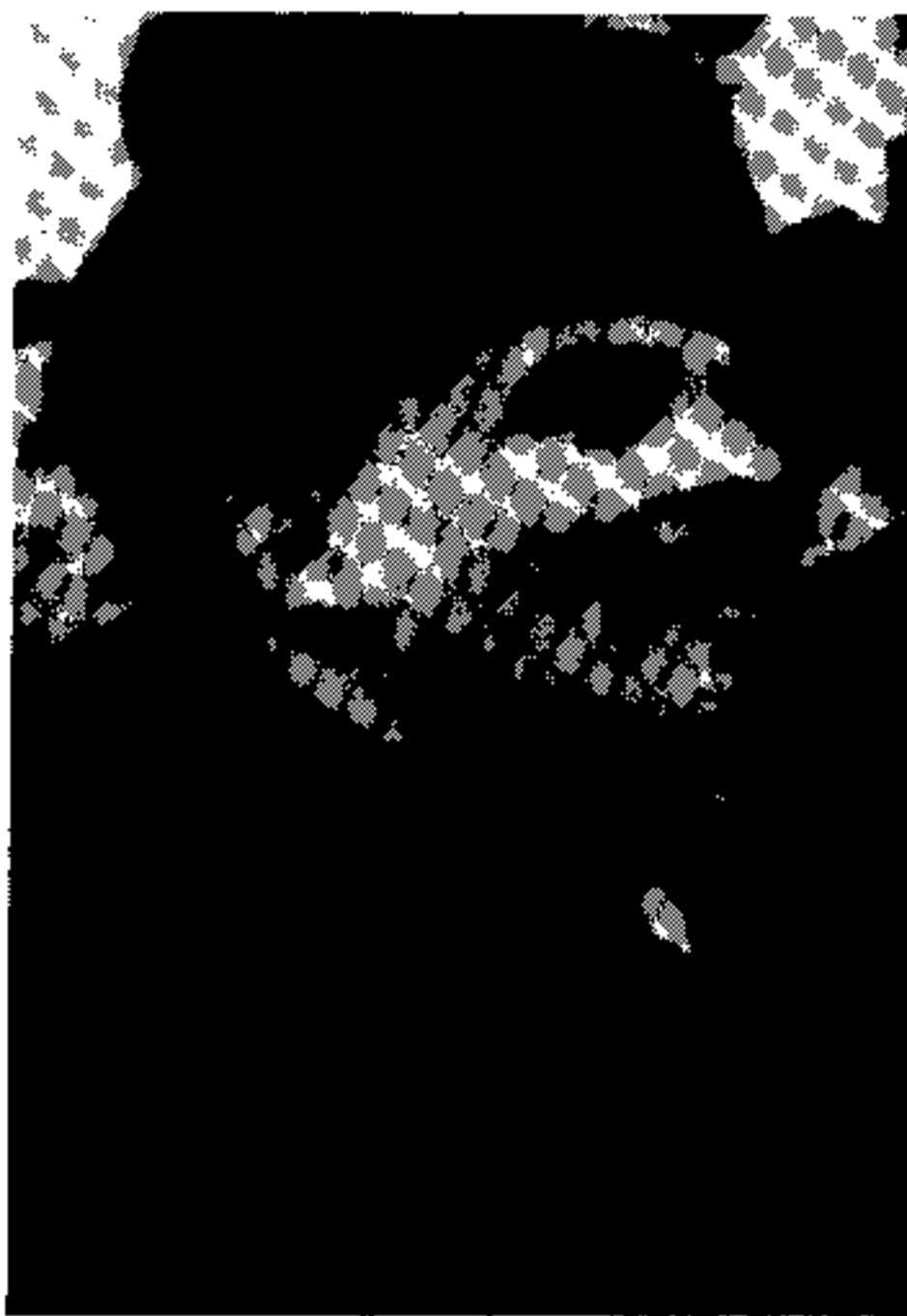
Now you might think the plot so far has some potential as a comedy, but sadly, no. Our ace reporter is humbled before the courage, determination and Colgate smile of the hero and the film abandons any attempt at satire to dwell on their developing romance.

It's an extremely reactionary film. As the hero stumbles into the sunset a Frankie Lane imitation grinds out the message: '...when the world is spinning out of control...love is what you need... etc.' And that's what the film offers, a blatant piece of Hollywood schmaltz to get you through the crisis. The whole film is just a stream of capitalism's favourite images: horses floating in slow motion, wide open spaces and Hollywood's most beautiful, 'beautiful people', Fonda and Redford. Fonda minces around in her skin-tight jeans, while Redford grins or glowers and exposes his hairy chest. It's like a 90 minute Malboro cigarette commercial and would make much better viewing with the sound turned down.

The basic theme — innocent couple fleeing west from the Law — is a potentially subversive one, used in dozens of films ranging from Nicholas Ray's *They Live by Night* and its remake by Robert Altman, *Thieves Like Us*, to Clint Eastwood's *The Gauntlet*. Though differing enormously in tone, these films all reflect a world where justice is non-existent and male/female relationships are riddled with problems. *The Electric Horseman* suggests none of these harsh realities. The fleeing pair's escape into romantic illusion is never threatened and just as easily they walk back into 'real life' when it's time for the movie to end.

So what are you playing at Jane Fonda? Compared with the fights against the Vietnam war and nuclear power, saving the world's animals is something of a political diversion. But even if this is your chosen cause of the moment, *The Electric Horseman* allows only one conclusion: you must have needed the money.

Jackie Frazer



L is for Lenin

It is still usual in certain circles to treat Lenin as the father of Stalinism. This is as true of the libertarian left as of the liberal right. Yet those who met Lenin in the early years of revolutionary Russia paint a completely different picture of the Bolshevik leader. One of them was the French syndicalist, Alfred Rosmer. Contact with Lenin and Lenin's ideas converted him to Bolshevik ideas, which he adhered to for the rest of his life, although he denounced Stalinism from 1924 onwards and came to believe that Russia was state capitalist.

This account of Lenin is from his *Lenin's Moscow*, published by Pluto Press and available from Bookmarks.

I was called to the Kremlin by Lenin. He was anxious to make direct contact with the delegates, to get to know each of them personally, and to ask them questions. As soon as they arrived he was preparing the interview. One of the things that struck me most at this first meeting was the relaxed atmosphere that was established from the first words of the conversation, and which was kept up throughout it. And also his simplicity, the way he could say to me, whom he hardly knew: 'I must have written something stupid.'

The Executive Committee of the Communist International had sent out an appeal: 'To all communists, to all revolutionaries!', inviting them to send delegates to the Second Congress, for which the date and place had boldly been fixed - 15th July in Moscow. But for these delegates the blockade still existed and every frontier was a serious obstacle.

There was something intoxicating about the atmosphere of Moscow in that month of June 1920; the quiver of the armed revolution could still be felt. Among the delegates who had come from every country and every political tendency, some already knew each other, but the majority were meeting for the first time. A true spirit of comradeship was born spontaneously among them. The discussions were heated, for there was no shortage of points of disagreement, but what overrode everything was an unshakeable attachment to the Revolution and to the new-born communist movement.

From his vantage-point in the Kremlin, Lenin followed the preliminary work for the Congress attentively. For the first time since the Revolution, he had the opportunity to make contact with communists from Europe, America and Asia. So he hastened to question them; as soon as you arrived you were summoned to his office in the Kremlin.

On the way to his quarters in the

Kremlin, you wondered what sort of a man you were going to meet. His works, apart from the most recent ones, we knew only slightly, or not at all, and we had only rather vague ideas about the passionate struggles which in the past had brought him into conflict with the various tendencies of Russian social democracy. His writings showed him to be a revolutionary of a new type: a surprising mixture of 'dogmatism' (it would be better to say unshakeable attachment to certain fundamental principles) and of extreme realism. He gave great importance to tactics, to 'manoeuvring' (a typically Leninist expression) in the battle against the bourgeoisie. You would prepare questions and replies, and then, all at once, you found yourself in the middle of a cordial and familiar conversation with a man you seemed to have known for a long time, though it was the first time you had seen him. This simplicity and easy way of welcoming people could hardly fail to make a deep impression on the delegates, and you could be sure that when they returned they would begin and end the story of their visit by mentioning this impression.

He did not claim to know everything, yet he knew a lot, and had a rare grasp of the labour movement in the West. This allowed him to follow events going on there and to assess them at their true value, to give them their precise meaning. But just because he knew a lot he was able to fill out his knowledge when the opportunity arose, and also, an unusual thing in a 'leader', to recognise that he had quite simply been wrong.

It is well known that, when necessary, he could be hard and pitiless, even with his closest associates, when questions were in his view decisive for the future of the revolution. In such cases he did not hesitate to make the most severe judgments and to defend the most brutal decisions. But first of all he

would explain patiently; he wanted to convince. In 1920, his authority was immense. Events had shown that in the gravest circumstances he had seen aright. He appeared in the eyes of all as the surest guide of the Revolution, but he was still the same man, very simple, cordial, and ready to explain in order to convince you.

Some copies of a book by Lenin called *State and Revolution* had arrived in France early in 1919. It was an extraordinary book and it had a strange destiny. Lenin, a Marxist, was treated as an outcast by the theoreticians of the socialist parties which claimed to be Marxist. 'It isn't Marxism,' they shrieked, 'it's a mixture of anarchism and Blanquism.' On the other hand, for revolutionaries situated outside the mainstream of orthodox Marxism, for the syndicalists and anarchists, this Blanquism, was a pleasant revelation. They had never heard such language from the Marxists they knew. They read and re-read this interpretation of Marx, which was quite unfamiliar to them.

It was precisely the revolutionary nature of Marxism which was to be found in *State and Revolution*: texts from Marx and Engels, and commentaries by Lenin. And for him too, in a sense, these texts had been a discovery. He remarked:

'All this was written less than half a century ago, and now one has to engage in excavations, as it were, in order to bring undistorted Marxism to the knowledge of the masses.'

Lenin comments:

'The proletariat needs the state - this is repeated by all the opportunists, who assure us that this is what Marx taught. But they 'forget' to add that, according to Marx, the proletariat needs only a state which is withering away, ie. a state so constituted that it begins to wither away immediately, and cannot but wither away.'

'"Breaking of the state power", which was a "parasitic excrescence"; its "amputation", its "smashing"; "the now superseded state power" - these are the expressions Marx used in regard to the state when appraising and analysing the experience of the Commune.' And finally 'the proletariat needs the state only temporarily. We do not at all disagree with the anarchists on the question of abolition of the state as the aim.'

So, for Lenin the socialist revolution was no longer a faraway objective, a vague ideal to be achieved piecemeal, within the strictest observance of bourgeois legality. It was a concrete problem, the problem of the present day, which the war had posed and which the working class was going to solve. These texts, in which they could find a language akin to their own, a conception of socialism which resembled their own, particularly pleased revolutionaries from the anarchist and syndicalist traditions.