

The Red Mole

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Freeze Battle Opens

The letter we print below is the first shot in the next big battle in the class war in Britain. Heath's government have placed most of their eggs in the Incomes Policy basket. Success is vital; the ruling class cannot accept another defeat at the hands of mass workers' action. Incomes policy is an economic kick in the teeth to the working class, but more than that, it is a political test of the balance of forces in society. The ruling class cannot afford to have the question of "who rules" — raised again.

Heath knows all this and will not be appearing on the stage exactly naked. First, anyone fighting Incomes Policy faces a barrage of carefully prepared propaganda. Trade Unionists taking up the struggle "will be fighting against the O.A.P.'s, low paid and housewives". Secondly, most of the best organised sections of the trade union movement have their claims timed for February. March onwards. Traditionally weak groups, like the hospital workers, can (it is thought) be defeated easily. Thirdly, the hospital workers face an assault on the basis that they have abandoned the sick anyway. All this can sow confusion in many sections of the working class.

Against this, the hospital workers' claim can and must be used to rally working class opposition to the Freeze. Class-wide solidarity action must be developed—and that demands class-wide organisation, not reliance on the bureaucracy. Trade unionists everywhere must demand an emergency conference of the LCDTU to organise such action now.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF STEWARDS FOR HEALTH WORKERS

122 Sinclair Road,
London W14 0NL.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As you may have heard, health service workers are organising at rank and file level to put an end to a situation where low levels of unionisation and activity have led to many N.H.S. workers struggling to exist below the Government's official poverty line.

We have been galvanised into action by:—

- (a) an abysmally low claim of £4 put in by the official union negotiators.
- (b) the impossibility of gaining any increase as long as the freeze is allowed to last.

Under pressure from widespread militant activity in support of an £8 claim our leaders have called a national half day strike of all ancillary workers on Wednesday, December 13th. We feel that this is not enough to shake the government, and so at a national conference of stewards on December 3rd, we decided to convert this action into a 24 hour strike with demonstrations wherever we can, and to plan a week of militant action from December 29th to January 4th.

We see this as not just in pursuit of our sectional interest, but as the first major blow of the Labour Movement against the freeze.

Therefore we call on all other sections of workers to join us in our struggle to smash the freeze. Alone we cannot successfully take on this government. United working class action can and must. If you cannot join us on strike on the 13th, motions of solidarity and donations (chèques payable to L.A.S.H.) will be gratefully received if sent to me at the above address.

Finally, we apologise in advance for any inconvenience our actions will cause to Trade Unionists and their families but we have learnt through bitter experience that we have no other way of making our voice heard. However, we shall be maintaining emergency services, provided that the management do not bring in "volunteers", i.e. scabs.

Yours fraternally,
J. M. Palmer.
(Acting Secretary)

The jailing of Mac Stiofain and Lynch's new anti-IRA laws are all part of a

NEW ALL-IRELAND BRITISH OFFENSIVE

By GERY LAWLESS

The passing by the Dublin Parliament of the draconian Offences Against the State (Amendment) Act, 1972, marks a crucial turning point in the struggle in Ireland.

Unable to win the war in the Six Counties, British imperialism calls in its second guarantor, the Dublin Green Tories. By launching an all-Ireland offensive, they are attempting to smash the Northern Resistance with a stab in the back from the Vichyite regime in the South.

Whitelaw's regime understands that unless it can, in the next two to three months, destroy the resistance and the will to victory of the Catholic population in West Belfast — the epic centre of the struggle — the whole strategy for dealing with the Irish situation will be threatened.

FAILURE

The IRA have now succeeded in launching massive daylight attacks, using the RTG-7 rockets, the most advanced armaments they have yet used. This, coupled with the spread of the struggle to the central areas of the Six Counties — away from both the border and the two main cities, those areas where the Catholics have up to now been relatively quiescent — underlines the failure of the British Army to crack the command structure and support organisation of the IRA.

These attacks upset the delicate tightrope that Whitelaw was walking, as the British Army tries desperately (sic) to saturate and suffocate West Belfast, before morale in its own ranks cracks up or the Labour Party's bi-partisan policy on Ireland comes to an end. The end of Labour's bi-partisan policy, i.e. a refusal by Labour to support the present repression, would open the flood-gates of latent frustration and despair over Ireland in the British working class and give rise — not, at first, to a mass solidarity movement — but to a mass "Bring Our Boys Home" movement which would objectively for a limited period aid the Irish people.

There have been three important indicators to date of the disintegration of morale in the British Army. Firstly, as reported in the last issue of *The Red Mole*, a tremendous drop in the British Army recruitment and re-enlistment figures. Secondly, the decision by 30 N.C.O.s and long serving veterans of the 2nd Battalion of the Paras to buy themselves out of the Army rather than face another tour of duty in Ireland. Thirdly, another unit of the British Army was only persuaded to go for a third tour of duty in Ireland when 27 "agitators" were given cushy postings in Hong Kong.

On bi-partisanship, there have been signs that Wilson, looking at British opinion polls, and aware that the overwhelming majority of British people want the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, has been manoeuvring to place himself in a position from which he can take electoral advantage of this feeling. His



Volunteers of an Active Service Unit of the IRA try out their latest weapon, the RTG-7 Rocket. (Picture: Colman Doyle)

"The Great British Public will not tolerate... " speaker last week-end at Huyton was only one pointer. Another indication has been the recent calls by James Wellbeloved, the Labour M.P., to "Bring Our Boys Home".

Political observers are well aware that Mr. Wellbeloved is acting in this as a stalking horse for the Labour leader.

DECISIVE BLOWS

All these factors mean that, if Whitelaw is to win, decisive blows have to be struck against both the morale and the apparatus of the Northern resistance.

The blows in the South do both.

They have the added advantage of challenging the Provisionals at their weakest point. To achieve this, it was necessary to force Lynch into action. This was achieved by threats and promises.

The threat was that if Lynch did not come to the aid of the British, and the British Army morale started cracking, Whitelaw would fall, to be replaced probably by Defence Minister Carrington, and a policy of total confrontation, which would probably have been followed by another truce.

Either a truce or blatant and open repression would have been a threat to Lynch and the Fianna Fail Party, as the events in the South after Bloody Sunday plus the tremendous enhancement of the status of the Provisionals after the summer ceasefire showed.

The promise was that if Lynch helped Heath, in cracking the resistance, there would be a place for Fianna Fail in the future governing of Northern Ireland.

To fulfil his part of the deal, Lynch had to

panic the people in the South into the belief that the violence of the North was going to spread South in a wave of irrational and meaningless terror bombings, which could lead to a second civil war. For half of the population of the South of Ireland, who like the Spanish people, have seen a civil war in their own lifetime, this in itself was a frightening thought.

This is the political significance of the three "mysterious" bombings which rocked Dublin, and conveniently gave the Fine Gael Party the chance to do a *volte face* and abstain in Parliament, thus allowing the draconian legislation through.

In fact the only mystery about the bombings is whether they were conceived in Park Gate St., (the Headquarters of the Irish Secret Service) or in Queen Anne's Gate (Headquarters of the British Secret Service).

FAR FROM OVER

In all this, Lynch has been successful to date. But the battle is far from over.

In 1927, the Cumann na nGaedhail Party bought in a similar measure. A couple of years later, they were gone in a storm, never to return to governmental power. Since then there has been successful anti-IRA legislation passed. It is important that this is born in mind, because it is important to contradict the middle class liberal myth that repression never works.

It is equally important to combat the notion that *this* repression necessarily will work. The number of strikes, protest meetings, pickets and demonstrations that greeted the arrest of Mac Stiofain and the introduction of the new legislation, which was a 100 times greater than

LACKENBY STEELMEN VOTE TO RETURN TO WORK

From MICK GOSLING

Over a thousand men at the British Steel Corporation's Lackenby works voted on Wednesday to end their unofficial strike for an £8 pay claim and return to work. The men had been out for just less than a fortnight, and the decision reflected not just the treacherous role of the union bureaucracy but also the failure of the strike leadership to break in practice from bureaucratic forms of struggle. The fact that the vote was only carried by a 2-1 majority despite the lack of perspectives for any ongoing mass

struggle shows only too clearly the potential militancy which was thrown away by the strike leadership.

The men had first taken action on Tuesday, 21 November, when the rod and beam mill workers imposed an overtime ban and work to rule after their £8 claim for 'Parity with Wales' had been turned down. A walk out followed on the Friday when a manager changed a spindle in a rolling machine. BSC threatened to lock out the rod and beam mill men if they did not return to normal working. At a mass meeting on the 26th they decided not to return at all.

of the bosses' interests. Unfortunately most of the locomen were taken in by this nonsense, and although two gangs did come out in support of the claim they returned to work after only two days.

THE POLITICS OF PARITY

There was also, however, a problem about the type of claim the men put in for. By justifying pay rises in terms of 'parity', or of retaining differentials such as the rod and beam mill fitters have, workers immediately open themselves up to the attack that the work is not comparable, and in come the work study men, the productivity agreement made with union officials, and longer dole queues. Therefore, while supporting the present struggle, we would argue for claims which can maintain and improve the living standards and fighting strength of the whole working class regardless of comparability, parity, profitability or anything similar.

... AND REDUNDANCIES

More importantly, the whole question of redundancies was not raised in the dispute. Yet this is the urgent problem facing steelworkers throughout the country. A single local example demonstrates just how important this is as a unifying focus.

The workers at Lackenby are in a strong position; their plant has only been open a couple of years. But just a dozen or so miles away, at Hartlepool, there is a completely different situation. There, the ISTC branches have not put in for £8, nor has there been any support forthcoming for the Lackenby men. The reason is simple: the men are scared of getting sacked. BSC plans to close all its Hartlepool works by 1974, and the 'hived-off' pipe mills are also threatened with closure. Solidarity action would only have been likely if the Lackenby men had guaranteed to make a firm stand against redundancies. This sort of exemplary action could also have laid



ISTC official Mr Drinkwater

the basis for the development of a national struggle against the massive redundancies planned by BSC over the next three years.

Only if such questions had been taken up could the Lackenby men have avoided the isolation which affected their struggle. As it was, the strike leadership did not even break from bureaucratic procedures, so that even the mass of the strikers were not brought into their own struggle. There were no regular mass meetings, no organised picketing, no mass propaganda campaign in the rest of the Lackenby works (which employs over 5,000 men) - in fact, there wasn't even a strike committee! No wonder then, that demoralisation set in; what has to be ensured at the very least now is that there is no victimisation of the leading militants after the return to work.

Stirling Comrades Killed

We have learnt with deep regret of the deaths of two revolutionary socialists who were involved in the protests and subsequent activity over the royal visit to Stirling University. They were killed in a car crash while driving to the National Union of Students conference in Margate on Friday, 24 November.

Findlay Binning was a close sympathiser of the International Marxist Group, and very active in politics around the University and in the town. He was a laboratory technician at the University, a member of ASTMS, and was on the Executive of the Trades Council. He was sacked from his job after the Trades Council issued a statement supporting the Stirling students.

Jack Carter was one of the 24 students charged after the royal visit, and was a member of the Council of Students Associations as well as being Secretary of the International Socialist Society at the University. He was an exceedingly talented comrade, a very articulate and clear political thinker, and had played a leading role in the struggle against the charges.

The death of these comrades is a severe loss to the socialist movement both in the University and in the town.

OFFICIALS SCAB AGAIN

Locomen at the South Teesside works, who have put in a similar claim, would have come out with the rod and beam mill men but for the intervention of a Mr Jim Drinkwater, divisional officer of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (formerly BISAFTA). Drinkwater managed to persuade the men to put off their action until procedure was exhausted by putting round the old, old story about a handful of politically motivated men being behind the dispute.

"Union Man Lashes Lackenby 'Reds'", screamed the headline of the local scab press (*Evening Gazette*, 25 November). There followed long quotes from Drinkwater denouncing the strike. "There are extreme left-wing political moves behind this claim and this dispute and the aim is disruption of production on Teesside. There is political influence at work here. They are not going to ruin this industry in this area. I'm going to fight hard and win. They are not just up against BSC, they are up against this organisation."

No steelworker should be surprised by this reactionary drive. Drinkwater is merely typical of many ISTC officials. The only battles most of them have ever fought have been against their own members in defence

£10,000 FUND DRIVE FOR WEEKLY PAPER

The Red Mole



Many more donations have arrived. This week's batch includes a letter from a British army corporal who encloses £10, emphasising his appreciation of our support of the Republican struggle and ending "Free Mac Stiofain!"

We are still a long way from £10,000, though, and would urge readers to help transform the trickle of money into a downpour. The total now stands at:

£3,416.20p.

Fill in this form and send to: FUND DRIVE, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. (Cheques should be made out to The Red Mole).

I am enclosing £.....p..... for the Fund Drive.

NAME

ADDRESS

I know the following who may also wish to contribute:

NAME

ADDRESS

N.U.S. CONFERENCE: TWO STEPS BACK

By J.R. CLYNES, PIERS CORBYN and RICH PALSER

There can be no doubt that the NUS conference at Margate was a set-back for the struggle in the colleges. The disarray of the revolutionary forces allowed real anticapitalist policies to be marginalised and, by consequence, the reformist and integrationist perspectives to be reaffirmed. No clear strategy therefore was provided for struggle against the rationalisations taking place within higher education. Rather than refusing to accept responsibility for the problems of the capitalist state, and struggling to veto any attempts to solve the problems of the state at the expense of students or the working class, the NUS has decisively reinforced a policy which will misdirect student struggles - that of representation.

REPRESENTATION

For the NUS leadership and more particularly the CP which is its dominant trend, representation is one half of a strategy for curing all ills in capitalist education. Fighting alongside what they are pleased to call the 'labour movement', representation is meant to be a process whereby gradually more and more 'say' is gained by students in each institution so that the influence of 'Big Business' is gradually neutralised.

Unfortunately the two sides of this strategy are in contradiction with each other. Inside the colleges we are expected to accept national education policy as given, whilst outside the colleges struggling to change it. The fight against capitalist education policy is therefore weakened in two vital respects. First of all we would have legislated away any 'undemocratic' attempts to change educational policy in the colleges which the committee on which students had representation had agreed on. Second, and perhaps more importantly, students would have compromised themselves in relation to that force with which it is necessary to ally. It is absurd to expect the working class to fight against a policy when students have taken on the responsibility of implementing it.

In other words, at no point does this strategy come to grips with the relation of higher education to the capitalist state. The NUS will be leading students into a struggle which cannot solve their problems, and which leads students to accept responsibility for implementing policies determined by the priorities of capitalism. It is little wonder that many college authorities actually support this policy.

AUTONOMY

But more yet is involved, as is revealed by the whole executive approach to autonomy.

In previous conferences they had struggled to win a line which accepted that students unions should be accountable to the State. This was again re-affirmed. But clearly this approach is quite sufficient for their purposes if viewed within the strategy of representation. Students unions are never going to be called on to take up the struggle against the State, so what need for unions to be independent from the State? Such complacency on this most vital of issues was revealed in the executive opposition to and the consequent defeat of an amendment calling for unconditional support to any union fighting an autonomy struggle. This was completely in line with the previous executive policy towards the struggle in North London Poly, and contrasts sharply with the fuss that has been made around Nonington College where the aim here is to get a government enquiry ("it's all a matter of backward college authorities"). Within this context, therefore, the seeming victory of the "left" at conference in committing NUS to "hold an immediate national campaign for full autonomy" amounts to no more than a publicity stunt. For any campaign which would be capable of informing a movement for autonomy could only be built through solidarity around those "local" struggles. A campaign which doesn't recognise this can only be a smoke-screen for the very real defeats on autonomy which have been suffered in the recent past and will continue to be suffered. The best that revolutionaries can make of this is to use any heightened interest created to intervene to explain what a real, class line is on autonomy.

ACCOMMODATION AND GRANTS

All these confusions and idiocies suffuse the proposed campaigns which the NUS is committed to wage over the next period. Fortunately, the methods of struggle were not made explicit and the NUS does not totally determine the policies adopted by individual unions. Revolutionaries can, in the colleges, have a real determining influence despite the 'leadership' from the NUS executive.

The present situation concerning grants and accommodation are examples, *par excellence*, of the rationalisation to which we have so often referred. Because higher education is now becoming part of the costs of reproducing labour power it is more and more subject to financial cutbacks in the same way as all other elements of this reproduction. This process happens, that is to say, because of the normal workings of capitalism and not by design of some evil government or state

department. Any strategy for fighting against this has therefore to take account of this. A method of struggle has to be adopted which brings the real weight of students to bear.

Nationally coordinated rent-strikes are already one element of a fight. The adoption of this tactic at NUS conference clearly offers an opening for the struggle to be taken up. But the experience gained in the rent strikes which have happened this term should be taken into account. Unless the mass of students are actively involved in the struggle only defeat and demoralisation can be expected.

As against the representation, negotiation and pressure politics of the present NUS executive, therefore, revolutionaries can begin to promote the mass struggles of students which in turn can begin effectively to arrest the deteriorating conditions which students are having to face. Fought on the basis of opposition to capitalism a real student-worker alliance can be forged.

The unity of the forces of the revolutionary left during the course of the last session had allowed the growth of a sizeable current within the colleges which was organised on a clear revolutionary basis. It is the dissolution of this unity that has seen the strengthening of the reformists in the colleges. The action of the International Socialism group both in walking out of the ongoing united front with the IMG and in refusing any future unity has been the cause of the big defeat for the revolutionaries at this NUS conference. The frivolous attitude to this question of unity was revealed in the walk-out of the I.S. contingent to the "unity" conference held just before the NUS conference. To base such a walk-out on the "apolitical" proposals of the IMG without even attempting to offer any constructive criticism or alternative, is the height of irresponsibility. What the I.S. comrades must grasp is that a revolutionary current amongst the mass of students will not grow spontaneously but has to be forged through an intervention in the actual struggles of students. The activity of the I.S. leadership at North London Poly should serve as a dire warning to those who link up with the reformists against the revolutionaries. The big struggles around grants and accommodation which will emerge next term need a revolutionary perspective: such a perspective can gain mass backing - but only if the revolutionaries bring their weight to the struggle. Unity around a clear anti-capitalist perspective could transform the situation in the colleges and nullify the effects of this NUS conference.

Pete Cresswell and Brian Slocock report on

CAV: URGENT NEED FOR SOLIDARITY

The occupation of the CAV—Lucas factory in Liverpool is now entering its tenth week and there is no sign as yet that the management of this multi-national giant is being forced to alter its determination to shut the plant down. Nor have talks with "development" minister Chataway produced anything more than a lecture on the need for the CAV workers to "clean up their image" (i.e. give up their struggle and wait cap-in-hand for whatever crumbs the government may have to spare). It is quite clear that the plans of British capitalism to rationalise production and assure its profitability inside the Common Market will not be adjusted for anything as unimportant as the needs and welfare of workers and their families.

NEED FOR UNITED ATTACK

At the same time the occupation remains solid, and the CAV workers were never under any illusions that they could win other than by hitting hard at the profits of Joseph Lucas. The occupation itself will only have a limited *direct* effect along these lines. The real weapon which must be placed at the disposal of the CAV workers is a united attack on the Lucas combine by the whole labour movement.

Recently the occupying workers have developed new tactics with the aim of extending and strengthening the struggle. Straight-forward appeals for blacking of Lucas products met with insufficient real support, so picket lines have now been thrown up around all the major plants of the Merseyside car industry to prevent Lucas products being brought in.

There undoubtedly exists widespread sympathy for the CAV struggle in the area, but so far the main expression this has



Demonstration in support of the CAV Lucas occupation, Saturday, 2 December

found has been in the form of resolutions and financial aid. However, as the CAV occupiers clearly understand, only *active industrial* support can bring a power the size of the Lucas combine to its knees.

The occupation committee, in conjunction with the Trades Council, organised a demonstration for the centre of the city on Saturday, 2 December. This demonstration was undoubtedly an important step forward and was very useful in bringing the issue of CAV to the attention of the Liverpool public. At the same time, however, the

response of the organised labour movement was far from satisfactory — only about 600 were mobilised, many of them either from CAV itself or brought out by the revolutionary left. If this demonstration is just the *beginning* of serious efforts to develop support for the struggle — then excellent; but if tremendous efforts are not made to carry things forward from this point, the reputation of the Merseyside labour movement for militancy and class-consciousness will have suffered a serious set-back.

The Trades Council has in fact called for a

meeting of Merseyside shop stewards for the 13th to discuss building support for CAV. This meeting *could* be a real opportunity to open up the kind of campaign throughout the British labour movement that would force the Lucas combine to retreat. But a similar meeting held last month was very badly attended (only about 100 stewards from all of Merseyside) and actually accomplished little. What is really needed is a *full day conference* of shop stewards and branch delegates from the Merseyside area to draw up a *full-scale battle plan* against the Lucas combine. The trade union movement is facing very new problems here, and they cannot be dealt with by traditional means at an evening meeting: a full and serious discussion is absolutely necessary. Moreover such a conference should be properly prepared by an extensive educational campaign throughout the Merseyside trade union movement on the issues at stake, in order to ensure the widest participation possible in the work of the conference. Only measures such as these can build the kind of solidarity the CAV workers urgently need in order to win their struggle.

At Saturday's demonstration Dave Martin (T&G convenor for CAV) issued a call to all trade unionists for a complete blacking of *all* Lucas products. This call must be taken up immediately by socialists and trade union militants across the country. It is the duty of us all to make sure that the CAV workers do not carry the burdens of this struggle alone: it is a fight in the interests of the whole working-class and must be shared by the whole working-class movement.

Asians' Strike Advances

Red Mole Reporter

After the signing of an agreement by the Union and management, submitting almost completely to the demands of the strikers, the Loughborough Hosiery Workers' strike burst out again on Monday, 27 November — the first day of the supposed "return". It was discovered that 41 trainee white knitters had been hired during the strike. This would effectively prevent the Indian workers from entering the knitting section. At a mass meeting the strikers decided to continue the strike until the 41 newly hired knitters had been transferred to other jobs.

The determination of the strikers has now forced the Executive of the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers, who have continually tried to diffuse the strike, to declare the strike official.

This dispute remains of crucial importance, well beyond Loughborough and the Mansfield Hosiery Company. It represents an important example to all black workers in Britain, as a fight against being used by employers as cheap labour. A successful conclusion to this strike would strengthen the determination of black workers throughout the country.

When nationally the attacks on the working class make the struggle for workers' unity central, this necessitates a fight against organised racism and nationalist feeling in the form of the National Front. The strikers at Loughborough have given us a further lesson. When white workers were being laid off due to the dispute the strikers called for unity to defeat redundancies — an impossibility if racism continued to divide them.

The demands of the strikers for democratisation of the Union with full voting parity for black workers, is also crucial for any similar struggle in the future. The struggle for black workers to form caucuses in Unions must always be upheld — this demand also relates to the struggle of women workers, who also form a large proportion of the labour force in the textile industry.

Lastly the importance of solidarity action continues. The call by the Strike Committee and the Solidarity Committee for national picketing of Marks & Spencer branches (Marks & Spencer own 20 per cent of the holdings of the firm and are its largest customer) remains an urgent task. Solidarity action has been important in this strike in pressuring the Union and in widening support, it must continue to spread the lessons of the strike.

HEALTH WORKERS MEET NATIONALLY

By COLIN SMITH

Last Sunday (3 December) shop stewards and rank and file representatives from all the Health Service unions, representing health workers in hospitals throughout the country, attended the first National Conference of Stewards for Health Workers. The holding of the conference and the decisions it took represent an important step forward for hospital workers in their struggle against miserable pay and conditions. It was also a reflection of the growing militancy (the recent series of unofficial token strikes, overtime bans and demonstrations, etc., in hospitals throughout the country) and their increasing disillusionment with their respective union bureaucrats.

For years the union bureaucrats have contented themselves with 'negotiating' miserable pay rises which have, in real terms, resulted in cuts in the standard of living of hospital workers. Just before the introduction of the pay freeze, they were busy playing their familiar bureaucratic role of trying to limit the demands of their members (from a modest £8 per week rise to a miserable £4). Now, instead of organising hospital workers and other sections of the labour movement to fight against the freeze, they have been running cap in hand from the N.H.S. management to Sir Keith Hoseph, pleading for crumbs. At the same time they are trying their utmost to dampen down the new-found militancy of hospital workers.

WILLINGNESS TO FIGHT

By way of contrast, the discussion and decisions taken at the conference showed the willingness of ancillary workers themselves to take the lead in the fight against the freeze, and their growing realisation that only by organising independently of the union bureaucracies can their interests be effectively defended.

The main organisational decisions taken by the conference were to work towards the setting up of permanent local rank and file alliances of *all* sections of hospital workers in cities throughout the country, and to form a national alliance committee (National Committee of Stewards for Health Workers) to plan and co-ordinate future actions in the struggle. A national secretary was elected (Jack Sutton, NUPE, Manchester) for an initial period of six months, subject to election every six months and immediate

recall by the conference which would otherwise meet once every six months. Given the history of passivity amongst hospital workers and the unevenness throughout the country (and even within one locality) of the recent growth of militancy, another important decision taken was that to work towards the setting up of a national rank and file newspaper for health workers. This could not only be a means of information and education, but would be a focus around which isolated militants can organise within the unorganised areas of the health service.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The most immediate issue that the conference discussed were plans to continue the struggle of hospital ancillary workers. The discussion took place in the light of the call issued at the end of the previous week by the union bureaucracies of the four main unions involved (T&GWU, GMWU, NUPE & COHSE) for a half-day of demonstrations and mass meetings on Wednesday 13 December. Several shop-stewards pointed out that this move by the union chiefs must be seen as a small success, but that it was basically an attempt to re-establish their tattered credibility and regain control of the rank and file militancy to limit it once again.

The conference agreed that the half-day official action was totally inadequate and voted for a national one day strike on the 13th — as a preparation for the organisation of a week of industrial action (strikes, overtime bans, demos, etc.) between 29 December and 4 January.

LEAD ON FREEZE

It was continually stressed throughout the conference that health workers as one of the weakest sections of the working class have little perspective of smashing the pay freeze on their own. Their action must be a lead to other sections of the labour movement to take up the struggle.

It is an important task for socialists and militants to generalise the fight of hospital workers. They must explain to other sections of the working class that the hospital workers cannot be left to fight alone, but must be supported — not just because they are amongst the most weakly organised and most exploited sections of workers, but because they are in the front line of a struggle which is in the interests of the *whole* working class; the struggle to smash the pay freeze.



Alan Fisher, leader of NUPE—trying to damp down rather than organise health workers' militancy

Action Committee Averts Fife Closure

Red Mole Reporter

Another successful page was added to Fife's book of industrial militancy when on Friday, 1 December, the company of Carron Hydraulics was prevented from closing its Kirkcaldy plant.

As an exercise in rationalisation, Carrons had tried to move the company and the 80 employees to the main works at Falkirk, 30 miles away. The employees, virtually all AUEW members, didn't recognise the company's authority and set up pickets immediately. At the same time they formed an Action Committee of all trade unionists and left organisations willing to help. This committee played a dual role: it brought the Carron threat to the local population and gained support for the possibility of an occupation, and it also co-ordinated trade union activity.

The TASS Divisional Council took a decision to black all Carrons products and the engineering section, though somewhat later, followed suit. Under these attacks the management crumbled. The plant and the 80 jobs stay in Kirkcaldy and the top management has been replaced. The lesson from this fight is that we must recognise that Action Committees, uniting the widest sections of the working class, are the steel hand with which we hit the owners.

AUSTRALIA AFTER THE ELE

An interview with John McCarthy, editor of 'Militant' and a leading member of the Communist

What is the significance of the victory of the Australian Labour Party in the recent General Election?

With the end of the long post-war imperialist boom and the resultant sharpening of inter-imperialist rivalry, the Australian bourgeoisie faces two main problems. Firstly, the problem of foreign investment and the implications of this on native industry, and secondly, the problem of the economic and organisational strength of the trade unions. It is in the context of the feverish search for solutions to these two nagging problems that the elections occurred. The political climate which has developed during the last term of office of the Liberal-Country Party Coalition is vastly different from anything we have seen in Australia in the last twenty years.

In this situation the Australian Labour Party campaigned under the slogan of "It's Time". The message of "It's Time" provided some of the important newspapers in Australia with an excuse for dumping the Liberals. It's time for a change they explained; the Liberal Party could only benefit from a term in the opposition seats. We also saw such groups as "Business Executives for a Change of Government" run full page advertisements in Australia's only national newspaper. The slogan of "It's Time" completely covered over the situation which was actually leading to the election of the ALP and merely implied that the Liberals had been in office long enough.

The significance of the ALP victory lies in the new situation in Australia. The McMahon Government failed to develop a clear and consistent policy for tackling the situation and the working class and middle layers turned to the ALP in the hope that it can solve the basic problems confronting the working class: unemployment, low wages, poor conditions, etc.

What type of policy did the McMahon Government pursue during its term in office?

The McMahon Government pursued a policy of *confrontation* with the trade unions. This policy did not rely on any one particular measure but used a variety of measures in an attempt to bully the trade union leaders into accepting the activity of the rank and file. The aim of the measures taken by the McMahon Government was to keep wage increases as low as possible. It became increasingly obvious that McMahon was seeking to defeat an important section of the working class which could be held up as a lesson to the whole working class. In a Treasury Document Mr. Sneddon (Federal Treasurer) made it clear that the oilmen, the transport workers, the wharfies (dockers) and the metalworkers had to be defeated if the traditional flow-ons to the other sections of the working class were to be prevented.

The first step was the August 1971 Budget which was designed to create a pool of 200,000 unemployed which was rapidly successful - by June 1972 unemployment had doubled to stand at 110,000. Of course, the August Budget was not the sole cause of unemployment but the point is that unemployment was used as an instrument of policy by the McMahon Government in an attempt to hold down excessive pay rises. Even with 110,000 unemployed (and I am using official figures - real figures have been estimated by trade union leaders to be twice that) the Government could not halt wages militancy.

Then came the next step in what was developing by this stage as a clearcut policy of confrontation with the trade unions. In the closing session of Parliament on 31 May the Government rushed through a piece of legislation which was to bear the name of its architect - the Lynch Laws (Philip Lynch was the Liberal Minister for Labour). The legislation took the form of amendments to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act and was the most significant thrust against the trade unions in the recent period.

During the oil strike the McMahon Govern-



New Labour Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam

ment made it clear that it was enforcing an unofficial wage freeze when it showed its preparedness to use troops or even recall Parliament to contemplate deregistering the unions. Australian Council of Trade Unions leader, Mr. Hawke, was able to back out of the strike, under the pretext of a plan to keep emergency services going (emergency services which included industry), a plan which he said showed the majority of Australians what a monopoly is. All the plan did in fact was to divide and demoralise the rank and file who had struggled vigorously for five weeks. McMahon succeeded in keeping the oilmen to \$14 over the next eighteen months.

Then we saw the Metal Trades Agreement come up. The Amalgamated Metal Workers union presented the same set of claims as the oilmen, but the new agreement gave them only \$6 over eighteen months. The rank and file in several areas threatened immediate strike but the union leaders preferred not to put up and used the example of the oilmen to show what would happen. The Metal Workers were defeated without a fight, a defeat which was a defeat for all the working class in that the wage flow-ons normally come from the Metal Workers, traditionally the strongest section of the working class. Of course, this was not a decisive victory by the McMahon Government but it did mean that his policy of confrontation with the trade unions had been shown to be at least partially successful.

Could you tell us more about the background to and the meaning of the Lynch Laws?

The amendments to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act provided for the separation of the functions of arbitration and conciliation; updated penalties and indicated that all future fines would be collected; empowered the commission to order a secret ballot where a strike or ban is threatened or exists; and declared that the commission should have regard to the state of the "national economy" and the likely effects upon the "national economy" of any award the commission

might make. The amendments also sought to prevent the amalgamation of unions. However the significance of the amendments lies in the fact that they were *designed to strengthen the penal powers.*

All strikes in Australia are illegal (although the Labour Party has promised to correct this situation). This means that unions can be fined under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act for going on strike, and if the fines are not paid then union officials will be jailed. This happened in the case of the Maoist leader of the Tramways Union in Victoria, Clarrie O'Shea, and provoked a general strike which resulted in his release and the effective neutralisation of the penal powers by the sheer militancy of the working class. That militancy alone is not enough however, is revealed by the legislation of the Lynch Laws and their actual use in at least one dispute. (Despite claims of many that they will be unworkable).

The Lynch Laws represented one aspect of a many-sided policy of confrontation with the trade unions.

What has been the response of the trade unions to the policy being pursued by the McMahon Government?

The trade unions emerged from the postwar period economically strong. The working class was confident and had no immediate recollection of the defeats of the thirties, the war years and the post-war period. Any Government of Australia has to contend with this situation. That is, if anything at all is to be done about the problems facing the ruling class then the economic strength of the working class must be broken. This is the significance of the McMahon course of confrontation with the trade unions.

What we have seen in all the strikes over the past year however is a tremendous activity and initiative from the rank and file and a cowardly stand adopted by the union officials, be they members of the Communist Party or the Labour Party. Sections of the working class have adopted and developed new methods

of struggle such as work-ins and sit-ins which indicate the depth of the class struggle. Also, we have seen on a number of occasions the rank and file breaking away from the control of the trade union bureaucracies and their political 'leaders'. We saw, for example, a group of rank and file Communist Party members oppose their leadership in struggling against the Metal Trades Agreement. Also significant in this respect was the recent Plumbers strike which had lasted for five weeks before a very narrow majority voted to go back to work.

Another important series of struggles have taken place around the question of Equal Pay for women. For the first time in Australia women have taken strike action and have been prepared to organise street demonstrations and other militant activities in defense of their claims. The ACTU is committed on paper to support for Equal Pay; the McMahon Government rejected the ACTU's submission, claiming that it opposed Equal Pay "on principle" besides the fact that "the economy could not handle it".

With the problems facing the Australian ruling class and the renewed activity of the working class, what do you expect from a Labour Party Government?

Except for individual contributions to Labour Party strategy by people such as Cameron, the new Minister for Labour, the Labour Party as a whole has been more than confused on the main problems facing the Australian bourgeoisie.

Cameron came up with a statement on industrial relations for the June 1971 Federal Conference of the ALP which was premised by the assertion that "if business confidence is to be restored we must have peace in industry".

Cameron planned to guarantee productivity by such methods as the use of secret ballots and fines on individual striking unionists (up to \$20 per day). These proposals were actually rejected at the Conference but Cameron has continued as though they were already Labour Party policy. This gives some indication of

CTIONS

League in Australia.

the kind of concepts current in Labour Party circles.

Recently, however, Whitlam in projecting an annual growth rate of 6 – 7 percent over the next few years stated that "all sections of the community must pay". It is becoming more and more clear that Whitlam will depend on the trade union leadership to cooperate in some form of prices and incomes policy. It is within this context that he has promised to abolish the penal powers. Who needs the penal powers when there are other ways of breaking the strength of the trade unions? Another indication of Labour Party policy are the recently legislated anti-union laws in South Australia introduced by the Labour Premier of that state, Mr. Don Dunstan.

We can see therefore that we have only had glimpses of what could be Labour Party policy in relation to the trade unions. The most likely policy is the attempted integration of the unions into the capitalist state by an incomes policy, although we must remember the confrontationalist threats issued by Cameron and the experience of previous Labour Governments which on a number of occasions confronted the Trade Union movement.

On the question of foreign investment the Labour Party has been extremely unclear apart from occasional statements on the threat of foreign takeovers. However, recently Mr. Whitlam has thrown out a promise to the Australian people "to buy Australia back". This type of demagoguery, reactionary as it is utopian, strikes a chord with a certain section of the Australian working class.

What are the tasks facing revolutionaries in Australia in the coming period?

What we have seen in the recent period is the beginning of the emergence of a broad vanguard in the working class. This vanguard is dominated predominantly by anti-boss sentiments and is distinguished by its willingness to struggle, and to develop new methods of struggle. This is of tremendous importance for revolutionaries.

Our main task must be to win political hegemony of this emerging vanguard in the working class. Since this vanguard is at the moment under the influence of social democratic and stalinist ideology this involves breaking them from these trends.

Of course, this raises the question of "What is working class consciousness?" We should see this in terms of the Leninist concept: "Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the working class is trained to respond to all cases of oppression no matter what class is affected" (*What is to be Done?*) Thus it is extremely important for revolutionaries in Australia to raise the questions of the oppression of the blacks and the oppression of the people of New Guinea inside the working class movement. The Australian working class is extremely chauvinistic and has tended to succumb politically because of this.

Quintin Hoare reviews the current issue of *New Left Review*

THE LEFT AGAINST EUROPE?

THE LEFT AGAINST EUROPE?, by Tom Nairn (*New Left Review* No. 75—special issue—35p.)

The whole of the current issue of *NLR* is given over to a book-length study by Tom Nairn of the significance of British entry to the Common Market. On the one hand, the author analyses what entry means for the ruling class, not simply economically but also politically. On the other, and at considerably greater length, he truthfully dissects the motives and the inner pitiless of the anti-Market campaign launched by the Labour Party and tailed by the CP and much of the revolutionary left.

Not only is this easily the most important and serious thing to have been written by a Marxist on the subject (to be truthful, it has little competition). It also raises issues which are far wider than its ostensible subject: issues regarding the nature of bourgeois power, the relation between state and civil society, the respective role of subjective and objective factors in opening the way to revolution, the historical significance of nationalism and the nation state, the material conditions for internationalism, etc. A great deal of Tom Nairn's analysis is right; and where it is wrong or inadequate, it demands a full and meditated answer — one, it goes without saying, that cannot be more than indicated in the space of a short review.

REVOLUTIONARY SENSE

Tom Nairn prefaces his final section 'Beyond the Nation' by a quotation from Marx's 1848 speech on Free Trade: "In general, the protective system of our day is conservative, while the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favour of free trade . . ." His central thesis is that Marxists should 'in this revolutionary sense alone' be in favour of the Common Market. He attacks the confused thinking and political nervelessness which led the Marxist left to adopt an ambiguous position, deploring the chauvinism of the anti-Market campaign but nevertheless taking part in it instead of swimming against the current. As one example of such a position, he cites an article (by Ben Joseph) in *The Red Mole*, Vol. 2, No. 10, which he effectively disposes of with the aid of a quotation from Ernest Mandel (from *The Red Mole*, No 14).

If Tom Nairn argued only this — that Marxists should not get involved in defending backward capitalism and national particularism; that opposition to the Common Market is as retrograde as the opposition of the Communist Parties to monopolies rather than to capitalism as such; that entry will inevitably erode some of the central mystifications about the nation, parliament, etc. which serve as the ideological buttresses of bourgeois rule — then it would be possible to go along with him. Most of his essay is indeed an eloquent statement of this case, powered by a gut hatred of the diseased trappings of the nationalist mystique and a biting contempt for the lickspittle servility of labourism. But unfortunately he

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THE LEFT AGAINST EUROPE?

Tom Nairn

"To be in favour of Europe . . . does not imply surrender to or alliance with the left's enemies. It means exactly the opposite. It signifies recognising and meeting them as enemies for what they are, upon the terrain of reality and the future."

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goes much further, and in overstating his case he reveals the fundamental weaknesses in the political viewpoint from which it is written.

Marx, in the speech on Free Trade quoted above, devotes 95 per cent of his effort to attacking the Free Traders, and only the remaining 5 per cent (the passage quoted by Tom Nairn) to saying that nevertheless this did not imply support for protectionism. Marx's main preoccupation is to differentiate the communist position from that of either wing of the bourgeoisie. Tom Nairn, in sharp contrast to this, argues that Marxists should support the Common Market (i.e. not just view it as a more advantageous terrain for the waging of the class struggle). In numerous passages he argues that the Common Market will not merely 'hasten the social revolution'; it will create the objective basis for proletarian internationalism. The past century has been the century of nationalism in Europe, he claims, and the internationalism of Marxists has been abstract, the repetition of timeless truths. Only now, with the transcendence of the nation state, will internationalism be grounded in material reality.

FAMILIAR ARGUMENT

Why is this line of argument so familiar? Because it is the Marxism of the pre-1914 Second International. It is as if the October Revolution had never taken place, the Third and Fourth Internationals had no historical validity, the colonial and anti-imperialist struggles of the past half-century had no significance in the world struggle for socialism. Tom Nairn criticises Ben Joseph for writing of the need to build the international revolutionary vanguard: "Perhaps; but then, this was true in 1970 as well, or in 1870 for that matter." He further attacks him for writing: "It is not the objective conditions that have been responsible for a lack of socialist internationalism in Europe but a failure on the part of the bureaucratically

led labour movement to live up to its responsibilities." This, for Tom Nairn, is just the old, crude theory of 'treacherous leaders'. But is it?

The truth of the matter is that, whatever the defects of Ben Joseph's formulations the task of building the international revolutionary vanguard is the task of Marxists today as it was for Marx, Lenin and Trotsky (or Luxemburg and Gramsci, for that matter). And the 'labour movement', the mass organisations of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries, are bureaucratically led. The problem of the respective importance of subjective and objective factors in the failure of revolutions in West Europe is a real one, and it may be that revolutionary Marxists have often tended to underestimate the objective factors. But what is certain is that Tom Nairn totally liquidates the concrete history of the 'subjective factors'. His standpoint here is the determinism of the pre-World War One Second International. It is surprising, in view of Tom Nairn's obvious debt to Gramsci, that he is so unsympathetic to 'optimism of the will'.

There is no room here even to begin to indicate the myriad theoretical problems raised by Tom Nairn's study. Has the bourgeoisie not since its creation always been at once universalist and national-particular? United across national frontiers against the threat of revolution anywhere, but compelled by its very nature to compete — one national bourgeoisie against another? Did the League of Nations not coincide with fascism? Is not the notion of a real transcendence of the nation-state just Kautsky's ultra-imperialism in another guise? And if a limited number of nation-states — here those of West Europe — really did merge into a greater nation-state, would not the nationalism thus generated be as effective a weapon in the hands of the new super-bourgeoisie as the old, particular nationalisms had been? Is national imperialism really something of the past, as Tom Nairn suggests? Is imperialism itself really a 'disease' like fascism, rather than the 'highest state of capitalism'? If one rejects the possibility of 'socialism in one country', does that mean that one has to reject the possibility of overthrow of capitalism in one country? (Has not Tom Nairn himself written a brilliant and original study of the May events, which opened up precisely such a possibility?) And can one speak of a proletarian internationalism whose 'objective basis' is not world-wide but confined to a united West Europe — i.e. one imperialist power?

REAL PROBLEMS

To recognize Tom Nairn's Marxism as non-Leninist, however, does not erase the problems he poses. On the contrary, these problems are real ones, which require answering. Luxemburg, the principal intellectual influence on Tom Nairn, was also a non-Leninist and at times an anti-Leninist. And not only did she too pose questions which demanded answers; the resulting discussion between her and Lenin was of great theoretical value to all revolutionary Marxists since that time.

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Red Europe rally organised by the Fourth International two years ago—understood importance of building international revolutionary vanguard.

BOOKS

Strategies for the Women's Liberation Movement

Women, Work and the Unions, by Selma James (Falling Wall Press, 5p); The Choice Before Us (IMG Publications, 5p)

The heated discussions of the problems raised or intimated in Selma James's pamphlet and the solutions criticised in the other pamphlet, which is only one of the more fully laid out of the critiques and alternatives that have arisen out of six months of a debate carried on throughout the women's movement, indicate the emergence of a new stage in the development of the movement.

CENTRAL QUESTIONS

Previously, discussion within the movement has been a process of turning angry, intuitive awareness of oppression into an understanding of its causes and the ways in which it operates, and into a consciousness of its effects on the oppressed. Problems at the centre of discussion have been concerned with seeing the way in which events, images, injustices, stresses, etc., previously experienced as fragmented and unrelated take on a pattern as different manifestations of a systematic oppression justified by a sexist culture and with how one rids oneself of the psychology that has adapted to oppression. These themes of course continue, but the central questions posed are now strategic. How we destroy the institutions of sexist oppression. What is the strategic justification for an autonomous women's movement i.e. beyond the justification in terms of the necessity of collectively analysing the experiences of oppression and rejecting ideological definitions of women's situation? What is the specific social power of women? Is it characteristic of all women or only some sections of women? How does the abolition of sexism relate to that of capitalism? And flowing from this, does the women's movement have any allies and how should alliances come about? In particular how should it relate to the working class and its institutions of struggle?

Once one has hacked one's way through Selma James's extremely opportunistic method of argument and repeated construction of strawmen one can see that it is these problems that she is attempting to solve. The question that she focuses on is the last of these. (Answers to the others are implicit, but the question of how sexism relates to capitalism and the nature of women's social power to struggle against their oppression is argued far more lucidly in an important pamphlet by her friend Maria Dalla Costa on *Women and the Subversion of the Community*). It is on her analysis of the unions and the theory of work underlying it that *The Choice Before Us* makes most of its criticisms.

UNIONS AND WORK

Instead of analysing the limits and possibilities of the unions in the context of their origin as defensive organisations of the working class in their fight against the incessant tendency of employers to increase the rate of exploitation, she sees them as a cancerous growth on the working class functioning solely as instruments of social control. She accuses them of being one of the major causes of male chauvinism. *The Choice Before Us* in criticising these arguments does not counterpose a glorified conception of the unions. It shows how the sectoral nature of trade union organisations frequently means that they reflect and reinforce many aspects of bourgeois ideology, in this case male chauvinism, in their attitudes to other sectors of the working class, including working class women, immigrants, etc.

In opposition to Selma's idea of the unions as homogeneously bureaucratic, *The Choice Before Us* shows how she completely ignores the conflicts which exist within the unions. These conflicts flow basically from the incompatibility (under all but the most booming economic conditions) of a class compromising leadership with the satisfaction of the membership's economic demands. If such a leadership persists, militant initiative is taken at lower levels of the unions, in particular by shop stewards. Selma, to explain such things as the militancy of the miners' strike, which was predominantly due to these initiatives at the shop steward level, applies the mythical concept of "the autonomous working class community going its own way",

Bourgeois and Marxist 'Ways of Seeing'

Ways of Seeing, by John Berger (Penguin, 60p).

John Berger is the leading Marxist art critic and novelist in Britain today. An ex-member of the Communist Party, he has moved progressively to the left from a dilettante radicalism to a highly committed revolutionary perspective. So much so that at the presentation of a literary prize (for his novel *G*) recently he denounced the donors for their imperialist connexions, as well as the art establishment, before announcing his intention of giving half the £5000 prize to the Black Panthers. His work too has become more consistently grounded in scientific materialism, and now seems a good time to deal at length with his latest book.

His previous non-fiction books (all in paperback) include *Art and Revolution*, a study of the Soviet sculptor, Niezvestny, *Success and Failure of Picasso*, one of the few critical and non-adulatory views of this artist, and a collection of short essays on various aspects of art and literature. His latest work, *Ways of Seeing*, based on the excellent but neglected BBC 2 series, goes one step further and attempts to deal critically with the bourgeois "way of seeing" (or not-seeing) the relation between art and society.

BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY

One of the essential tasks of revolutionaries is to confront bourgeois ideology — the commonly held ideas about the world — in all its diverse forms, to develop a critical materialist view of all aspects of bourgeois society. However one area of social life that most socialists neglect to analyse at all thoroughly (preferring instead to be guided by "taste" — socially conditioned and often reactionary taste) is the question of art and the social relations of the past and the present which it reveals. Even revolutionaries often see art as something separate, something 'other' than their politics and therefore at the level of light relief — the "holiday" view of art. They remain mystified about the part art plays in expressing the purposes of the ruling-class and in modelling social consciousness.

The alternative position often adopted by the left is the crude Stalinist one — "All art is bourgeois and therefore we reject it totally". Berger deals with this position succinctly: "By refusing to enter a conspiracy, one remains innocent of that conspiracy. But to remain innocent may also be to remain ignorant. The issue is not between innocence and knowledge . . . but between a total approach to art which attempts to relate it to every aspect of experience and the esoteric approach of a few specialised experts who are the clerks of the ruling-class in decline." (My emphasis.)

For socialists of either school, Berger's book is a fine introductory exercise in de-mystification. He is attempting to counter the bourgeois mystique of art as remote, eternal and absolutely valid, to which only the initiated elite, with all their profound knowledge about the artist and the painting's financial "pedigree", can relate. He stresses throughout the necessity to approach art on terms other than the claims it makes for itself. The bourgeois view serves to deprive the mass

implying that the women's movement should do the same, untainted by involvement in the unions.

She goes on to say that those who argue for working within the unions want the liquidation of the women's movement and its complete absorption into the unions. *The Choice Before Us* shows that this does not follow. It outlines a strategy for the women's movement to intervene in the unions. This involves the setting up, or in some cases supporting where they exist already (e.g. Pat Sturdy's group in the A.U.E.W.) rank and file action groups of women which will, broadly, have the following three purposes:

- To organise within the unions against sex discrimination, and the conditions that prevent the active participation of women in the union e.g. lack of creche facilities at meetings, inconvenient timing of meetings.
- To make sure the unions actively support and initiate struggles on questions of women's oppression; not only those demands that relate immediately to the industrial work situation but also those that concern women's work in the home. This will involve industrial support for demands against the state for nurseries, maternity benefits, contra-



John Berger

of people of their cultural heritage and this is dangerous, because it prevents them from locating themselves in history and thus drawing conclusions about what must be done to change the future. ". . . The art of the past is being mystified because a privileged minority is striving to invent a history which can retrospectively justify the role of the ruling-classes . . ."

PROPERTY

The section on the nude in art however is a tour de force and the perfect uncompromising foil to Kenneth Clark's bourgeois view of the female human body in art as "object" or pure "form" to be rendered perfect by the artist. Destroying this mystification, Berger points out and illustrates that in the majority of paintings since the Renaissance, nudity has not been an expression of the model's own self and feelings, but a display, a sign of submission to her owner's (or the painting's owner's) demands. He makes the distinction between nakedness, which is to be and be seen as oneself (and relatively rare in art), and nudity, which is never to be seen as oneself, but as property on display which expresses, flatters and celebrates, not one's own sexuality, but the sexuality of the owner or viewer. To drive this point home, Berger takes examples from contemporary "girlie" magazines which fit perfectly well into this degrading tradition and this argument, showing just one more form of female oppression and de-humanisation hiding behind bourgeois norms.

The net is cast wider and the whole role of oil painting since the 16th century, during the epoch of the growing and established bourgeoisie, is put under examination in the next section. During this period oil painting proved to be the medium in art, because art itself became the celebration of property or a flattering depiction of the ruling-classes themselves, as defined by their property.

". . . A way of seeing the world, which was

ceptives on the N.H.S., etc.

(c) To attempt to educate working class men about the relationship of women's oppression to capitalism and therefore to the exploitation of the working class as a whole.

Thus in some senses it is organising for the extension of the principles of organisation of the women's movement into the T.U.'s, not its liquidation. This strategy does not pretend to be the total strategy of the women's movement but only a part of it. Many problems involved in it still need to be worked out — in particular the question of how the organisation of housewives who do not work outside can be achieved and how it can relate to industrial organisation. Also there needs to be far more detailed analysis of the exact situation of women in the labour force. Here one could usefully apply many of the implications of Mandel's theory of the third industrial revolution, for example the decline of unskilled labour, the increasing need for certain types of skilled labour, how these processes effect the situation of women in Britain and thus the specific emphases of our strategy.

Hilary Wainwright

ultimately determined by new attitudes to property and exchange, found its visual expression in oil painting and could not have found it in any other visual art-form. Oil painting did to appearances what capital did to social relations. It reduced everything to the equality of objects. Everything became exchangeable because everything became a commodity. All reality was mechanically measured by its materiality . . . Oil painting conveyed a vision of total exteriority."

What is argued conclusively is that oil painting, as opposed to other forms of painting, is especially able to render the tangibility, the texture, the lustre and solidity of what it depicts. We can see here the powerful relationship between the economic basis of the society — the property ethic and its relations — and its philosophical underpinnings, empiricism, with its emphasis on the reality of surface appearances.

PUBLICITY

In the last section, the world of advertising and it images is related to "high art". Notwithstanding the protests of academicians, it is shown that far from being in completely different categories, the one is the continuation of the other, though with important differences. It is obvious for a start that the colour camera has taken over from the brush and oil its capacity to render surface appearances as "real" as possible. However whereas oil painting developed from the principle that you are what you have — the celebration of private property, "rightfully" held — in publicity the spectator-buyer stands in a completely different relation to the world from the spectator-owner. The oil painting began with the facts of the owner's life, but the purpose of publicity is to make the spectator dissatisfied with his present way of life (but on a personal, not a social level) and suggests that if he or she buys what it is offering, their lives will become richer and more satisfying.

It is argued that publicity is a sort of limited philosophical system — another way of seeing which interprets the world in its own idealised terms and in the process prevents choices which lie outside these terms. Unfortunately reality keeps breaking in, especially in the pages of the colour supplements, where pictures of the starving in Bangla Desh jostle obscenely with "Things happen after a Badedas bath". These are both images in the same culture and the same language which highlight and display undisguisedly the deep contradictions in modern international capitalism.

Lastly it is worth quoting Berger as he deals ruthlessly with his critics: "We are accused of being obsessed with property. The truth is the other way round. It is the society and the culture in question which is so obsessed. Yet to an obsessive his obsession always seems to be the nature of things and so it is not recognised for what it is. The relation between property and art in European culture appears natural to that culture, and consequently if somebody demonstrates the extent of the property interest in a given cultural field, it is said to be a demonstration of his obsession."

This is a book that all socialists should read. It is short, explicit, vividly illustrated and Berger's aphoristic style, where every phrase makes its separate statement, is a joy to read. It ought to form the basis for any Marxist trying to approach art in a way consistent with the needs of revolutionary activism.

Carl Gardner

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Rhodesian Sanctions: last year of the cover up?

By BEN JOSEPH

Once again there is speculation, fed by reports from Salisbury, that a new deal between the Government and the Rhodesian whites is on the way. This follows the mass revolt in the Tory Party less than a month ago when more than 130 Conservative MPs voted against or abstained on a motion to renew the Ministerial Order imposing sanctions on the Smith regime.

The whole affair should of course have been settled for the bourgeoisie many months ago. When Lord Pearce and his fellow-commissioners were sent to Rhodesia, it was merely to provide a respectable 'democratic' cover for the ratification of the deal agreed by Douglas-Home and Smith. The American chrome dealers had already moved in, defying U.N. sanctions; and with sections of the Tory Party buying for the removal of sanctions, the Government threw caution to the winds in concluding a deal that would have assured the strengthening of the white settler regime and made certain - if less quickly - the drift to apartheid. All that remained, so it seemed, were the necessary formalities.

DEAL UPSET

However the deal was upset by the masses of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), who rose in the cities, in the mining camps, and throughout the countryside in an impressive series of demonstrations against it. The Pearce Report effectively had no option but to declare that the mass of black opinion was against the settlement.

The Government has two main concerns. On the one hand, it must ensure that the African masses are left leaderless and unarmed, which can only be done by backing Smith; but on the other hand, it is anxious to dampen down 'extremism' in the camp of the white settlers, and re-establish business as usual with its 'kith and kin'. Pearce's purpose was to do exactly that.

AFRICANS WORSE OFF

In the past period the situation of the Zimbabwe masses has continued to deteriorate. The confiscation of the best African lands, which went on throughout the terms of successive colonial governments, has continued unabated since UDI. The number of black workers has been consciously depressed by the fears of the whites that the growth of a black proletariat would not only threaten white labour but the very regime itself. The black working class is today less than 3 per cent of the total black population - and they are paid only one twelfth of the wages of white workers. The trend for the whole black population has been for an absolute fall in real incomes both in the ten years before UDI and since. Talk about a settlement being "the last hope for a multi-racial society in Africa" merely attempts to mask further repressive measures being prepared against the Africans.

This year's rebellion by sections of the Tory Party in both Houses of Parliament in fact came despite further concessions to the white settlers in the form of a slackening of exchange controls, issue of passports to visit Britain, etc. As for the blacks, they have been hit hardest by sanctions - in every sphere of economic life the regime has thrown the burden of sanctions onto the black workers and peasants.

REPRESSION

Any new agreement will enable Smith to intensify the repression of the African workers and peasants with impunity. This is clearly recognised by the Zimbabwe masses, while they have no illusions in British imperialism giving any aid to their cause. But even if a new agreement is reached, it will do nothing to solve the contradictions of a racist capitalist social structure, in which every attempt at economic growth and expansion is fraught with dangers for the whites. Such expansion could only occur on the basis of a growing black proletariat, and higher incomes for the mass of African peasants to provide the basis of a strong internal market; and this would immediately threaten the whole basis of the settlers' power. Relief could only come from a massive repression and demoralisation of the African masses, which would almost certainly necessitate South African and British imperialist backing; it is this which will be on the agenda if a new deal is signed, and which socialists must prepare now to struggle against.

Fred Halliday reports on

THE AMERICANISATION OF THE PERSIAN GULF

In the last twelve months the U.S. has replaced Britain as master of the oil-rich Persian Gulf, the richest site of imperialist plunder in the third world. For 150 years, from its war against Napoleon to its imperialist twilight in the late 1960s, Britain dominated the Gulf, and ensured the flow of oil and profits to the West. But at the end of 1917, Britain finally withdrew her colonial tutelage, leaving a set of shaky neo-colonial states to continue the protection of Western interests. In a pattern set ever since 1947, when the U.S. took over the British role in Greece under the Truman Doctrine, Britain's pullout has been followed by a stepped-up U.S. involvement. Nixon's trip to Iran after his Moscow visit highlighted this change.

THREE REASONS

There are three reasons for this U.S. move. First, the Gulf is a zone of U.S.-Soviet rivalry. Soviet economic and military power in Iraq, at the head of the Gulf, has led that country to boot out the Western oil monopoly that has long dominated its economy. Soviet naval activities in the Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea trouble Pentagon strategists. The U.S. has already announced that once they are no longer needed in Indochina, ships of the Seventh Fleet will be redeployed in the Indian Ocean and Mideast zones.

A second reason for U.S. concern is that the regimes in Iran and in the Arab states along the Gulf coast are thought to be unstable from the West's point of view. Both interstate disputes and clashes between the regimes and the popular opposition movements are likely in the near future. In the Sultanate of Oman, Marxist-Leninist guerrillas have liberated most of the province of Dhofar and have tied down the Sultan's army. The U.S. reckons that its presence in the Gulf will counter these destabilizing forces.

The third and most important reason is that the Gulf is the richest source of oil in the world. In the spring of 1972, the Nixon Administration began to issue alarmist statements about the future U.S. dependence on Gulf oil and the political weaknesses this could lead to. While the British were there, they controlled the zone politically - but the U.S. has the greatest economic power, with ownership of two-thirds of the oil and a \$5 billion investment. With 70 per cent of the capitalist world's known reserves the Gulf is the key to U.S. economic plunder of the Third World. Gulf oil is 30 times cheaper to produce than Texan or Alaskan oil, and this wealth of oil makes the area prone to careful Pentagon attention. With depletion in the U.S. and delays on the Alaska pipeline, the United States may have to import more than the mere 10 per cent it does at the moment, and the big source for these imports will be the Gulf.

SECRET DEAL

First public sign of the U.S. build-up in the Gulf came in January with the revelation that the U.S. had reached a secret deal on naval facilities in the Gulf state of Bahrain. The base there was built by the British, and the U.S. had used part of it since 1947. Last year, as the British began to leave, the U.S. moved in.

According to the State Department, the U.S. activity in the Gulf is only "a flag-showing operation to manifest U.S. interest in the area." But this is a lie. Although the U.S. presence is small (260 men permanently on shore, a flag-ship, two destroyers), it provides a foothold for future deployments, and for a permanent watch on all Soviet actions in the Gulf and Red Sea. It is also clearly a basis for U.S. intervention in Bahrain if the ruling pro-imperialist al-Khalifa family runs into trouble.

In 1956 and in 1965, British-officered troops crushed popular uprisings. Strikes began again in 1970, and a third big upsurge came

this March, when a strike at the airport spread to town, and all shops factories and schools came out on strike. After four days of battles in the streets, when the government used armoured cars and reportedly brought in Bedouin tribesmen from Saudi Arabia, the workers were forced to return to work. Their leaders were thrown into prison. The U.S. is unlikely to have a quiet time in Bahrain with allies like the ruling al-Khalifa family. Since the first uprising of 1956, the al-Khalifa have lived outside the capital in a special fortified village, guarded by armed Bedouin. They doubtless find the U.S. naval presence reassuring.



U.S. MOVE INTO OMAN

More important than the Bahrain deal is the recent U.S. move into the Sultanate of Oman. Last October, Omani Sultan Qabus entertained a party of U.S. visitors aboard his yacht. Head of the mission was Robert Anderson, Texas oilman and Secretary of the Treasury under Eisenhower - in this instance a front man for an elaborate move by the U.S. to move into the oil-rich Sultanate.

The most important publicized deal fixed up by Anderson was between the Sultan and a U.S. firm with fishing interests, Mardela, of which Charles Black, husband of Shirley Temple, is the head. Ostensibly, Mardela plans to run a joint U.S.-Omani fishing company off the Omani coast, i.e., in the north-west Indian Ocean. But officials in Washington, London and Muscat (Oman's capital) have let it be known that Mardela will also carry out intelligence surveillance for the U.S. government, spying on Russian naval activity in the Indian Ocean and on smaller ships that may be engaged in arms smuggling in the zone.

GUERRILLA WAR

The Sultanate is the site of a fierce guerrilla war located in the southern province of Dhofar. Marxist-Leninist guerrillas in a People's Liberation Army have for eight years been fighting a people's war there against the British and their local mercenary army. They have captured most of the province and pose a direct political threat to the rest of the Gulf. Up to now the British-run Omani army has done without U.S. aid, but the new Mardela deal has changed this. According to the London *Evening Standard's* correspondent: "Washington observers now believe that President Nixon has decided to help protect the 1,000-mile coastline of Oman." (27.3.72)

In addition to this naval deal, Anderson has done well out of his Omani venture. He now has a contract to set up a diplomatic service to the Sultan, who has no ambassadors abroad at all. He has won oil exploitation rights for part of the Sultanate, and for a large section of the offshore area. In addition he has acquired mineral rights for the whole of the country. No details of what might be there have been given, but the Egyptian press reported in January that large deposits of uranium

had been found in the Omani interior. This possibility, plus the fact that Omani oil is sulphur-free, make the country a rich prize.

The U.S. entry into Oman has only come after long negotiation. The Sultan used to be out of touch with the U.S. because he had a territorial dispute with the U.S.-backed Saudi Arabian government. But in June 1971, while the Sultan was in London on a private visit, he met representatives of the CIA. They proposed that the U.S. should give the Sultan financial aid to help him develop the country and step up his campaign in Dhofar. In December, the long-standing Saudi-Omani dispute was patched up; Omani Sultan Qabus visited Saudi Arabia and the deal was sealed. Since then Saudi and Omani forces have worked together. In particular, they have coordinated attacks on the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, a revolutionary state that borders Oman and has given continued support to the guerrillas in Dhofar. Documents and arms captured from the attackers prove that the U.S. is helping these moves. Prisoners taken in the fighting have also reported receiving training from U.S. instructors in camps inside Saudi Arabia.

ANOTHER INDOCHINA

Although the zone is economically far more vital to the U.S. than Indochina, there is no likelihood in the immediate future of any comparable military interventions by the U.S. Rather than hold the people down itself, the U.S. wants the growing military powers of Saudi Arabia and Iran to do the job for it. Both countries have received massive military aid in the past twenty years. But the nature of U.S. commitment is such that, over the long run, it could easily find itself involved in a very messy situation. It stands behind the local rulers and is prepared to step up its intervention if its strategic and economic interests are threatened.

"Flag-showing" could then give way to "flag-waving". Places like Oman, Bahrain, Dhofar, and Yemen could then take on the importance that Laos, Quang Tri, and the Parrot's Beak have today.

POSTSCRIPT

This article has already appeared in the *Guardian* (New York) and in *Ramparts* (San Francisco).

Since it was written, U.S. policy has further unfolded. In July, Secretary of State William Rogers visited Bahrain and North Yemen. In September, anti-communist elements in North Yemen, armed by Saudi Arabia and the United States, declared war on People's Yemen. The subsequent peace agreement between the two Yemens, signed in November, has severely split the reactionary camp, and has temporarily defeated U.S. plans to wipe out the People's Republic. According to Saudi Arabia, the agreement is an attempt to undermine the "Islamic" (i.e. pro-imperialist) character of North Yemen and to export revolution from the South.

News from the oil front has been dominated by the so-called participation agreement reached between the oil-producing Gulf states and the oil companies. As Saudi Arabia has openly stated, this is a means of guaranteeing long-term Western access to Gulf oil in an era of rising U.S. and European needs.

In Dhofar, a fresh imperialist offensive was launched on 23 September at the start of the dry season. This has included a heavy and continuous air and artillery bombardment of the liberated areas in an attempt to drive the population onto the British-held coast. A three-man delegation from the N.L.F. of South Vietnam visited the liberated areas in September: in a joint statement, the two sides expressed support for each other's struggles and committed themselves to closer ties in the future.

HOSPITAL WORKERS AGAINST THE FREEZE - IMG Public Meeting, Wednesday, 13 December, at 7.30 p.m. in Friends House (opposite Euston Station).
Speakers: Mark Palmer (Health Workers Shop Steward); Steve Lynch (T.U. organiser - in personal capacity).

IRISH CITIZEN NEW YEAR CEILIDH - Friday, 29 December at Sol's Arms, Hampstead Road (Warren Street tube), 8-12 p.m. (extension). Admission 30p. Organised by Central London A.I.L.

SOCIALIST WOMAN SOCIAL - Friday, 22 Dec. at Sol's Arms, Hampstead Road (Warren Street tube), 8-12 p.m. (extension).



INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

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The Stoke Newington Eight trial may be over, but there are



Sentenced to ten years apiece: (from left to right) John Barker, Hilary Creek, Jimmy Greenfield, and Anna Mendleson.

STILL FOUR TO FREE

By SPIKE HENRY

The Stoke Newington Eight Trial has finally come to an end. Anna Mendleson, Jimmy Greenfield, John Barker and Hilary Creek, have been found "guilty of conspiring to cause explosions", and have received ten year prison sentences. What has been notable throughout the trial is that there has been a singular lack of activity in solidarity with the '8'. This is not the fault of the Stoke Newington Eight Defence Committee who have worked very hard to organise pickets, demonstrations, meetings in universities, etc., but of the organised groups on the left. We must now ask "why?"

One position is to say that the '8' are just mad bombers; ultra lefts with whom we have nothing in common. Firstly, it is by no means clear that any of them were guilty. It looks quite likely that arms and explosives were planted by the police in the Amhurst Road flat, where all four of the imprisoned lived.

SOLIDARITY

But that is not the main point. The main point is that revolutionaries should demand the freedom of these people, whether or not they are 'guilty'. What after all have they been found guilty of? Using violence against the capitalist state. Are we not in solidarity with anybody who struggles against the capitalist state, in whatever way? That surely is the first tenet of revolutionary fraternalism. To be in solidarity with such people is not at all to be in agreement with their tactics or their philosophy. In an earlier article we made a critique of the tactics and strategy of armed propaganda outside a revolutionary situation (*The Red Mole*, 48). But this does not mean that we do not solidarise with them. Marx was very critical of the strategy and tactics of the leadership of the Paris Commune, but

when it took place, as Lenin pointed out "Marx did not assume the rigid attitude of pedantically condemning it as a 'premature movement'."

It may be argued, however, that it is all very well supporting all workers who are in struggle against the capitalist state, but these people were not workers, they were 'petty-bourgeois anarchists' who present a spectacle which serves to divert the working class from its struggle. Such criticism comes from 'revolutionaries' who clearly know less about the class struggle than the bourgeoisie. The ruling class took the trial very seriously. When the defence were on the offensive and at their best (when the prosecution were presenting their case), the bourgeois press quickly realised that liberal opinion would be offended by the contradictions in the prosecution, and ceased to cover the case. In many trials liberal opinion is offended, but in such cases, the defendants usually get off. In this case, however, the ruling class were determined not to be 'soft'.

CLASS STRUGGLE

Why does the ruling class take the question seriously? Because it clearly recognises that these people are on the other side of the class barricades. They are articulate and they devoted most of their time to the class struggle even if not by directly intervening in the organised working class. For example, all four of those imprisoned were active in the claimants unions.

We must fight against those who say that everything which takes place away from the point of production is a diversion from the class struggle. As Lenin said, "The consciousness of the working masses cannot be truly class-consciousness if the workers . . . do not learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist evaluation of all sides of

activity and life of all classes, strata and groups of the population."

STRUGGLE NOT OVER

This is no abstract polemicising after the event. It has concrete relevance. For a start, the Stoke Newington Eight struggle is not over. It has now become the struggle to free Anna, Jimmy, John, and Hilary. All revolutionaries must make it their business to organise in defence of these four, wherever they have influence, whether in places of work, or study, amongst trade unionists, claimants or students. Already students at Enfield have voted to strike in solidarity with them on Wednesday, 13 December, and to organise a teach-in on the case. But that is not all. There will be more trials of this kind in the future. As the class struggle gets fiercer, so the modes of struggle of many layers of society become more militant, and at the same time more areas of struggle are made illegal.

The left must understand the importance of all political trials and make it their business to organise so that ultimately the working class will respond to them. It is no pipe dream to suppose that the class can respond to such things. The campaign in defence of Sacco and Vanzetti in the United States in the '20s had a considerable impact amongst wide sections of the working class. But it is a hard struggle. We must not let the quotation on a Defence Group leaflet become an eternal truth: "They came to take away the Mangrove Nine but I did nothing cos I'm not black. They came to evict the squatters but I did nothing cos I've got a home. They came to take away the claimants but I did nothing cos I've got a job. They came to take away the Stoke Newington Eight but I did nothing cos I'm not angry. Then they came to take me away and there was no one to help."

BASIS LAID FOR NEW INDOCHINA CAMPAIGN

By JOHN WEAL

"This is the right moment to organise such a conference", said Ly Van Sau, a leading Paris representative of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam. He was addressing the two day Indochina Solidarity Conference held on 2-3 December at the Conway Hall in London. This conference has laid the basis for a new campaign in solidarity with the Indochinese revolution until final victory.

At least 700 people crammed into the Conway Hall to hear Noam Chomsky and I.F. Stone speak on the Saturday evening, and the day's session and workshops had been attended by almost as many. This was a serious discussion conference, not a jamboree. It also collected £450 for future activity to which Chomsky added the £172 cost of his fare.

SOLIDARITY CRUCIAL

It is not just a whim of the Fourth International that solidarity is so crucial during this period. The PRG and FUNC (Cambodian liberation organisation) representatives played an

active role in the conference, explaining the political conjuncture in Indochina and the nature of the agreement being negotiated. They stressed again and again, "We have aspirations but no illusions . . . we are confident of final victory . . . We need and appreciate the solidarity movement . . . Please do more . . . Vietnam has become a flower on the lip of every progressive human being . . . do not be demobilised . . ."

An important feature of the conference was the Saturday afternoon workshops. One of particular interest, "Socialist forces and the Indochinese Revolution", discussed the role of China internationally and looked also at our own insular backyard (IS and the SLL were both absent). A second discussed British complicity and current and proposed activities in Britain; while a third analysed the imperialist strategy and revolutionary prospects in South East Asia. These workshops showed the generally much higher level of political debate than existed in 1967-68. While some elderly peace-niks were indeed sheltering behind a "Sign Now" slogan, the majority of those holding more or less such

a position were clearly for victory for the NLF. In fact the old fight between "Victory" and "Peace" positions has been superseded.

FUTURE ACTIVITY

But this political development has taken place amongst a tiny handful of people. The task now is to radiate out from that conference and restart the process of education, organisation, discussion and activity at a local level. A mass of duplicated propaganda on many aspects of the war was produced for the conference, and this can provide the basis for education in the proposed Indochina Solidarity Committees.

In the New Year, regional conferences, preceded by speaking tours, will be organised. At the same time work will be directed at GIs and US Air Force personnel, the mass media, British firms' involvement, etc. By a large show of hands, the conference indicated its enthusiasm for a national demonstration projected for early next year.

The IMG wholeheartedly supports all proposals for ongoing activity in solidarity with the Indochinese peoples. We urge our readers who are interested in joining or forming an Indochina Solidarity Committee to write to ISC, 6 Endsleigh Street, London WC1, or contact their nearest IMG branch or *The Red Mole*.

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IRELAND (From page 1)

that which greeted the 1957 crackdown, shows that a strong reservoir of resistance exists which can be tapped and successfully used to turn the tide and defeat Lynch.

WEAKNESS

But the present crisis expresses the essential political weakness of the Provisional Republican Movement. As explained in *The Red Mole* (56), the Provisionals came to the leadership of the struggle in the North because they had the answers which corresponded to the needs of the nationalist minority after July 1970. This position of leadership in the North has given them their support in the South, not the actual test of their politics in the South, and this shows in such blunders as the call in a highly trade union organised city like Dublin, late one Sunday night, for a general strike to begin the next morning.

Another sign of this confusion was in the calls to action and inaction at the arrest of Mac Stiofain in Dublin. Sinn Fein's national leadership was calling for protests and demonstrations in Ireland, Britain and America. In Britain, James MacManus of the *Guardian* was able truthfully to quote "a prominent Provisional" as being against activity on this question on the grounds that Mac Stiofain was only one man.

In some Dublin factories, Provisionals called for strikes in the name of the Republican movement, whereas a greater response would have been likely if they had been called in the name of Trade Union or Shop Stewards' organisations. This was an example of what Mary Holland, in a sympathetic piece in the *New Statesman*, described as the Provisionals "talking to themselves" — their almost total inability to communicate with anyone outside their own ethos.

TRADE UNIONS CONDEMN BILL

The Executive Council of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions on Friday, 1 December condemned the Offences Against the State (Amendment) Bill as repressive and retrograde. The council felt that it had highly dangerous and ominous overtones in relation to freedom of speech, of assembly and movement. It also considered that the proposed Bill threatened practices of generally accepted norms of democracy, civil liberties, citizens' conduct, and especially that of trade unionists.

The national leadership of Sinn Fein made it clear that it welcomed action from British left wing groups on this issue; Walter Lynch, Sinn Fein General-Secretary, at a press conference in London, praised the IMG's response on the question of Ireland, but members of British socialist organisations who turned up on one picket at least, found themselves called upon to join in prayer.

If there is one thing which the history of Ireland teaches, it is the ineffectiveness of prayer. As one disgruntled sympathiser said, "If prayer can do the job, what do they want people for?"

That sentence exposes the weakness of the Provisional leadership. They know that they cannot win without the support of the revolutionary groups and the Labour movement. They want to achieve that support, but the best of them act like an over-anxious suitor, stumbling in the dark, and tend to drive away the support that they know they need. There are other elements which actually desire to isolate their own membership from revolutionary socialist influence.

NO EXCUSE

None of this criticism however can be for one moment tolerated as an excuse for inactivity on the part of the British left. The need for solidarity action in Britain will be greater in the coming months. What is needed in Britain is the continuation of the uphill task of winning through the Anti-Internment League the vanguard of the British working class to support of the Irish struggle, by explaining to them the connection between the struggle in Ireland and their own struggle, coupled with a sharp campaign to harass the Free State government at every point. And in trade union branches and working class organisations, advantage must be taken of the opposition voiced by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to the new anti-IRA legislation.



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