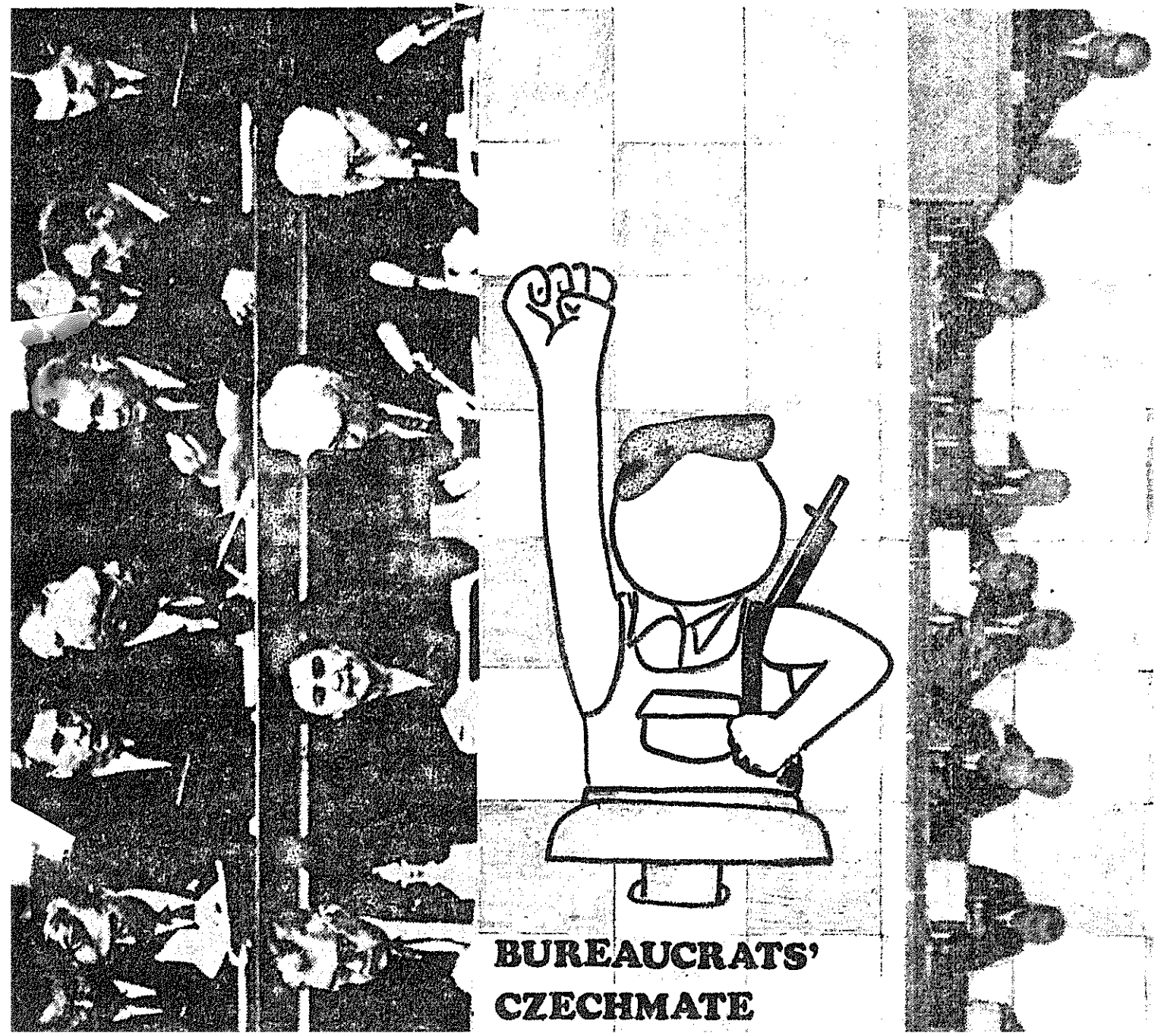


Inside: Wilson's workers' control • VSC's October • AEL

No. 8  
6d.

# WORKERS' FIGHT



**BUREAUCRATS'  
CZECHMATE**

# BUREAUCRATS' CZECHMATE

The Czech-Russian crisis, with Russia threatening, manoeuvring, and brandishing her tanks and troops to intimidate the reforming Dubcek regime, shows just how insecure the Russian establishment feels. It knows that the stalinist regimes in Russia and East Europe are built on sand - and recently the sands have been visibly shifting, largely in response to the Czech 'liberalisation'. The Russians fear the disintegrating effects of the Czech example on the rest of the bloc. More than anything they are terrified that the Dubcek CP will lose control of the Czech ferment, thus reproducing the pattern that unfolded in Hungary in 1956.

At one point in late July it almost looked as if they would use Soviet troops to turn the Czech clock backwards, thus presenting the world with a new experience: war between 2 stalinist bureaucracies! But the obvious grip of the Dubcek men on the Czech situation convinced them that it was as yet unnecessary. And they had to reckon the cost of a new Hungary: the leaders of most Western CPs declared that they would not share the odium this time, as they did in 1956.

The drastic reform from above to which the majority of the CPC was driven by the crisis in their economy (see W.F.5) has sent earth tremours echoing throughout East Europe and into Russia itself, where a cultural clampdown signals growing discontent. The stalinists are acutely conscious that beneath the unstable bureaucratic crust is the lava of workers' revolution, looking for cracks: they remember 1956. Thus once more we see that stalinism is a regime of almost permanent crisis rent by explosive contradictions.

The basic contradiction is between the interests of the workers and of the rotten political/social bureaucracy which monopolises power and as a rule maintains a stifling dictatorship of the app-

aratus over the working class. This expresses itself as a contradiction between the nationalised economic structure from which the capitalists have been eliminated, and bureaucratic rule.

A nationalised economy needs planning and conscious control by those who do the work: real planning demands freedom of discussion, of information, of collective choice of goals. Working class democracy is as necessary for economic efficiency as is oxygen to a man's bodily functions: lack of it produces convulsions, waste, contradictions. But the ruling bureaucracy is a parasitic social formation which ensures its own material well-being and privileges by tightly controlling society. It fears democracy because it would lead to the workers questioning its prerogatives and privileges. It fears democracy because it fears the working class. Thus it cannot plan or organise the nationalised economy rationally. It plans and organises the economy in its own way, from on high - administering people as things, with the workers alienated and excluded from control as under capitalism.

Though statification of the economy ends the characteristic fetters of capitalism on production internally, bureaucratic rule in these states creates new types of contradictions. The necessary dynamism of a nationalised economy is full conscious control in every pore of the economy - only possible by the democratic control of the millions who live in the pores of the economy. Crude control from above is an anachronism, inefficient and wasteful, as if one had a new Jaguar and instead of putting a tiger in its tank one harnessed a mule to pull it along! In advanced Czechoslovakia the economic consequences of this situation became so catastrophic as to force the present innovations (limited restoration of the free market internally, including its peculiar type of waste). First came the economic changes in early 1967, and

later the political reforms, as the bureaucracy groped for a reorganisation that would allow it to keep control against the workers: the future of the Dubcek regime depends on whether it can maintain this control - and convince the Russians that it can.

In Russia the power of this bureaucratic caste arose out of the backwardness of Russia and the isolation of the October Revolution in the '20s. It seized power in a counter-revolution against Bolshevism. But in most of the other East European countries the bureaucrats were lifted or aided into the saddle by their Russian puppet masters in whose image they moulded themselves.

Added to the contradictions between the workers and the bureaucracy, in the bloc as a whole there is tension arising from the national oppression and parasitism of Russia's relations with most of the other countries, and also conflicts of interest between the various national bureaucracies. This patchwork of tensions is aggravated by the unevenness of development within the various 'satellite' countries, and between these countries and Russia itself. When the rulers in one country move to ease their own situation they threaten the stability of their neighbours: Hungary 1956 was initially sparked off by the much milder movement in Poland - and went on to flower into one of the most significant working class revolts in three decades.

Hence the alarm of the Russian, Polish and East German bureaucrats at the Czech liberalisation. What they fear was made plain in the notorious letter of July 18. They bluntly demanded a return of censorship and a general totalitarian reassertion of rigid control by the CP. Significantly the Czech Party's reply simply reassured them that they could keep control in their own way, and might in fact lose it if they tried to retreat. That it is the contagion of liberalisation, and fear for the continued control of the CPC, which haunts the Russians, is shown by their explicit statement of support for the economic innovations of Sik and Dubcek.

The empirical Dubcek leadership first discovered the uses of 'freedom' last January, because of the need to bludgeon the Novotnyite Old Guard - which was simply ruining the economy and clearly intending to maintain its power. After the Special CPC Congress in September, at which the remaining "Old Guard" (still about 40%!) of the CC will be eliminated, the 'new men' will be in a much better position to reassert themselves where necessary. For the moment the conflict with the Russians has consolidated their control in a genuinely popular way.

Their letter of reply to the Russians equated both Right and Left "extremism" and they will undoubtedly move backwards though not necessarily all the way. The demonstrations of the 'phlegmatic' Czechs against even a hint of a sell-out to the Russians shows one consideration which will make them cautious. The future of 'liberalisation' will evolve within the triple pressures of: the Russians; the need to dominate the Czech workers; and the needs of the new economic set up.

Here sharp clashes between the workers and the reforming bureaucrats are in the making. Economic 'rationalisation' will cut into workers' standards. Among the tasks openly discussed is to "shake-out" and "redeploy" (ie sack) up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  million workers. Dubcek may be assured of control at present - but the workers have yet to speak their piece on the 'new model' "market socialist" economy.

Despite the bureaucratic nature of the new regime, Czech national self-determination and the political reforms (limited as they are) are to the advantage of the Czech workers. There is no doubt where they stand in the Russo-Czech confrontation. Experience, however, will show then that the new regime is not qualitatively different, and that the other side of the liberal-bureaucratic coin is ferocious attacks on their standards and conditions. Then those who are mere pawns in the present confrontation will move to take control of the board!

Sean Matgamna.

EDITOR: Rachel Matgama; BUSINESS MANAGER: Linda Youd  
All correspondence, reports, articles, etc., should be  
sent to: 31 Leicester Road, Cheetham, Manchester M8 7GZ

**Workers'  
FIGHT**

**AUGUST  
1968**

## **WILSON'S WORKERS' CONTROL**

The May wind from France shook the Labour leaders. Now the proposals of the L.P. N.E.C. ("INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY") for more workers' participation in running industry, look like an attempt to steal de Gaulle's new clothes before he even has a chance to wear them! That the NEC now acts on the 1967 report of the Committee it set up under Jack Jones, is part of the post-May reckonings of the bosses and their servants: the system needs more safety valves. The NEC proposals are also meant as a safety valve for the anger of the Party Conference in September - as a sop, "a little bit of socialism."

Legislation is proposed on the right of the workers (ie Union leaders) to: - 1) information on Company affairs; 2) consultation; 3) representation on the Boards (presumably on the Steel Board model, of worker-directors who immediately ceased to be workers in any sense!). Clearly they want to draw the union bureaucrats into new responsibilities and closer collaboration with the management - as junior partners, powerless against the dominant capitalists, their state and the laws of their economy; ie to institutionalise class collaboration by way of a con-trick. The proposals are designed to strengthen the employers, the state and the Union machines - against the workers' interests. Thus the proposals on information are irrelevant. Posed to workers in struggle, the slogan OPEN THE BOOKS can lead them forward. But accessibility of information to tame union leaders under the patronage of the bosses' state is a different matter entirely.

TRIBUNE has asked: are the 'participation' proposals steps towards workers' control - or a deliberate side-tracking of the campaign for workers' control? And this attempt by the Labour leadership to steal the steam laboriously built up by the WORKERS' CONTROL CAMPAIGN, raises other questions which TRIBUNE doesn't ask: about the nature of that campaign. These questions must be asked if the NEC sham is to be exposed.

Workers' control is the essence of socialism, but the general phrase is open to myriad interpretations. The slogan is useful if it aims at developing workers' assertiveness - though in practice this develops not from generalised propaganda but as part of a struggle. To mount a one-issue campaign around workers' control, under which all sorts of confusion and political gradations gather, is pointless if not harmful.

Real workers' control is possible only as the local concomitant of workers' state power, or as a transitional regime in the revolutionary upsurge (which, if not consolidated, will be followed by defeat). Militant shop floor organisations are, of course, permanently fighting for an extension of controls on the unbridled powers of management. An eruption and qualitative deepening of this presupposes a real shake-up for the whole system. But under a more or less stable bourgeois state "workers' control" in any institutionalised form becomes participation, a sham to reconcile the workers to the system.

To demand permanent workers' control is to demand workers' power. And for the slogan as such to be positive it depends on who makes the propaganda: the slogan must be in the hands of an organisation which consistently pushes the Marxist understanding of the State, the scab nature of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy, and which fights both Reformists and union bureaucrats (who have a Fabian theory and practice on the state and class struggle) assembling behind such a slogan, create confusion and a verbal, literary - ie false - synthesis between Fabian socialism (with its cold nationalisation

(continued on page 6)

# Polish Backlash

The Czech liberalisation has produced strong reactions in all her neighbours. In Poland the impulse from Prague combined with local issues to produce a sharp bureaucratic backlash. Regarded for long as amongst the more 'liberal', the Gomulka regime is hardening into one of the most vicious in East Europe.

'Liberalising' itself in 1956 to contain a workers' revolt (Poznan uprising, workers' councils, etc) the Polish bureaucracy has gradually slid downhill back to square one. Gomulka was 'progressive' in '56 compared with the past. Today his regime is backward and repressive by any standards, and particularly by the standards of Czechoslovakia's bright new reformed regime. Students shouting pro-Czech slogans have clashed with police, and since then there has been a purge of the universities. Within the bureaucracy itself, the Czech events triggered into action a faction ("The Partisans") of nationalist, stalinist hardliners around the Minister of the Interior, General Moczar. Struggling for control, in a situation where all bureaucrats feel the need for a clamp-down, this grouping necessarily sets the pace. Moczar recently became an Alternate Politbureau member.

One of the worst signs of the regression in Poland in recent months has been a very thinly disguised eruption of anti-semitism - in this country which saw its millions of Jews leave few survivors as they vanished into Auschwitz only a generation ago.

Under the banner of anti-Zionism the Partisans play the anti-Jew tune blatantly, playing also the Polish nationalist tune. Advocating a hard stalinist solution to unrest and particularly student unrest, they blame it all on that section of the bureaucracy which is of Jewish origin!

Their theoreticians even write learned

articles blaming all the 'errors' of the past, Stalinist as well as 'Luxembourgist' \* on the "ethnic composition" of the CPP. In June, Werblan (head of the Cultural section of the C.C.) published an article examining the role of the Party's Jews. The conclusions he reached included these: "No society can tolerate the excessive participation of a national minority in the elite of power, particularly in the organs of National Defence, Security, propaganda and representation abroad." But happily "the correction of the irregular ethnic composition in the central institutions ... will go a long way towards removing this problem." In other words, Jews watch out, particularly Jewish Party members. (Indirectly the campaign is also aimed to put the heat on the Gomulka leadership, which is mostly ex-emigre, unlike the Partisans who, as the name implies, stayed behind. Apparently the amigres also constitute a 'dangerous national minority'!)

They are even alleged to have contact with foreign centres organised by .... Trotskyists. Deja vu! (There has been, of course, a genuine upsurge of revolutionary socialist activity, which the Gomulka regime has met with repression.)

The politics of racism is the politics of the scapegoat. Where it appears it denotes extreme underlying tensions in the structure of society. The widespread use of the 'poisonous vapours' of anti-semitism (still apparently endemic in Russia and East Europe) by the Stalinists was one indication of the repressive nature of the societies over which they presided. Trotsky explained its appearance in Russia as an attempt by the lea-

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\* In 1938 the CPP was declared incurably infested with Trotskyists, Luxembourgeois and .... fascists - and dissolved by Moscow: some of the members were betrayed to the Polish police; many in Moscow were shot.

ding sections of the bureaucracy to deflect the hatred of the masses from the bureaucracy as a whole, onto certain sections of the bureaucracy of Jewish extraction: a sort of stalinist version of 'Jewish capitalism'.

After '56 information on the repression of Jews in Russia led to an outcry in the western Communist Parties. The more blatant forms of discrimination were curbed, though Jewish cultural activities in Russia remained under strict control.

Among other things this vicious racism helps to generate real illusions in Zionism on the part of Russian and East European Jews; It even helped endear Zionism and Wall Street's pet, Israel, to many other opponents of racism in these countries: many who normally would be repelled by Israel's official racist

set-up. Thus anti-Semitism and Zionism are, as always, inseparable sides of the same coin.

It is doubtful if "The Partisans" can benefit a great deal from this racism: there is after all only a handful of Jews left in Poland (about 30,000 - before the War there were 3½ million). And there is a strong possibility that attempts by the regime or a faction of it to move sharply backwards - as sharply as the Moczarites want - will generate more serious opposition than the bureaucracy has ever faced before.

Poland is a living example of how unstable is the liberalism of even the most 'liberal' of bureaucratic regimes. The point is that only workers' socialist democracy offers a qualitative change and a real solution.

Stan Lomax

## BITTER HARVEST - the fruits of betrayal

"Behind the smokescreen of public polemics M. Pompidou and France's Communist leaders established a secret link at the very beginning of the strikes. Messages were exchanged every day and it is known who the contacts were and how they operated."

(K.S. Karol, NEW STATESMAN, 7.6.1968.)

Of course the Gaullists won the "Election of Fear"! Their opponents got no thanks at all for allowing the elections to take place; and they failed to win the electoral support of many petit bourgeois and even some workers who had actively supported the movement in May. Any Party which abandons its fortified position to fight on its opponents' ground is bound to get the worst of all possible worlds.

The Gaullists fought on a slogan of NEVER AGAIN - cashing in on the inability of the workers' parties in May to go beyond the necessary anarchy of the strikes. And this slogan appealed to many who during the strikes had seen the anarchy as a prelude to something better,

but who in disillusionment now saw them only as an interlude of anarchy leading to possible repression.

The C.P. and Left Federation, remaining silent at the CRS re-occupation of the Sorbonne & the brutality of the police, and agreeing to the banning of the left groups, took the same line and thus endorsed the Gaullist propaganda: "keep the Gaullists and there may be a bigger explosion later!"

But the lefts' respectability was easily outdone by the persuasion of fear so lavishly used by the Gaullists. "Hopelessly torn and bewildered by the revolutionary crisis" the Left "was permanently on the defensive, trying to prove that it had nothing to do with riots and barricades. Whether this was true or not turned out to be irrelevant. As a champion of established law and order M. Waldeck Rochet could not compete with M. Pompidou." (ECONOMIST 29.6.68)

Finally the C.P. and Left Federation succeeded in getting less votes than the

number on strike in May; only the small opportunist PSU of Mendes France, which defended the students, made any gains. Many workers and petit bourgeois who could have been led forward in May step by step in conflict with capitalism and its state - given revolutionary leadership - were simply not ready in the cold anti-climactic atmosphere of the election to vote for those who had stood in their way. Many didn't bother to vote at all, disenchanted with all the Parties of the political establishment. The Right and the centre rallied to de Gaulle. The CP lost 39 seats out of 73, and the L.F. 61 out of 121!!

The parliamentary cretins foresaw nothing of this. They were trying to force the heat of revolution onto the "cross" square of a ballot paper - and they succeeded only in hurling back the advance of the masses and alienating from revolutionary activity many who were beginning to be educated in class action. Revolutionary parties which sell out revolutions rarely win the elections or plebiscites called by those in power to put the seal on their victory!

Ironically, it is probable that the LF/CP would have won an April election, had there been one. But the masses didn't wait - they acted. The CP, totally inflexible, couldn't change to non-parliamentary struggle - as a revolutionary party, ready to walk on two legs, would have. It could not be other than counter revolutionary, given its ideology, its routine activities, its history of betrayals. In being true to its reformist nature, and betraying its own potential strength, it undermined itself for the coming election. The CFF may try desperately to ignore the laws of class struggle - but it is still completely at their mercy.

C.P. apologists in Britain naturally claim that the strikers in May weren't clamouring for socialism - and, somewhat triumphantly, they cite the election results to prove it. Thus they show their schoolmasterly ideas in the true style of Fabians for whom class struggle isn't

the school for the masses to learn in, but a diversion from their own routine. But how can the more backward French workers become socialists through propaganda (supposing that is how workers do become socialists) when the CFF, in the '67 and '68 elections, pointedly declares 'socialism' to be a non candidate?

To see the election as the final eclipse of the movement of May is too pessimistic: very many of the best workers saw the elections as an irrelevance. The victory of de Gaulle on a ticket of Red Scare and a vague panacea called participation solves nothing for French capitalism. Once the effects of the May settlements begins to bite in the Autumn the struggle will continue and intensify.

Neither will the spectre of revolution be laid by banning revolutionary groups and imprisoning their leaders: the left ferment continues within the CP and CGT. The prestige of the Trotskyist groups has only been enhanced before the advanced workers: in a way the ban was a formal recognition of the role they had played.

The repression continues, and with it the need for solidarity action in Britain. All support must be given, in cash and active help, to the committees formed in this country to carry on the work of organising solidarity for those who are in the front line of the struggle in France.

Anthony Mahony

#### WILSON'S WORKERS' CONTROL (Contd.)

by the bourgeois state with or without inorganic workers' "participation") and the working class. That Wilson hopes to thrive on the current amorphous state of the workers' control campaign indicates the need - taking the current Campaign level and the NEC proposals as starting point - to campaign for a revolutionary Marxist understanding of what is involved.



# AEI: PROFITS OF REDUNDANCY

Big publicity was given to the GEC-AEI Company report's statement that AEI's 1967 results showed a loss of £4.5 million instead of the £10 million profit forecast by the AEI board before the merger. This must be seen as the warning light for the company's workers to expect more attacks on them, more redundancies and eventually attempts at cutting piecework rates etc., in line with the demands of the Engineering Employees Federation in recent pay negotiations with the Unions.

But this sort of publicity hides the real position of GEC-AEI from the workers. Of course the shareholders pay more attention to the business sections of newspapers like the DAILY TELEGRAPH in which on July 31st the City Editor, analysing the GEC-AEI report, states:

"It is obvious that the huge swing of £14.5 million between forecast (AEI) and fact (GEC) is in part the result of changes in policy imposed by GEC in its first month in the saddle - the closing of the Woolwich factory is one example."

## PROFITS

Later in the same article he says: "Their (the accountants) duty, however is not to the directors of GEC but to the shareholders and it is plainly in the interests of the latter to understand why the profits of the newly acquired AEI have been deflated. Given that knowledge they would also understand one of the major reasons why GEC group profits next year will show a tremendous leap. (The substance of this point was fully grasped in the market yesterday when GEC shares jumped to 108s before closing 7/3 up at 106s6d)".

Here we have the position quite clearly. On the one hand the closing of the Woolwich factory with 5,000 workers being thrown on the dole, 1,600 redundancies at Witton, Birmingham, a further 900 redundancies at other GEC-AEI factories

including Trafford Park. On the other hand the shareholders are promised a "tremendous leap in profits" with GEC shares standing now at 106s6d compared with 73/9 just before the merger.

## GOVERNMENT POLICY

Workers at GEC-AEI must be made to understand that the mailed fist of GEC hatchet man Arnold Weinstock is in fact one of the instruments of the right wing Labour government's attempt at saving British capitalism in its present crisis.

The Wilson government, faced with a multiple crisis of Stirling, Balance of Payments, Balance of Trade and the cost of modernising Britain's antiquated industries, has two main instruments of its policy. One is the Prices and Incomes Board to hold down wages and subordinate the Trade Unions to the capitalist state. The other is the Industrial Re-Organisation Corporation set up by the Wilson government with enormous sums of public money and used to promote the growth of giant monopolies like GEC-AEI. All this of course has one aim: solving Britain's economic troubles at the expense of the working class.

## TRAFFORD PARK

At the time of writing the latest batch of redundancies are taking place in AEI Switchgear, Trafford Park, despite recent promises from the management that any reductions would be by "natural wastage" (retirements, deaths). But apparently the inconsiderate workers in Switchgear are not dying fast enough to suit the management.

Despite the seriousness of the position at Trafford Park there is no evidence of any attempt on the part of the workers' side of the works committee to resist the present wave of redundancies. Local district committee members of the AEF are right to be angry at H. Brennan M.B.E., works convener at AEI, for refusing to account for his



actions, or rather inactions, over these redundancies.

But of perhaps greater significance is the complete absence of any campaign by the Communist Party to mobilise AEI workers against redundancies - strange indeed, when in recent years the C.P. branch at AEI has been the pride and joy of local officials for its 100% membership re-registrations, and its sales of the MORNING STAR. Recently it caused Gollan himself to hand out prizes to the MORNING STAR salesmen at AEI. Perhaps this is the real meaning of the CP's talk of "unity"; after all, isn't H. Brennan M.B.E. a prominent Christian, and we mustn't "split" the workers' side of the works committee, must we?

But of course the main reason is the CP abandonment of class struggle. Its ideas of 'peaceful roads to Socialism' lead to failure to educate its militants above a trade union level of consciousness or to teach them the necessity of mobilising workers in struggle, as part of the preparation of the struggle for state power. Confining themselves to routine trade unionism, they wind up as simply bad trade unionists when the time arrives for a struggle, over and above the routine.

#### NATIONALISE UNDER WORKERS' CONTROL !

Significant also is the failure of Union leaders to intervene in the situation, especially as the official policy of the AEF is for the nationalisation of the Engineering Industry under workers' control. And isn't that the logical solution for GEC-AEI? Here is a giant monopoly which produces much of its output for the nationalised industries:- under nationalisation the future expansion of the group could be planned in relation to the needs of the CEGB, the further electrification of the railways, the future developments in Telecommunications, and the needs of other industry. Why not take it out of the hands of the shareholders and run it in the interest of the workers?

Recent events have shown that despite

the election of Scanlon and other lefts in the AEF, the right wing still dominate. Neither they nor the Labour lefts nor the C.P. can be relied upon to lead a decisive struggle against the Wilson government.

All serious Socialists at GEC-AEI must now prepare an alternative policy with which to mobilise the workers to resist the employers' attacks and to go on the offensive.

I suggest that the following points must be included in any such policy -

- 1) Stop all redundancy!
- 2) Ban all overtime, share the work!
- 3) Fight for a reduction in hours without loss of pay!
- 4) Nationalise AEI-AEC under direct workers' control!

Larry Durkin

## **SOFTLY, SOFTLY**

It isn't exactly a secret, either on the left or amongst the general public, that the police go in for 'black-baiting' and have more than a fair share of bare-knuckle racials among them. Or maybe it's just that the racist thugs in the blue uniforms thrive on the virtual impunity which mantles the police violence (or force, as it is usually called).

The black areas of the big cities are full of tales of police beatings, intimidations, frame-ups and attempted frame-ups. Some months ago a proposal by CARD in Manchester to organise a march through Moss Side against police brutality met with mass support from the local community. It was finding so much support, in fact, that the police got scared of the effects. The Dean of Manchester quickly stepped forward to offer himself as arbiter between the police and the black workers in the future - and a majority of the organisers of the march

were either pressurised or gulled into calling it off.

Of course this close support by the rest of the establishment for the forces of Law and Order is one reason why so much abuse of power - over and above the 'norm' required to maintain capitalist society - continues. The halo must be kept shining around the head of the 'friendly bobby' - even though cases such as that of Challinor and other incidents have made it slip a little in recent years. Concern for the image of the police is a part of the concern for the stability of the system: alienation of workers from the police, as the French events showed, can sometimes have nasty repercussions for the bosses. Thus all the pressures are continually exerted to prevent any publicity being given to the seamier side of the cops. And more often than not, little of even this permanent burking is perceived by the general public. The traces are usually very well covered.

The SUNDAY TIMES of July 28th. contained details of one of the few such incidents that have broken through the barrier of total silence.

A film was made for the BBC TV series "Cause for Concern", examining the normal treatment of coloured people by the police. It emerged as an indictment of the police. Four cases of apparent victimisation by the police were examined: in all of them the accused had won their cases, and two had been awarded damages against the police. By implication, of course, the stories of the 4 who "got away" indicated the multitudes that, for lack of resources or knowledge of their rights, or due to the skill of the police in framing them, aren't so lucky.

THE PROGRAMME MUST BE STOPPED!

Playing safe, the controllers of the BBC (alma mater of dozens of good, clean, fictional, cops) decided that the police should be given an opportunity to reply to the film in a 10 minute follow-up discussion.

But evidently this wasn't good enough. On being shown the film, one of Scotland Yard's representatives commented: "You might as well have saved time by putting up a caption saying all police are bastards." And that would never do at all! Reading a transcript, the Police Commissioner is reported to have said: "THE PROGRAMME MUST BE STOPPED".

And it was stopped. First, the legal Department at Scotland Yard tried putting on the pressure by saying it was libelous in 4 instances. The BBC's legal Department, however, was sure the charges could be substantiated in all 4 cases.

Then, the police threatened to take action under the Race Relations Act - on the grounds that the film was inflammatory and constituted incitement to racial violence!!!

Finally, amidst growing background pressure, the BBC at the 11th hour called off the showing. The grounds (read excuse) were that the arrest of a Biafran on the night before the programme was due, meant that a writ could be issued against the BBC for contempt. The Biafran was charged with "uttering a writing (sic) threatening to kill police in Hyde Park." He did not appear in the programme in question!

There is some vague talk about a showing "later". Meanwhile the police, halo still in place, are in charge not only of administering extra kicks to the blacks, but also of administering the new Race Relations Act. Whatever the defects of the Act in other respects, it has already proved its usefulness to the police - for intimidating the BBC, and no doubt anyone else (particularly black people) who presume to inquire too much into the methods of the sweet British bobby!

FOR THE SOCIALIST STRUGGLE IN IRELAND - READ 9d.pp  
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# OCTOBER MOBILISATION - 2 VIEWS

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The tactics of any large demonstration, in this case the October Mobilisation of the Vietnam Ad Hoc Committee, must be considered in relation to the aims of the demo, and the desired effects. In this case they can be summed up as follows, and in the following order of immediate priority:

1) Solidarity with the NLF, and assistance in their struggle in the form of a morale boost.

2) The radicalisation of the left in Britain, the raising of the level of consciousness of both the demonstrators and the broad left. Most of the groupings taking part agree that this should lead on to the development of as many as possible of the people won to solidarity action, as revolutionary socialists in the full sense, with a full knowledge of the wider issues.

3) Radicalisation of the mass of the working class and labour movement, and the winning of numbers of workers to solidarity with Vietnam.

## SOLIDARITY - IN ACTION

Different aims require different tactics. Where there is a clash, then the priorities become important. An example of this, perhaps the most important, is the clash between the appearance of the demo and its achievements. For the sake of appearance (which would be important in relation to the third aim) the demo is best kept together; but for the sake of effectiveness (which I believe is the most important in relation to the first and second aims) it is better policy to split up the demo, to have a greater effect in these ways:

For International solidarity and morale: the greater the commitment of the demonstrators, their level of militancy, determination etc., the better - and this must be apparent and obvious. Also, such an achievement as the occupation of a building or streets, though in itself it is of little

value, can have enormous value in its effects on the morale of the NLF and other combatants facing Imperialism directly. Thus when viewed in relation to morale and solidarity, the 'meaningless' conquest becomes an actual conquest - and not only that, but it serves to 'prove' in a tangible way the commitment of the demonstrators. Therefore the demo should be deployed so as to achieve actual success, not merely token protest. Tactics must allow for a maximum development and use of the total potential strength of the demonstration.

For the effect on the demonstrators themselves: the methods and tactics for this coincide with those for solidarity. The higher the level of involvement of each demonstrator, the more likely is there to be a polarisation, with the best of them turning their experiences of struggle against the state into a drive towards revolutionary socialism. A struggle of this sort can have a tremendous impact in shattering illusions about the neutrality of the state - illusions necessary for adherence to any 'peaceful road' perspective. A typical example is expressed in a letter to the MORNING STAR following the July 21st. demo: "...I no longer want to hear people say what nice, courageous and courteous humans our police are. I shall do all I can in the future to open people's eyes to the incidents which happen when our police are around."

The needs of both these aims tend to conflict with the simple showing of number, which requires massing all together in the same place. This massing, as on March 17th, tends to minimise both the total achievement of the whole demo (the first aim), and also the second aim, the involvement of the maximum number of people. (The two are of course inseparable - only by involving everyone to the utmost can any objective be achieved.

And because they are interlinked, they use the same tactics.) On March 17th. there was a narrow front line, with the mass of demonstrators almost immobilised behind it, forced into passivity and uselessness (in fact they were to an extent a positive hindrance to the people at the front in restricting manoeuvrability). Therefore, the Ad Hoc committee should adopt tactics which will enlarge the front of the demo to the maximum.

This could be a matter of choosing several targets and splitting up; or a matter of converging on one place from, say, 6 directions or more.

Here a certain conflict might arise with the demands of the third aim, of winning over large numbers of non-committed people. A demo which expressed forceful solidarity with the NLF, and won those involved to a long term opposition to capitalism, is not calculated to get the best 'press' in the Mirror! But on the whole it must be said that in political consciousness this mobilisation is a long way ahead of the political level of the mass of the workers. We should not assume that, if only we 'play our cards right' (ie have a huge demo, impressive but immobile) then a repeat of the French events will inevitably result.

There is still sympathy for the police, etc, and we must face the fact that even some militant workers will be alienated rather than won by the demonstration. Nevertheless, the demo has many other things to gain. It is not a sectarian binge by a handful of 'hoary old revolutionaries'. It will be made up of tens of thousands of young people (students and workers) who are moving towards revolutionary socialism. And, after solidarity, the main priority must be the demonstrators themselves, many of whom will be drawn into the building of the future revolutionary party - and many of whom, having become committed through action, will move on to more complex propaganda activities (as below) as well as demonstrations.

EFFECTIVENESS

There is a danger in wanting to do too much in one go: if there is a conflict of interest between effectiveness and impressiveness, a choice must be made, according to priorities. Compromise will achieve neither. In my opinion effectiveness is politically the most desirable. We will have achieved much if we can show a real, active, combative solidarity with the NLF and at the same time continue the radicalisation of the left which began in the October mobilisation last year. The third set of aims will not be achieved in demonstrations. (Although there will be an interaction between demonstrations and propaganda, demonstrations cannot themselves be tied down to the requirements of propaganda.)

Any demonstration which sets out to replace propaganda and the direct experience of the class in this matter is only likely to undermine its effectiveness on the other two fronts, as outlined above. We must recognise that, though connected, demonstration and propaganda are different. If we want to link them there are ways of doing so without weakening the demonstration by compromise.

To this end, the following proposals (some of which have been made in the VSC Bulletin) are useful:

1) Route: the demo should come through working class areas from different starting points, passing such areas as east London, Brixton, Clapham, Battersea, Notting Hill, Islington, Camden, etc. These routes should be thoroughly leafleted beforehand, explaining why the demo is being held and asking people to join. In areas like Brixton and Notting Hill where there are large numbers of immigrants, the leaflets could be specially drafted to link up with the colonial and black struggle. (Immigrant organisations in or sympathetic to the Ad Hoc Committee could be responsible for this). In other areas a general solidarity line.

2) Factories and



size and number of organisations was deemed to be the most important aim, the slogans were reformist so as not to offend the liberal and Christian sympathisers. They ended either with everyone going home immediately, or after a short meeting. Direct action groups to test the police were frowned on by the organisers (eg CND).

Now the demonstrations are more definite with undiluted slogans, and a more determined attitude seems prevalent. Instead of marching quietly by the embassies, for example, the strength of the police cordon is actually tested. Anti-fascists are not content just to demonstrate against racialists, but aim to drive them off the streets. The attempts by fascists to demonstrate apparently respectably must be crushed. The views of Powell on immigration are already far too widely accepted by workers, for lack of an alternative.

The police also seem aware of these new aims of demonstrators (new since the 2nd World War in this country). Socialists and militants are arrested on pickets as at Roberts Arundel, Stockport; YCLers collecting for Vietnam, and even demonstrators in a small Manchester Rents demo, have been arrested. Fines are rocketing.

This no doubt is preparation for the next few years when capitalism and its government, whether Labour or Tory, must resist opposition to its restrictions on wages and general tightening up of the economy. Also, the events in France recently have shown how an apparently taciturn West European capitalist state can suddenly erupt and attain, if not revolution, large wage increases, at least temporarily, by mass action initiated by revolutionary students.

Accepting that large demonstrations of the future must raise political consciousness of workers and be of assistance in building a new revolutionary

force to actually remove capitalism and not just prick the conscience of a reformist government, it is inevitable that the more effective and determined the resistance is, the more it will be met by force from the protectors of established capitalism. Violence by police to contain and intimidate demonstrators will grow, and will be met by violence from prepared demonstrators (eg rescuing comrades from the hands of the police - possibly even rescuing US deserters from courtrooms as suggested by Tariq Ali).

But should this relatively large scale violence be initiated by demonstrators say, breaking a police cordon round the US Embassy, if the whole affair could lead to a few windows broken at most? An embassy occupied by demonstrators for a period of at least a weekend, would only be useful if it led to a much increased awareness of the strength of the working class, and I think that this could only be a test of strength of the workers and not a rallying point for the situation now.

Of course the French revolutionary upsurge was initiated by students occupying the Sorbonne, but this was their 'pwn factory', so to speak, and the evidence of lack of money, lectures, in fact of education in any sense, was obvious to workers, and also had the positive support of lecturers and professors. This is being copied in England where the bureaucracy of the senates is not quite so clumsy, and it is meeting with some success for the students. But it is not meeting with any support from the workers.

In France the attacks of the French police and the methods of the CRS started the violence, bringing forth much support for the students. Why then should 'combat' demonstrators be used in this country to initiate violence? This would alienate the demonstrators from the bulk of the workers, and not raise consciousness.

T.F.

((We invite further contributions to this discussion. Editor.))

# Boss organises Union

In historic Durham, scene of many big events in the development of the labour movement, history was once again made: the management of the Hugh McKay Carpet Factory became organisers for a trade union!

Although it seems hard to believe it is perfectly true. In May of this year I decided to try and establish a trade union branch at the factory where I work. I contacted the regional offices of the T & GWU and explained my intentions to them. I received full support and backing in the first weeks of activity, and I recruited 23 members. A letter was sent by the Union to the management explaining the situation and asking the management to meet them to discuss this. After a week no reply had come to the Union offices.

But a circular letter was then distributed to each employee in the factory explaining that the bosses were in favour of having the "right" type of union and a meeting was called at the factory for the following week. At the meeting the managing director Mr. John McKay told the workers how he had telephoned a carpet factory in Halifax where they have a 'trade union of a special sort': this union is the CARPET TRADE UNION NORTHERN. He put it to the workers that this was the union for them.

I protested, said that there was already a T&GWU branch at the factory, and asked for recognition. Before he could answer his scabs were witch-hunting me on my political affiliation. A ballot was taken CTUN v. T&GWU. The Carpet Union, supported by the employers and helped by the anti-'red' witch-hunt, walked it. Their official was invited to speak the following week.

At this next meeting we learnt a little about the CTUN. It seems they are a one-factory union! They have just over 1000 members, no full time officials, only

£14,000 in reserve. Their benefits are a disgrace to the trade union movement: no sick benefit - and strike pay of £2 a week! The Union was formed in the late 19th century and they have had no disputes in over 50 years! (It is hard to see how they could afford them anyway.) I asked Mr. John McKay if the T&GWU official could also come and speak to the workers. He refused and our members walked out of the meeting.

Of course the management jumped at the chance of having this union - in effect almost an old-style company union - in the factory. They printed all the application forms and notices. Appropriately the worker who is organising the CTUN is a Tory councillor and also ex-Mayor of Durham. He is now standing for branch chairman.

While their membership grew to over 500 we were struggling through witch-hunting and intimidation to a branch membership of 70. Recognition of any sort has been refused and we are now pressing for firm action to be taken by the Union officially. So far we have been assured our case will be taken to the TUC Disputes Committee, where we are sure of winning since the other union is in breach of the 1939 Bridlington agreement by coming in while we were already organising. Although this is far from over there are certain questions we must ask ourselves.

- 1) Are the craft unions being used as pawns by the capitalist class? Yes!
- 2) Did the management bring this union in for the benefit of the workers? Of course not!
- 3) How can we stop this happening again? We can call for the amalgamation of all small and craft unions into the established big unions. This will not only strengthen the trade union movement but it will also benefit the workers in these unions. It will help create the conditions for militant rank and file actions within unions such as the T&GWU, to overcome the foot-dragging lack of



militancy which is only too often found amongst the full-timers where these unions are already established.

Which brings me to the final point: organising ourselves into a bona fide union like the T&CWU is only the start. If we want to make sure it really serves our interests we must go to the meetings and insist on militant policies. We must not just be passive trade unionists - we must be militant trade unionists!

John Gaines

## OBITUARY

Anyone who followed the discussion on the 'morality' of heart transplants, will know that defining death isn't all that easy. Sometimes a heart may beat, or a nerve twitch, even after death, for all practical purposes, has come.

So too with revolutionary organisations. They may grow sick and catch one of a variety of diseases, such as sectarianism or opportunism. An organisation which fails to fight off the sickness correctly will gradually succumb to it, until at some point - often difficult to pinpoint - it will have to be pronounced dead for the purposes of revolutionary activity.

That the Socialist Labour League has been seriously ill for a long time is beyond dispute. Has anybody seen it up-and-about lately? We hear rumours of small, private enterprises such as youth clubs and discotheques - but wherever the going is strenuous there is no sign of it. It had a completely orderly demo, such as would gladden Gollan himself, outside the French Embassy in London - side by side with a militant one which it shunned in fear of contact! And this fear has kept it away from united action with other revolutionaries on each and

every issue of trade union and political life.

For 5 years now it has proclaimed that the Big Crisis of capitalism has come. But, unable to expose the vulnerable minds of its youth to any contact with reality or other revolutionaries, it has reduced its own role ever more totally to simple, abstract propaganda - processing political events as fodder for 'revolutionary' comment, increasingly at the expense of participation in struggle.

Now that a serious crisis for capitalism really appears to be upon us - it is a good time to take the pulse of the SLL, and test its reflexes. But alas, there are no reflexes left.

One of the clearest manifestations of the crisis of capitalism was Powell's speech, and the response to it. And on July 7th the Mosleyites tried to consolidate their gains with a march. They managed to bring together 400 backward elements to spread their racist poison.

1,500 marched in a counter demonstration organised by MCF and supported by a variety of other groupings. There were YCLers, CPers, Trotskyists of various different groupings, anarchists, Maoists, VSC supporters, etc. etc. In fact, every group alive on the left was represented, and even some (like the RSL manana Trotskyists) that are only barely alive. But not the SLL - the 'Alternative Revolutionary Leadership': that is, unless you count 3 or 4 NEWSLETTER sellers.

The militants on the march (about 1,000) decided to make a stand and try to drive the fascists off the streets. They felt that this counter-demonstration should not be a mere token - "drive them back into their holes!" Unfortunately the police cordon protecting the racials, with their shouts of "Red rabble", was too strong: the fascists, though outnumbered and threatened, marched.

And where were the 'thousands of young workers' from the discotheques, who could

have tipped the balance through the cor-  
don? Where was the SLL hard core?

It could hardly be that the SLL dis-  
agrees, in the abstract (everything is in  
the abstract!) with the need to drive  
the racists off the streets. Racism is  
the one issue on which the SLL has a re-  
cord second to none: as much as a decade  
ago it brought a storm around its head  
by proclaiming the need to organise wor-  
kers' defence squads against the race  
rioters in Notting Hill. In the series  
of clashes involving Jordan and Mosley  
in the late summer of 1962, the SLL took  
a revolutionary line and came out with  
headlines like this one (1.9.62): STOP  
MOSLEY THIS SUNDAY. Recalling the Battle  
of Cable Street in which workers stopped  
the fascists marching in 1936, the front  
page article concluded:

"The job of the  
London labour movement this Sunday is to  
stop fascism. There can be no equivocati-  
on on this point. Appeals to the Govern-  
ment and the Home Secretary will not  
stop them. Only the organised working  
class of London can do this.

This Sunday, in London's East End, the  
labour movement must take another step  
in the campaign to crush these groups  
before they can start their drive ag-  
ainst the organised labour and trade un-  
ion movement."

But nowadays, as readers of the NEWSLET-  
TER's strictures on the great recent  
demos on Vietnam will know - this sort  
of activity is 'adventurism', part of  
"Tariq Ali's Circus"! And while reiter-

ating platonic anti-racism, they extend  
these attitudes and their concomitant  
boycott even to struggle in the streets  
against fascists and racists.

Their absence on July 7th ranks in our  
eyes as the final clinching piece of ev-  
idence that the SLL is stone dead, in-  
capable of playing any serious role in  
the big battles of the class which are  
coming. In fact, as these battles loom  
ahead, the sectarian aloofness and prop-  
agandist passivity of the SLL becomes  
daily (or twice-weekly) more blatant.

This organisation, through which in our  
opinion the 'revolutionary stream' in  
the British labour movement flowed for  
many years, still moves, twitches, goes  
through certain motions and produces its  
ritual noises. It has a good - comm-  
ercialised - press, able to run almost  
indefinitely on its own 'free enterprise'  
momentum; this allows it to produce an  
impressive paper. But for the revolution-  
ary needs of the British labour movement  
it is stone dead.

There are many people around who have  
yet to see this and act accordingly to  
build a new movement on the politics  
which the SLL sectarians have abandoned.

Events like July 7th. should spur such  
people to the long overdue job of giving  
the SLL a certificate of death. The evo-  
lution of the class struggle already has.

Albert Gatte

## **COVER-UP STORY: the CPGB on France**

The last few years have brought many  
frustrations for loyal CPGB members:  
Krushchev's first denunciations of Stal-  
in, the Hungarian crisis, the present  
Russia-Czech confrontation, and finally  
the disappointments of the French elect-  
ions. Subsequently many CP members have  
asked - is the CPGB a revolutionary  
party? These doubts have been highlight-

ed by recent Party discussions on the  
French crisis.

In these discussions the small active  
membership seems divided into 3 groups:

1) The 'rationalisers' who manage to  
construct from the stalinist contradict-  
ions a 'new path' for the 'reforming of  
British capitalism'.

2) The super-loyalists who faithfully

follow every edict pushed out by the central leadership.

3) The confused activists, sandwiched between the first two groupings, who vainly try to reconcile the contradictions with their own loyalty to the Party.

We saw in France 10 million workers taking militant action unprecedented in Europe since the thirties: not only striking for better wages and conditions but occupying their work-places and so fundamentally challenging the owners. They were supported by large numbers of peasants, urban petit bourgeois, and of course the militant students. (Characterised by the CFF - Rene Andrieux, Editor Humanite, in the MORNING STAR - as "petit bourgeois leftist intellectuals.. who pit themselves against the strategy of working class organisations which know what is possible now, and what is not.")

As the first storm waves of the student riots and workers' strikes hit the rank and file CPGB members a general air of elation was felt. Was this, at last, the long awaited revolutionary breakthrough? And then for the Party idealists the blows began to fall. The students were seen to be led by a conglomerate leadership of Trotskyists, anarchists and Maoists! The workers' spontaneous actions were shaking the CFF as violently as the system against which they were directed, and the CFF soon assumed the character of a man chasing a runaway horse, and never quite catching it!

On May 16th the CFF Political Cttee. issued a statement calling for "the satisfaction of the pressing demands of the workers", characterised as these: general wage rises; job security; cuts in hours without loss of pay; cancellation of the decrees against the social security system; and defence of workers' liberties.

An impressive list of demands - sufficient to question the whole basis of French capitalism. But how did the CFF envisage these demands being satisfied, considering the state of French capitalism? The Party had already dismissed revolution as a "leftist adventure,

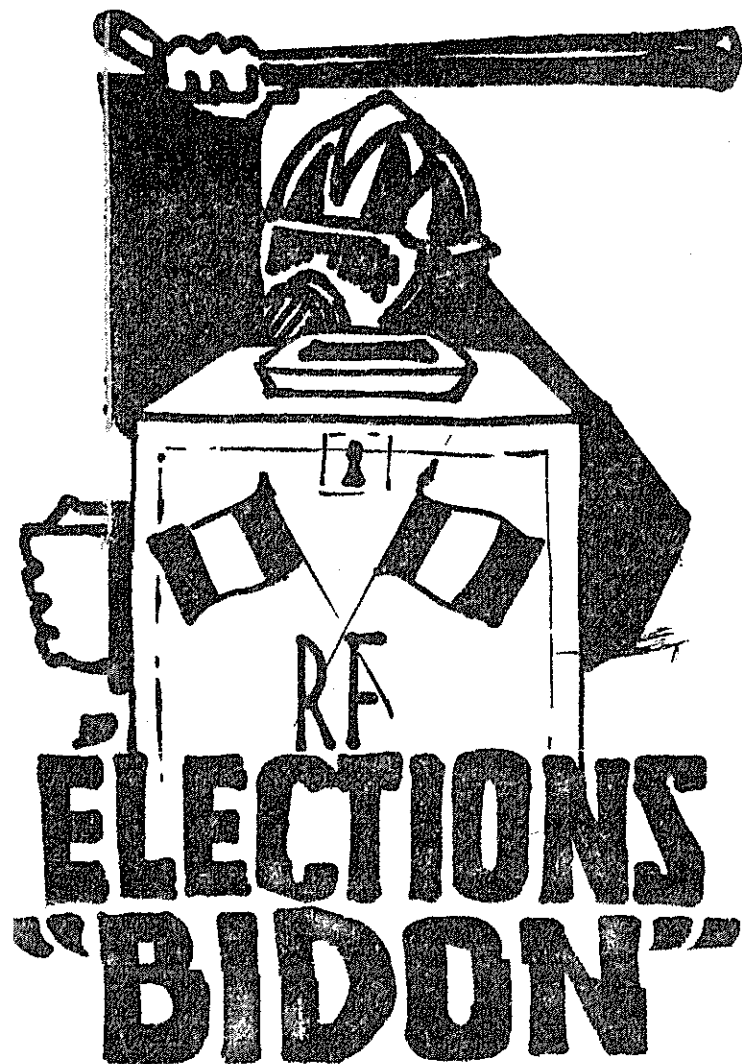
likely to destroy at one blow the left unity painstakingly built, and drown the road to socialism for decades to come in a bloodbath."

One of the many excuses dredged up by loyalist CPGB members in the post election discussions was: 'that the results of the elections prove that there was no basis for revolutionary action in France.' Let us consider, then, some of the predictions of CP journalists prior to the elections. Lance Samson (LABOUR MONTHLY July 1968): "Having failed to prophesy the May upsurge, I will risk none about the elections," however, he continues - "but it is widely forecast that France's mass working class party, the CFF, which has increased its vote at every election since De Gaulle came to power, will do so again". Rene Andrieux - "The coming elections should be for the CFF an occasion to show the increased support which it has in the country."

There can be little doubt that the bulk of the rank and file CPGB members were convinced that the left forces, led by the CFF, would push out the Gaullists and form a 'popular left' government. But despite its high sounding claims, it was either incapable or unwilling to take the necessary steps to ensure that these demands would be fulfilled. By separating the reformist demands from the revolutionary perspective and programme, which is only mentioned as a vague future dream by both the CFF and CPGB, the possibility of a definite workers' advance along the road of socialist revolution was lost in the mire of the CFF's electoral manipulations.

Not only that: by allowing the struggling system time to stagger to its feet, the CFF opened the way to vicious repressions against the militant left leadership. It enabled the far right to rally. And de Gaulle was able to utilise the same tactics of fear of a bloodbath as the CP employs, to rally the petit bourgeoisie (who had previously in their enthusiasm sided in large numbers with the workers) to the defence of capitalism.

However, de Gaulle was only able to do



this because the traditional workers' Party of revolution had refused to enter a revolutionary road. By pinning their faith in the ballot box the CPF had removed all possibility of overthrowing the system which stands in the way of fulfilling the demands of the workers. By their reliance on the electoral system, specifically designed to prop up capitalism, the CPF had ensured the dissipation of the militant fervour of the working class. The lesson must be: REVOLUTIONARY FERVOUR CANNOT BE TRANS-LATED INTO ELECTORAL FIGURES.

Already we are seeing the cracks beginning to appear in the rank and file membership of the CPGB. The loyalists regurgitate the familiar attacks on the left groups, claiming it was their "adventurism" which enabled the Gaullists

to frighten the floating electorate.

These claims are bolstered by the MORN-ING STAR, which in an enlightened front page editorial informed us that the French capitalists had no fear of the Cohn-Bendits etc, as these were the people who were being allowed to represent the French people on British Television, in preference to the true representatives, the CPF. Unfortunately a news item on the same page also informed us that Cohn-Bendit's group and 11 others had been declared illegal, but that the CPF would be free to follow its legal road!

The utter cynicism of the CPF is underlined by its attitude to the banning of the revolutionary groups. Along with CPGB loyalists, they are now prepared to walk the razor-edge offered by the capitalists in banning these groups. This is already seen as an aid to their programme of class betrayal, as their leading critics are removed from the political scene. Thus the CP helps prepare the way for more anti-working class measures.

The rationalisers are already incorporating this latest sell-out in their claims that the working class will not now be prepared to embark on a revolutionary road but instead will, through a series of gradual reforms, evolve socialism from the ruins of capitalism.

But the most important are the confused and disillusioned members, vainly waiting for some decree to be issued from the Party hierarchy which will cut thru' the mists of confusion and enable them to understand the situation. Do they seriously consider that the Gaullists, returned with an even bigger majority, will grant the hard gained reforms? And what will now be the programme of the CPF? To spend another ten years prostrate before the Mitterands, Mollets et al who were quite prepared to form a government excluding the CPF?

Comrades, is it not time now to disregard the apologists who inform us that there is no Party better than the CPGB?! Is it not time to build a real revolutionary party!!

Jimmy Carroll  
(Former Y.C.L. N.C. member)

# CENTRISM & the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

The polar extremes of working class politics - reformism and Marxism - are well explored, and educated socialists can draw model charts of them. Less well charted is the border region where their extremes meet - the territory of the cross-breeding "Centrists": hybrid mutants, the result of various permutations of the political elements of both poles. The following article by Trotsky attempts to draw a chart of the features of Centrism.

After the peaceful collapse of the German labour movement before Hitler in 1933, and the bloody defeat of Austrian Labour in Vienna a year later, not even the reformists dared openly defend their old positions: they were forced to 'disavow themselves'. Simultaneously a number of elements shaken loose by the Communist International swelled the gaggle of in-betweens: they proclaimed a many faced ideology of eclectic, inconsistent 'Revolutionary Socialism'. This 1934 article analyses this galaxy of groups and parties, all of which - with the not unimportant exception of stalinism, itemised as Bureaucratic Centrism - were to be swept aside by the Second World War.

But since that war the Labour movement has been dominated by Right reformism and a stalinism which now usurps the rags of what used to be mainstream reformism - parliamentarianism, pacifism, the lot. They why republish Trotsky's article on Centrism?

Precisely because of the dominance of reformist ideas, and the semi-eclipse of Marxism over the last three decades, much that is properly called centrism passes as revolutionary Marxism: some examples of this derive from the Trotskyist movement itself. The pressure of events and a certain ideological erosion has produced a number of nominally Trotskyist or semi-Trotskyist groups which are in fact centrist formations, because of political & organisational incompleteness or inconsistency. They use dehydrated ideas from Trotsky to excuse accommodation to the Labour bureaucracies; they refuse to draw the necessary conclusions from the pol-

itics they proclaim, living on an eclectic political diet. The SLL is a living example of Sectarian Bureaucratic Centrism of 1933/4 vintage - that they carry Trotsky's portrait and not Stalin's is a detail: even the Stalinists carried that of Lenin! For this reason it is absolutely necessary to understand Centrism and achieve the ideological precision which Trotsky demonstrates here.

Secondly, in Britain now the massive disillusion with Wilsonism, particularly amongst the youth, fused with the pro-Vietnamese movement, has generated a relatively broad and growing Revolutionary Socialist mood. The setpiece debate on "Reform or Revolution" is often no longer necessary with newcomers. Many militant socialists have come to agree that a revolution 'of some sort' is necessary. But the mood remains cloudy and unformed, approximating to centrism with its lack of precision, and attitudes which regard a concern for Principle and Leninist organisational completeness as 'Sectarianism'. The outstanding present example of this is the transformation of the old International Socialist Group into a Left-centrist current which will either consolidate as a Leninist organisation, based on the principles of the Fourth International, or regress and disintegrate fairly rapidly. Thus Centrism is an increasingly important subject in Britain today and Trotsky's comments are therefore vital.

On this 30th Anniversary of the foundation of the Fourth International, we must acknowledge that the optimism of Trotsky for the future of the Marxist movement was premature. Like Marx and Lenin before him, Trotsky usually looked ahead through powerful glasses, which sometimes foreshortened distances and time scales: foreshortened them. Today the great revolt in France, and the crisis which is overtaking both capitalism and stalinism, are proof that the revolutionary perspective of Trotsky can be realised in our time - on condition that we build an organisation able to fight for and realise that perspective.

S.M.

# Centrism & the FI

The events in Austria, coming after the events in Germany, placed a final cross over "classic" reformism. Henceforth only the dullest leaders of British and American trade-unionism, and their French follower, Jouhaux, the President of the Second International Vandervelde, and similar political ichthyosauri will dare to speak openly of the perspectives of peaceful development, democratic reforms, etc. The overwhelming majority of the reformists consciously take on new colours now. Reformism yields to the innumerable shadings of Centrism which now dominate the field of the workers movement in the majority of countries. This creates an entirely new and, in a sense, unprecedented situation for work in the spirit of revolutionary Marxism (Bolshevism). The New International can develop principally at the expense of the now-prevailing tendencies and organisations. At the same time the revolutionary International cannot form itself otherwise than in a constant struggle against centrism. Under these conditions ideological irreconcilability and the flexible policy of the united front serve as weapons for the attainment of one and the same end.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF CENTRISM

One must first of all understand the most characteristic traits of modern Centrism. That is not easy: first, because Centrism, due to its organic amorphousness, yields with difficulty to a positive definition: it is characterised to a much greater extent by what it lacks than by what it embraces; secondly, never has Centrism yet played to such an extent as now with all the colours of the rainbow, because never yet have the ranks of the working class been in such ferment as at the present time. Political ferment, by the very essence of the term, means a re-alignment, a shift between two poles, Marxism and reformism: that is to say, the passing through the various stages of Centrism.

No matter how difficult a general definition of Centrism, which of necessity always has a "conjunctural" character, nevertheless, we can and must bring out the outstanding characteristics and peculiarities of the Centrist groupings originating from the breakdown of the Second and Third Internationals.

(a) Theoretically, Centrism is amorphous and eclectic; so far as is possible, it evades theoretical obligations and inclines (in words) to give preference to "revolutionary practice" over theory, without understanding that only Marxist theory can impart revolutionary direction to practice.

### Centrist Ideology

(b) In the sphere of Ideology, Centrism leads a parasitic existence: it repeats against the revolutionary Marxists the old Menshevik arguments (Martov, Axelrod, Plekhanov) usually without suspecting this: on the other hand, its main arguments against the Right it borrows from the Marxists, that is first of all from the Bolshevik Leninists, dulling, however, the sharp edge of criticism, avoiding practical conclusions, thereby rendering their criticism meaningless.

(c) A centrist readily proclaims his hostility to reformism; but he does not mention Centrism; moreover, he considers the very definition of Centrism as "unclear", "arbitrary", etc; in other words, Centrism does not like to be called by its own name.

(d) A Centrist, always uncertain of his position, and of his methods, views with hatred the revolutionary principle:- to state what is; he is inclined to substitute for a principled policy personal manoeuvring and petty organisational diplomacy.

(e) A Centrist always remains in spiritual dependence on Rightist groupings, is inclined to cringe before those who are more moderate, to remain silent on their opportunist sins and to colour their actions before the workers.

(f) His shilly-shallying the Centrist frequently covers up by reference to the danger of "sectarianism", by which he understands not abstract propogandist passivity (of the Bordigist type) but an active concern for purity of principles, clarity of position, political consistency, organisational completeness.

(g) A Centrist occupies a position between an opportunist and a Marxist, somewhat analogous to that which a petit bourgeois occupies between a capitalist and a proletarian; he kow-tows before the first and has contempt for the second.

#### On the International Arena

(h) On the international arena the Centrist distinguishes himself, if not by blindness, then by short-sightedness; he does not understand that in the present epoch a national revolutionary party can be built only as part of an international party; in the choice of his international allies the Centrist is even less discriminating than in his own country.

(i) A Centrist sees in the policy of the Comintern only "Ultra-left" deviations, adventurism, putschism, ignoring completely the Right-opportunist zig-zags (Kuomintang, Anglo-Russian Committee, pacifist foreign policy, anti-fascist bloc, etc.)

(j) A Centrist always swears readily by the policy of the United Front, emptying it of its revolutionary content and transforming it from a tactical method into a supreme principle.

(k) A Centrist readily resorts to pathetic moralising to cover up his ideological emptiness; he does not understand that revolutionary morality can be formed only on the basis of revolutionary doctrine and revolutionary policy.

#### WORDS AND DEEDS

Under the pressure of circumstances the eclectic Centrist may accept even the extreme conclusions only to retreat from them afterwards in practice. Having accepted the dictatorship of the proletariat he will leave a wide margin for opportunistic interpretations; having proclaimed the necessity of the Fourth International, he will work for the building of a Two-and-a-half International, etc.

The most malignant example of Centrism is, if you wish, the German group "Begin Anew" (Neu Beginnen). Superficially repeating the Marxist criticism of reformism, it comes to the conclusion that all the misfortunes of the proletariat follow from splits and that salvation lies in the safeguarding of the unity of the Social-Democratic Parties. These Gentlemen place the organisational discipline of Wels and Co. higher than the historic interests of the proletariat. And since Wels and Co. subordinate the party to the discipline of the bourgeoisie, the group "Begin Anew", cloaked by left criticism stolen from the Marxists, represents in reality a harmful agency of the bourgeois order, even though an agency of the second degree.

The so-called London (now Amsterdam) Bureau represents an attempt at creating an international focal point for Centrist eclectism, under the banner of which the Right and Left opportunist groupings, which do not dare to choose finally a direction and a banner, try to unite. In this, as in other cases, the Centrists try to direct the movement obliquely along a diagonal course. The elements composing the bloc pull in opposite directions, the N.A.P. (Norwegian Labour Party) cautiously moves towards the Second International; the I.L.P. (of Britain) partly towards the Third, partly towards the Fourth; the S.A.P. (Socialist Workers' Party of Germany) and the O.S.P. (Independent Socialist Party of Holland) veering and vacillating towards the Fourth. Exploiting and preserving the ideological amorphousness of all its participants and trying to compete in the work for the creation of a new International, the bloc of the "London Bureau" plays a reactionary role. The failure of this grouping is absolutely inevitable.



## BUREAUCRATIC CENTRISM

The definition of the policy of the Comintern as that of BUREAUCRATIC Centrism retains its full force now too. As a matter of fact, only CENTRISM is capable of constant leaps from opportunistic betrayals to ultra-left adventurism; only the powerful SOVIET BUREAUCRACY could for ten years assure a stable base for the ruinous policy of zigzags.

Bureaucratic Centrism, in distinction from Centrist groupings which crystallised out of the social democracy, is the product of the degeneration of Bolshevism; it retains - in caricature form - some of its traits, still leads a considerable number of revolutionary workers, disposes of extraordinary material and technical means, but by its political influence is now the crassest, most disorganising and harmful variety of Centrism. The political break-down of the Comintern, clear to the whole world, signifies of necessity the further decomposition of bureaucratic centrism. In this sphere our task is to save the best elements for the cause of the proletarian revolution. Side by side with tireless principled criticism, our main weapon for influencing the workers still remaining under the banner of the Comintern is the further penetration of our ideas and methods into those wide masses, who stand now in overwhelming majority outside the influence of the Comintern.

## ADAPTATION TO REFORMIST MANOEUVRES

Precisely now, when reformism is forced to renounce itself, transforming itself into Centrism, some of the groupings of LEFT centrism, on the contrary, stop short in their development and even move backwards. It seems to them that the reformists have already grasped almost everything, that it is necessary only not to play with exorbitant demands, criticism, extreme phraseology, and that then with one blow one can create a mass "revolutionary" party.

In reality, reformism, forced by events to disavow itself, having no clear programme, no revolutionary tactics, is capable only of lulling the advanced workers to sleep by inculcating in them the idea that the revolutionary regeneration of their party is already achieved.

For a revolutionary Marxist the struggle against reformism is now almost replaced by the struggle against Centrism. The mere bare counterposing of legal struggle to illegal, of peaceful means to violence, of democracy to dictatorship, now goes beside the mark in the majority of cases, because the frightened reformist disavowing himself, is ready to accept the most "revolutionary" formulas, if only they do not obligate him today to a decisive break with his own irresolution, indecision and expectant waiting. The struggle with hidden or masked opportunists must therefore be transferred chiefly to the sphere of PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS FROM REVOLUTIONARY REQUISITES.

Before seriously accepting Centrist talk of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" we must demand a serious defence against Fascism, a complete break with the bourgeoisie, a systematic building of a workers' militia, its training in militant spirit, the creation of inter-party defence centres, anti-fascist staffs, the banishment from their ranks of parliamentary, trade union and other traitors, bourgeois lackeys and careerists also. Precisely on this plane the main fights against Centrism must now be fought. To carry on the struggle with success it is necessary to have free hands, that is, not only to retain full organisational independence but also critical intransigence with regard to the most "left" offshoots of Centrism.

## EVENIS FORCE REALIGNMENTS

Bolshevik-Leninists in all countries must realise clearly the peculiarities of

the new stage in the struggle for the Fourth International. The events in Austria and France gave a powerful impetus to the realignment of the forces of the proletariat in a revolutionary direction. But precisely this universal supplanting of open reformism by Centrism develops a powerful attractive force with regard to Left-Centrist groupings (SAP, OSP) which only yesterday were about to unite with the Bolshevik-Leninists. This dialectic process may produce the impression on the surface that the Marxian wing is again "isolated" from the masses. A flagrant delusion! The veerings of Centrism to the Right and to the Left follow from its very nature. There will be yet tens and hundreds of such episodes on our road. It would be the most wretched faint-heartedness to fear to go forward just because the road is strewn with obstacles or because not all the fellow-travellers will arrive at the very end.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Whether the new opportunist vacillations of our Centrist allies will prove conjunctural or final (in reality they will be of both kinds), the general conditions for the formation of the Fourth International on the basis of genuine Bolshevism become more and more favourable. The chase of the "extreme left" Centrists after the simply "lefts", of the lefts after the moderates, of the moderates after the Rights, like the chase of a man after his own shadow, cannot create any stable mass organisation; the miserable experience of the German Independent Party (USP) retains now also its full force. Under the pressure of events, with the aid of our criticisms and slogans, the advanced workers will step over the vacillations of the most left Centrist leaders, and, if it should become necessary, also over these leaders themselves. On the road to a new International, the proletarian vanguard will find no other answers than those which have been elaborated and are being elaborated by the Bolshevik-Leninists on the basis of international experience during ten years of uninterrupted theoretical and practical struggle.

During the past year our political influence has grown greatly in a number of countries. We shall be able to develop and broaden these successes in a comparatively short time under the following conditions:

- (a) Not to outsmart the historical process, not to play hide-and-seek, but to state what is;
- (b) to give ourselves a theoretical accounting of the changes in the general situation which in the present epoch frequently takes on the nature of sharp turns;
- (c) to heed carefully the mood of the masses, without prejudices, without illusions, without self-deception, in order on the basis of a correct estimate of the relationship of forces within the proletariat to avoid opportunism as well as adventurism, and to lead the masses forward, not to throw them back;
- (d) every day, every hour, to answer clearly to ourselves what OUR NEXT PRACTICAL STEP must be, tirelessly to prepare this step, and on the basis of living experience explain to the workers the principled differences of Bolshevism from all other parties and currents;
- (e) not to confuse tactical tasks of a united front with the basic historic task, the creation of new parties and a new International;
- (f) not to neglect the weakest ally for the sake of PRACTICAL action;
- (g) to watch critically the most "left" ally as a possible adversary;
- (h) to treat with the greatest attention those groupings which actually gravitate towards us; patiently and carefully to listen to their criticisms, doubts and vacillations; to help them develop towards Marxism; not to be frightened by their caprices, threats, ultimatums (Centrists are always capricious and touchy); not to make any concessions to them in principle;
- (i) AND ONCE AGAIN, NOT TO FEAR TO STATE WHAT IS.

# BUSMEN: NO MORE SELL-OUTS!

The reluctant, but apparently definite, decision of the T&GWU leaders to bring out 77,000 municipal busmen on August 12th, is a decision that should have been taken months ago when the government introduced its first freeze order. Faced then with a stand-up fight against the bosses' Labour Government Cousins and his mates - who had spent a great deal of energy in talking against the Incomes Policy - ran for their lives. Under cover of going to court with a test action, they accepted the order. Soon the non-starter of a legal test was quietly dropped. And since then the busmen's hard-won increase has been frozen. They have been blatantly victimised by a government determined to hold down everyone's wages, and determined to take advantage of all weakness of trade union leaders.

Last January Cousins still had sufficient standing with a delegate conference representing the 77,000, to get it to accept his lead. But this July, faced with an extension of the standstill order, the delegates ignored a recommendation from Cousins, ignored his and other officials' warnings about possible legal consequences (£100 to £500 fines, with imprisonment for refusal to pay) and by a big majority (37/19) demanded a national strike. Under pressure of the men, and spurred by the arrogant bosses' stooge Castle who rejected a 'compromise' offer worked out jointly by the Union and employers - the Union executive decided on a strike: the first major official T&GWU strike for 10 years.

This decision is good, and busmen must insist that there is no retreat. Unfortunately the past antics of Cousins and Co. makes very likely an attempt to find a retreat. And not only their past antics. Side by side with the executive's strike vote, they decided to try for separate local settlements - a course which is not compatible with preparing to hold the men together for a big fight.

Likewise the decision to strike should not blind busmen to the character of the

deal which Cousins & Co. worked out with the employers. Despite its rejection by Castle this amounts to a sell-out in itself. Cousins' deal includes provision for one-man operation and other productivity clauses, and bears a strong resemblance to the productivity deal which has been pushed through in London. Militant London busmen are denouncing it as the biggest sell-out in years. 'Bloody Barbara' is reported to have shouted at Cousins during the negotiations: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself! How can you, a socialist, talk about getting increases without strings!" Militant busmen, who take neither Castle's nor Cousins' socialist pretensions very seriously, think the union leadership should be ashamed of itself because it accepts strings. Busmen will insist on demanding the £1 minimum backdated to December - without any strings.

Another issue is the question of the strength of the busmen. One reason they have been victimised is that the government is counting on a limited, isolated strike, if any. The municipalities must not be left to fight alone. There are 30,000 London busmen, and 100,000 provincial busmen; these must be brought into the struggle. And not only busmen: after all, the fight against the Government's and employers' wage freeze concerns the whole labour movement. Already, offers of solidarity have come from NUS and AEF branches.

A serious stand on August 12th could mark the turn of the tide against the Government's ability to railroad the working class towards wage cuts (called freezes) and unemployment (disguised as productivity deals). But it can't be left just to the union officials working within the terms of their deals with the employers. **BUSMEN'S COMMITTEES MUST BE ORGANISED AND PREPARED TO GO IT ALONE IF NECESSARY WITH UNOFFICIAL ACTION.** We must see to it that there are no more sell-outs!

L.B.