

# Socialist Challenge

**BRIAN WALDEN:**

**'What you really mean is that immigration control is a device to keep out coloured people?'**

**MERLYN REES:**

**'That is what it is... I don't think we should hide from it and that's what people are concerned about' —Weekend World, 4th Feb. 1978**



## END ALL IMMIGRATION LAWS

### INSIDE

**MICHAEL EDWARDES and DEREK ROBINSON**  
A tale of love at first sight, page 3

**SOCIALIST TEACHERS ADVANCE**  
page 5

**GEOFF HODGSON and PETER JENKINS**  
Back to the Labour Party, page 7

**WOLVERHAMPTON**  
Powell's patch revisited, pages 8 and 9



**TONY CLIFF**  
On Ireland, page 10

**OWEN'S FOREIGN POLICY**  
What the doctor's ordered, page 11



**WOLF BIERMANN**  
Reply to East German dissidents, page 13



**UNDER REVIEW**  
'The shrill self-enclosed squabbles of rival egomaniacs', page 15

# Editorial

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## Thatcher and Rees



MARGARET THATCHER's explicitly racist speech has one noteworthy feature. It throws out of the window all the old nonsense about Britain being over-crowded and the rest of it. All the lies about why immigration controls were necessary have been abandoned. There is one reason and one reason alone. Racists of all hues do not like black people. The British nation is a white nation, declares the Tory leader, equating nationality with race. The logic of her speech is extremely sinister and leads to the road of repatriation, initially 'voluntary' à la Powell, but, if necessary, under the threat of force as the National Front demands.

Thatcher's speech does mark an important turning point, and we will need the results of the Ilford North by-election before we see if there is any resistance to it from within the Tory Party. So far Heath has made some gentle criticisms and the Federation of Conservative Students has expressed its distaste. Nothing more.

Merlyn Rees responded to Thatcher's attack by admitting that immigration controls meant keeping the blacks out. He admitted that racism was widespread and even confessed that this was the direct result of imperialism. His way and that of his party was to pander, but only partially, to this racism as a way of 'cooling things down'. However, even the slightest concession to racists increases the racist flood and does not stem it.

In fact, it is Labour which has been responsible for some of the worst racist legislation, including the 1968 Immigration Act. Now that Rees has admitted that the only reason for control is to keep blacks out, and that this had been effectively carried out, socialists need to take up the fight against immigration controls in a more vigorous and systematic fashion.

A mass anti-racist and anti-fascist movement to fight against a wide array of racist legislation and fascist attacks is needed more than ever before. We cannot rely on Labour leaders to fight Thatcher's Tories or to effectively combat their propaganda. The racist character of the Immigration Act is now openly acknowledged by both political parties.

The Tories say: Yes, we are racists and blacks cannot be considered as true citizens of Britain. Therefore we should stop any more from entering and start sending some back. Labour replies: No we aren't racists, but we've virtually stopped blacks coming in through our policies. We will allow a few dependents to trickle in and there's no real need for concern. The second is not much better than the first.

Unemployment, recession, inflation are not the result of immigration, whether those entering are Irish, southern Europeans or Asians. It is the result of the crisis of the capitalist system. That is why measures to defeat racism have to include a series of specific demands against unemployment and inflation. In other words to show that a socialist alternative is what is needed and not controls, either of immigration or of imports.

Large-scale nationalisations, work sharing, a sliding scale of wages, a crash programme of public works. This — alongside support for any actions taken to ward off racist attacks, including black self defence — is what is needed to reverse the present situation. And unless Labour MPs argue along these lines they will find their vote being whittled away by racists and fascists.

# ★ Star fails to shine on steel

On 3 February the Morning Star turned its attention to the problems of the steel industry with the headline: 'Steel in crisis — who decides'. The article was prompted by the announcement by Jimmy Milne, general secretary of the Scottish TUC and member of the Communist Party, of a campaign to save steel jobs.

After asking the right questions, the only answer the Star gives is to extend nationalisation into the private sector and to introduce import controls. With the continued world-wide recession, the jobs of thousands of steelworkers are at risk. PAT CAINE argues that steelworkers need to develop a workers' plan for steel rather than the meagre steps outlined in the Star.

The extension of nationalisation is something that no one in the labour movement should be opposed to. The huge profits made in the private steel and scrap industry are an obstacle to the development of any planned steel industry. But by itself, nationalisation provides no guarantee against redundancies, especially a nationalisation in which the workforce is no say.

The British Steel Corporation is currently losing over £1 million a week, and management — just like those in any private industry — is saying the solution is mass redundancies. The original timetable for plant closures, as contained in the 1976 Beswick Report, would mean that the bulk of redundancies would fall in the late '70s and early '80s.

But with a Government policy statement on the future of the industry due in March, many expect there will be proposals for a speed-up and extension of closures.

The whole strategy the Government is adopting is shrouded in secrecy. No information was ever released on the amount of money in compensation paid out to the old plant owners, and the exact amount of profits various private companies continue to make from the nationalised industry is unknown. What has emerged is that the massive losses of BSC include £210 million paid in interest to various financial institutions.

A first step towards an industry run in the interests of its workers is therefore a full-scale inquiry organised by the trade union movement into the operation of the corporation.

The Morning Star article made no mention of the need for such a workers' inquiry; an omission influenced by the fact that, no matter how reluctantly, the trade union leaders and their supporters in the Communist Party agree with the Beswick Report. Indeed co-operation and consultation are the key words for the leaders of the steel unions.

Redundancies have gone hand-in-hand with all manner of participation schemes, achieved at the expense of shop floor organisation. In the corporation's Scottish division, 2,777 jobs were lost through voluntary redundancies agreed

by the steel unions in just nine months last year.

Now, with 25,000 jobs at risk, the Scottish TUC — warmly supported by the Morning Star — is promoting the fighting of these closures by a lobby of Parliament next



month. But the STUC, often in partnership with the Confederation of British Industry, has been sending lobbies to Parliament in attempts to maintain jobs in Scotland for years.

For the Communist Party, the stressing of securing jobs for Scotland follows naturally from its advocacy of import controls, a policy which seeks to blame 'foreign' workers for the steel corporation's problems.

### FAILURE

The fact is that it was only in 1976 that Britain became for the first time a net importer of steel, a development partly explained by the failure of BSC to meet home demand the previous year.

So the Morning Star's plan for the steel industry can be summed up as more of the same: rely on the trade union leaders, nationalisation with out workers' control, participation, blame foreigners, and lobby Parliament.

An alternative, workers' plan for the steel industry can only be worked out when past practices are discarded — most urgently, rejection of the Beswick proposals and an end to all fake participation.

The leaders of the Iron and Steel Confederation of Trade Unions have shown no appetite for learning from their mistakes. So the task of leading the fight is now passing into the hands of rank and file militants. Most urgently what is needed is not a specific 'Save jobs for Scotland' or 'Save jobs for Wales' campaign response, but a national response to the current and threatened attacks on jobs in the industry.

The local steel union action committees which have existed — albeit intermittently — to fight for jobs for their own areas, would be better employed calling a national conference to organise such a response.

### CRISIS

No one can deny that the steel industry is in crisis; but neither can anyone suggest it is the workers' fault or responsibility. Until a national fightback emerges, it is necessary to continue to defend the guaranteed working week and its extension to cover the whole of BSC.

With this must go the fight for the ending of all redundancies and their replacement by a system of work-sharing without loss of pay. These are only the first steps in the fight to save jobs, but Jimmy Milne and the Morning Star article proved too cautious to even take these.

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## OUR POLICIES

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

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

- To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.
- To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

# The future of Derek Robinson

## A statement to every employee from Michael Edwardes

Dear Leyland worker. This week I have been making a number of appointments to higher management in British Leyland. I know some of you are upset that I have not managed to find a place for Derek Robinson, the chairperson of Leyland shop stewards and convenor of the 20,000 workers at Longbridge.

I want to assure you that I had only one reason for not promoting Derek: he is doing too valuable a job at the moment to move him. Let's be honest about the situation.

In his famous speech to the Twenty Club my predecessor Richard Dobson had this to say of Derek: 'I happen to know the chief convenor at Longbridge. He's an avowed communist. I must say that I fairly like him because he's fairly good at getting people to work'. I know exactly what Sir Richard meant. Of course, in the past Derek has blown a bit of hot air. For instance in April 1975 he said: 'In a situation where the Corporation try to enforce rationalisation and redundancy it will be resisted with all the organisation at our command'.

### NAUGHTY

But nobody took those sort of sentiments very seriously at the time, and seeing Derek voted for the resolution last week which involved the loss of 12,000 jobs, I think that has been proved right.

I really did appreciate that vote of confidence from Derek. After all, I was somewhat naughty in not taking my plan to the participation committee or 'car council' in which I know Derek is very strongly in favour. Just to show you how difficult his vote for my plan must have been — in view of his advocacy of participation or, as he called it September 1975 'limited workers control', I will quote what the recent Communist Party pamphlet said on participation.

It suggested participation gave workers: 'a say in the future of decisions on investment and location of work...the unions are receiving long term warnings...where the question of redundancies has arisen...the unions are receiving long term warnings of this'.

Yes, quite.

### UNGENTLEMANLY

Of course Derek is the first to appreciate there are problems with this participation lark. For instance, in November 1975 Derek was one of the members of an ad hoc shop stewards committee set up under the Ryder proposals to oversee the move towards corporate bargaining.

Part of this was Leyland's 'security of earnings scheme', which as you probably remember advocated penalties for strikes. Well, one of



Derek's ungentlemanly colleagues, hurried out these proposals before we were ready, at a meeting of a combine committee. Derek gave him a right telling off. But it just shows you this participation business must ensure that the workers representatives keep everything they discuss well away from the shop floor.

And I do not blame Derek for the vote of the workers which rejected that scheme. I know he tried his best to get it accepted. But then Derek has a good reason in trying at all costs to stop strikes. I was reading in my files about the time of the toolmakers strike in February/March last year, when Derek went all out to stop that action.

His words are worth repeating today I think: 'The worst thing that can happen to British Leyland and the country is for groups of workers to think they have the God-given right to take sectional action in defence of their own conditions. We can't afford a toolroom strike or any other

strike'. How helpful Derek's opposition to the toolroom strike was, and how helpful his support for the Social Contract has been, I know he has had problems holding back his



**DEREK ROBINSON** members. Didn't he say in November 1976: 'There is sheer frustration over wages. It's leading to a negative attitude. Unless there is some reversing of the trend we will not be able

to hold our members to July'. Derek was referring here to the end of a Phase Two which, to give him his credit, he backed throughout. He did at the time feel it necessary to make criticisms of any wage controls after Phase Two, but honestly I understand his problem.

Remember April 1977 at the conference called by Leyland shop stewards for free collective bargaining? They actually called a strike for 19 April, but as Derek explained later: 'We have to have a token strike. If we are not seen to do something we will be overtaken by our members'.

It is this sort of sharp management thinking which made me think very seriously about giving Derek a job in higher management. He has certainly potential and I will consider it in the future I promise. But in the meantime Derek has his job to do and I have mine. I want you to know we are both working for the same end, and together.

Yours most sincerely, Michael Edwardes.



### Wank insubordination

'WE HAVE been watching you for the last 25 minutes standing around there and we think you are a wanker.' This deathless prose was repeated to an astonished High Court last week. Constables Toal and Young of the Vice Squad arrested Michael Paling for masturbating in the lavatories at Piccadilly Circus Underground station in London.

One of the Vice Squad officers explained: 'We have been doing this for the last three weeks and every day we knock off a wanker. They always plead (guilty) to it.'

One problem: Paling was no ordinary member of the raincoat brigade but a Special Branch officer! An Old Bailey jury subsequently acquitted him (not surprisingly) and he has now brought charges against Toal and Young for wrongful arrest.

But there are two interesting points. First, Paling was pursuing a suspect when he was arrested. Is it usual practice for officers to be arrested in the execution of their duty? Secondly, what would have happened if Paling had not been an SB but one of the hundreds of innocent lavatory users who are also picked up on indecency charges on the whim of some zealous Vice Squad pervert?

### BASNETT'S DREAM

OUR TRANSPORT House correspondent informs us that the Municipal Workers leader, David Basnett, is busy working on a new plan to 'democratise' the Labour Party. Since Conference has rejected mandatory re-selection of MPs by constituency parties the whole question of party democracy has hung in mid-air.

According to our informant, Basnett wants to enlarge the National Executive Committee by another 30-40 members, who will be co-opted from local authorities. This does appear to be too ridiculously undemocratic even for the union block vote to push through, but nothing should surprise us in the present period. So all socialists in the Labour Party and the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Party should be prepared.

ROY HATTERSLEY, the Labour Minister for Prices and Consumer Protection, has recently addressed a number of Fabian gatherings at the working class universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Roy told any undergraduate prepared to pay attention to him over a drink that he had some important news to impart: (a) After Jim, there would be a new party struggle, (b) Denis was too arrogant and loathed by all sections of the party to become Leader, (c) Who did this leave to lead the nation? As his student admirers indicated that they were unaware of the supposedly obvious answer, Hattersley pointed at himself. Choke, choke, gulp, suppressed laughter, another round on the new Leader.

### nfo HIGH LOOK

NOT TO BE missed. Next Saturday, 11 February, BBC-2 is screening *Before Hindsight*, from 8.45 to 10.25 pm. It is a revealing documentary on how

cinema-goers in the '30s were presented with an utterly distorted picture of fascism by the so-called newsreels. The film, directed by Jonathan Lewis and produced by Elizabeth Taylor-Meades, was reviewed in our 24 November issue.

Needless to say, the mass media's presentation of current affairs has not radically changed. As Jonathan Dimbleby points out in *Before Hindsight*: 'The obsession with balance frequently distorts the truth fundamentally.'

At a discussion after a recent showing of the film at *The Other Cinema*, Richard Francis, head of news and current affairs at the BBC, was closely questioned by the audience about television coverage of the war in Ireland. Francis, former controller of the BBC in the north of Ireland, came out with the classic: 'We do not give equal time to right and wrong'.

And what was the BBC's policy on Britain's present-day Nazis? The revolting Francis replied: 'There is strong pressure from the public that we do not interview the IRA. I hope that is not now to be extended to John Tyndall.'

A CAUTIONARY tale for all our readers who may find themselves arrested. Nick Slater was a regular supporter of the Grunwick picket and was arrested twice. He was found guilty on both occasions (surprise, surprise), once for assault and once for obstruction.

As he saw the police coming for him a third time he was beginning to wonder if he'd done something to upset them. 'How do you know I'm not Special Branch?', he shouted as they dragged him off to the van. 'Right,' said the arresting officer, who, like all cops, is a bit deficient when it comes to humour. 'We'll have you for impersonating a police officer.'

When Nick's case came up he was approached by the police, who implicitly admitted that this was rather a silly charge. They said they'd drop it if he pleaded guilty to another charge of obstructing the police. Nick agreed, and, no, the police didn't go back on the deal. Instead the magistrates gratefully accepted his guilty plea, fined him the maximum penalty of £200 and bound him over for two years. If he 'misbehaves', he will forfeit £500.

What's more, Nick is training to be a solicitor, so the magistrates thoughtfully notified the Law Society, effectively ruining his career. And the moral of this story: never plea bargain with the cops, because if they don't double-cross you someone else will.

### IDES OF MAY

DOWNING STREET analysts are suggesting that Callaghan is thinking of going for a May election. He feels that his popularity is at its peak. He has tamed the class struggle and appears as the best possible leader at the moment. So why risk wasting any more time...all one can say is that there was another leader who thought along exactly the same lines seven years ago. He went for an election in 1970. He lost, much to his surprise. What was that about how history repeated itself the second time as farce?

## Leyland axes 12,500 jobs 'Irresponsible to vote against' says CP

On 1 February Derek Robinson, convenor of 20,000 Longbridge workers and Communist Party member, put strong words of warning to Morning Star readers about the dangers of the Edwardes plan for Leyland. That same day, in a cosy joint meeting of management and unions in Kenilworth, Robinson put up his hand for a resolution which placed 12,500 Leyland jobs on the block. RICH PALSER explains why the Communist Party is incapable of providing a fighting strategy for Leyland workers.

Derek Robinson's words to Star readers were to the point. He argued: 'The future of British Leyland now becomes a serious issue for the whole trade union and labour movement to take up, to ensure that the ground is not being prepared for a sell-out on a basic socialist tenet — a sell-out to private enterprise and the anti-nationalisation lobby.'

### ISSUE

It is certainly the case that the future of Leyland is an issue which the whole labour movement must take up. It is also true that the labour movement must defend basic socialist tenets. But 'public control' of Leyland has had nothing to do with socialism. Rather it has consistently flown in the face of 'basic socialist tenets'.

The main reason behind the nationalisation of Leyland was because, thanks to consistent under-investment, only the state could finance the massive investment programme needed to restore Leyland's competitive position.

In 1970 each British Leyland worker had only £964 in fixed assets backing up their labour. Their counter-part in Chrysler had £1,840 and in Fords UK £2,700. Thus the Ryder proposals for Leyland required cash investment of £3 billion through to 1982.

### FACILITIES

An initial £200 million was to come from the National Enterprise Board, along with further injections in instalments. Each instalment was dependent upon 'the contribution being made by British Leyland workers and management to the improvement of productivity and efficiency', as Ryder himself put it.

In a speech to the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce two weeks ago, Callaghan made it clear that he was backing the Edwardes plan. 'I make no threats about withholding funds if targets are not met,' he said. Nevertheless, since 'the country' had shown faith in Leyland by pumping in government funds, 'it is up to Leyland to justify that faith from top to bottom, management and workers'.

Because the 'success' of nationalised Leyland is measured, as before, in its ability to make a profit in the capitalist market, socialist tenets such as full employment and defending working class living standards must go by the board. Ryder didn't hide this: '...it is clear that if Leyland is to compete effectively there must be a reduction in man hours lost through industrial disputes... more realistic manning levels and more mobility and interchangeability of labour'.

In short: 'The improvement of productivity will inevitably mean a gradual reduction in the number of workers required to produce a given number of vehicles.' Just as the Labour Government agreed with Ryder, it now agrees with Edwardes that 12,500 — and a possible longer term total of 30,000 jobs — can go so that capitalist profitability is ensured.

The union officials and leading shop stewards in Leyland have consistently been

a party to these policies for Leyland. They have proclaimed that the 'socialist tenet' of capitalist nationalisation requires a different attitude from Leyland workers. They have championed workers' participation on the grounds that it ceases to be class collaborationist in nationalised industries. They have recommended acceptance of national corporate bargaining which puts wage negotiations in the hands of union officials and leading stewards in the participation bodies.

### BLEAT

These officials and stewards have also 'spent much time convincing the Leyland labour force that we are in the volume car league to stay and need sufficient output', as Derek Robinson admits. Now they bleat that the Edwardes plan 'completely reverses the process of the Ryder Report proposals'. And in the same breath, they vote for his resolution on the grounds that to have voted against 'would have been irresponsible'.

It is time the union leaderships in Leyland were removed from their participation in running state-controlled capitalist industry. A fightback must be launched based on real socialist tenets — tenets which say that Leyland workers are not responsible for the crisis, and should not be made to pay for it through loss of their jobs or living standards.

The first step in that fightback is to demand that there are no redundancies. If the work is cut, then work available must be shared out — with no loss of pay to any workers — by cutting the length of the working week. Secondly, the lead given by the Cowley assembly plant must be

followed. Workers there have withdrawn from all participation bodies — which tie Leyland workers to Edwardes' plans.

Thirdly, Leyland workers must begin to prepare their own alternative plans for Leyland. A plan is needed which can maintain and improve jobs and living standards of workers in the car industry. In order to draw up that plan, and prepare the fight against any job-

losses planned by the company, Leyland workers need full access to all the internal plans and workings of Leyland. Leyland books must be opened for inspection by the workers organisations.

These are the first steps towards establishing workers' control in Leyland — the real alternative to both Edwardes and Ryder, and to Derek Robinson.

## Historic compromise at Leyland Edwardes can be fought

Participation at Leyland achieved its greatest victory to date on Wednesday 1 February. Trade unionists joined with Leyland bosses to vote in support of Michael Edwardes' plan to carve up the company; ditch 12,500 jobs in 1978; and to prepare the way for thousands more job losses in 1979 and 1980.

PAT HICKEY, shop steward at Rovers, Solihull, explains what happened at that meeting, and how to fight against the decisions it took.

A seven-point resolution was put to the meeting of 650 trade union representatives and management. Only five votes were cast against. Point one of the resolution reads: 'There is a common aim to make British Leyland cars profitable and to secure its future.'

Point two is just as disastrous. The overwhelming majority of those present agreed that 'every effort will be made to further

improve the quality and reduce the number of disputes'.

Point four, however, was the key to Edwardes' plan. This vote accepted 'the need to line up manning levels and production capacities with market needs'.

Only Bob Fryer from Cowley spoke against this extraordinary procedure of management and unions together



voting on a management proposal. Nonetheless, the vote went ahead, with Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson voting in favour. He did this despite overwhelming rejection of the Edwardes' plan by shop floor meetings at Longbridge.

In an outstanding piece of hypocrisy, the Morning Star's article by Robinson that very day called on the labour movement to 'close ranks, unite and fight the plan to carve up Leyland.' And it declared the issue was 'central to the future of the working class.' At the meeting, Edwardes made it clear that the jobs would go through 'natural wastage, redundancy programmes, plant closures and some combination of these'.

In addition to job loss, Leyland management is planning a big drive on line speeds and productivity levels. Brave statements have appeared in the Morning Star, yet the CP has committed the powerful Longbridge trade unions to support the plan. This was the kind of opposition Edwardes had to overcome to be hailed by the press as the 'tough, no-nonsense boss who tamed the Leyland workers'.

The Edwardes meeting was followed by a Leyland combine committee meeting on Friday in Birmingham. Again, words were substituted for action. This body represents about 160,000 Leyland workers in the cars, and bus and truck divisions. It has immense potential power, yet it endorsed

a line of surrender. The committee decided that redundancies and other similar measures would be 'subject to mutual agreement'. In other words, job loss will be accepted.

It is now quite clear that union leaders at Leyland will not be leading a fight against Edwardes' plan. If the present leadership has its way, Leyland will undergo the quietest massacre in history. And they know that Edwardes' present plans are unlikely to be the end of the attacks.

### JOBS GONE

Even with 12,500 jobs gone, Leyland will be manned up for 27 per cent of the UK market, while its actual share is 20 per cent. Once trade unions go along the road of adapting to the irrationality of the market in a time of economic decline and stagnation, they will find it is a road which has no end.

In the interests of competing with giant firms of America, Europe and Japan, Leyland workers will have to accept further job loss, further decline in their living standards and further speed-ups.

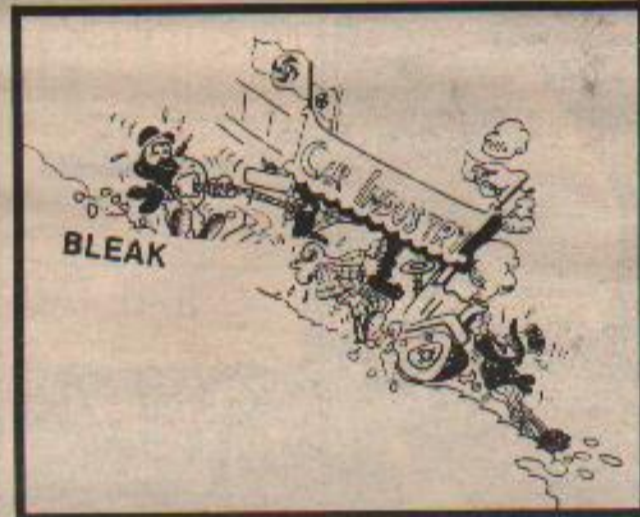
The argument that this plan must be accepted to make Leyland 'viable' must be rejected. Workers must say no to proposals that they sacrifice so Leyland is put back on its feet. Only the most determined struggle against sackings, job loss and plant closures will defend the workers' interests.

The CP leadership has nailed its colours to the mast. It will preside over the sackings and the speed-ups, and its main efforts will be towards winning 'consultation' and extending participation. When the Ryder report was published, the CP welcomed participation as a major step forward in workers' democracy.

Wednesday's meeting showed what participation means in practice — a surrender of the independence of workers' organisations, and the abandonment of workers' interests in favour of management. The trade union leadership at plant level has now become the front line for the national officials. And they will fight against any real struggle emerging.

Thus the combine committee rejected a call for a national conference of Leyland stewards to prepare the fight against the Edwardes' plan — they feared that shop floor participation in union decisions might lead to a fight. Militants in Leyland must prepare to fight Edwardes' proposals when and where they emerge.

A first step is the fight to end participation at all levels, and for the independence of the unions in Leyland. We must also demand withdrawal from the Joint Negotiating Committee and for an end to unemployment-creating incentive schemes. The spineless leaders who have given the green light to the attacks on Leyland workers will need to be removed if they stand in our way.



## NUT Conference

# Socialists win broad support

by BERNARD REGAN

THE SOCIALIST Teachers' Alliance has scored notable success in winning broad support amongst members of the National Union of Teachers for its motions to this year's conference. Five of its motions appear amongst the top eleven voted by members as priorities in the conference debate.

### RACIALISM

The five STA policies which won this support include: the education cuts, with the third highest support; racialism, sixth in line; conditions of service, eighth; superannuation, tenth; and the TUC

Charter on Women at Work, eleventh.

Motions for NUT conference are voted on by topic. The one with the highest vote in each topic is placed on the agenda for conference. The first topic on the agenda this year concerns class size.

The STA motion on this is third within the topic list. It should have come first, but didn't thanks to the manoeuvrings of the right wing on the powerful Conference Business Committee which refused to composite two almost identical motions, thus splitting supporters for the motion.

Salaries is the second topic on

the agenda. This year's Communist Party-sponsored motion came top with votes from local associations representing 43,000 members. The motion contains no mention whatsoever of incomes policy — statutory or voluntary — and doesn't even have the time-worn call for a return to 'free collective bargaining!'. Once again the STA came second with a vote of 17,000.

This vote — when combined with the 9,000 members who supported a similar resolution from Croyden teachers — reflects the growing strength of a current within the NUT which is calling for automatic compensation in wages against every rise in the cost of living. The 26,000 votes cast for this position far outstrips the 'supermilitancy' line adopted by Rank and File which achieved a vote of only 7,000. The Rank and File motion with the most support on the agenda ranks number 29.

There has also been success by the left in the Inner London Teachers' Association elections. Despite doing all in its power — short of crossing the ballot paper themselves — the right-wing leadership of ILTA only just defeated the left in a postal ballot.

Votes cast included: Woods (CP) 2319; Esterson (STA) 2225; Richardson (right-wing) 2486; Rosenberg (Rank and File) 2026; Carter (right-wing)

2377; Pieton (STA) 2179. Both the right and the left improved their vote, and the figures show what success can be achieved with a united left slate.

Hopefully Rank and File will learn the lesson, and reconsider its sectarian splitting tactics in the national executive elections in Inner and Outer London. If they do not they will undoubtedly help the right wing to counter the left's advances in recent weeks.



New issue of Socialist Teacher (No. 4) now out. 30p plus postage from the Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1. Bulk orders from Top Flat, 13 Bloomfield Road, London N1.

# 60-80 candidates for May elections Socialist Unity Appeal

If you happen to live in one of the 19 places where Socialist Unity is fielding a candidate in the May council elections, you will have the opportunity to express your disgust with Labour's vicious policies.

But to make certain a political alternative is offered to Labour in the council elections, it's not enough just to churn out the leaflets and election addresses. Active campaigns and struggles in every locality need to be supported and organised. That requires lots of resources.

Below we print the appeal launched by Socialist Unity and urge readers to respond with speed.

A Labour Government in power has meant reduced living standards, growing unemployment, savage cuts in public services. The limited gains made by women, such as the 1967 Abortion Act, the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act are either being attacked or have proved to be nothing more than token sops. Fascist organisations like the National Front, encouraged by Labour's immigration laws, and its reactionary social policies, have grown even

bolder.

Although the Labour left has groaned and protested about the Government's policies, it has done nothing to organise any fight back. The majority of the 'left' MPs and 'left' trade union leaders are nothing more than happy prisoners in the jailhouse of Callaghan's anti-working class policies.

## NO WAITING

Socialist Unity — which is a

coalition of marxist organisations and militant independents — insists there is a need to start fighting back now. It says such a fight back cannot wait until the Callaghans and Healeys become converted to socialism, or the left MPs discover that the interests of the working class are more important than some shoddy compromise with the Labour leaders.

## STANDING

Socialist Unity will therefore be standing about 60 or 80 candidates in this May's local elections. It is doing this because it is convinced that there is a need to raise the banner of an alternative socialist programme. And that in its election campaigns it can encourage, and stimulate, activity in the areas to fight back against wage freeze, cuts, unemployment, racism, the oppression of women and in

defence of democratic rights.

In no sense does Socialist Unity intend posturing as the alternative to the Labour Government, or the Labour controlled councils. It intends to show by its election campaign that there is a socialist alternative to Labour's bankrupt policies, and that this means building an opposition that embraces trade unionists, members of the immigrant community, and the women's movement as well as all those people inside the Labour Party who are prepared to take action against Labour's anti-working class policies.

## APPEALING

We are therefore appealing to you to support the Socialist Unity campaign in the May elections. You can do this by working in the election campaign; giving a financial

I am willing to do work for any Socialist Unity candidate standing in my area ..... YES/NO

I enclose a donation to help Socialist Unity's election campaign. State amount ..... (cheques made payable to Socialist Unity), or bankers orders made payable to Socialist Unity, Coop Bank, 110 Leaman Street, London E1. Account No. 30196391.

I am prepared to sponsor Socialist Unity candidates, which I do in a personal capacity.

Name (block capitals) .....

Address .....

State positions held in labour movement etc. ....

Post this slip to Socialist Unity, c/o Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N1.

**SOCIALIST UNITY**  
Steering Committee Meeting  
Sunday 12 February 12 noon-4pm  
76B Digbeth (next to Digbeth Civic Hall) Birmingham

donation and sponsoring the Socialist Unity candidates. By doing one — or even better, all — of these three things you will be making sure that the needs of working people and their allies are not buried by the policies of class collaboration.

Candidates will be fielded in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Hull, Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool, Bolton, Nottingham, Birmingham, Bristol, Coventry, Watford, Newcastle, Manchester, Basingstoke, and four boroughs in London.



# Army ready to scab Drivers challenge 10 per cent

Oil tanker drivers are maintaining their overtime ban in the face of the latest offer from the oil companies, and statements from the Government that it is already training troops to step in. Esso, Shell, BP Oil and Texaco have dressed the offer up as a 15 per cent increase, but with the turmoil around the Government's sanction list they will doubtlessly stress that this formula is within the 10 per cent; the additional 5 per cent involves a productivity scheme. **DODIE WEPPLER reports**

The tanker drivers are out to see their action has results. They will be meeting again in mid-February to assess how much closer they are to the 60 per cent increase in the original claim, in the wake of a fortnight's overtime ban.

The oil companies have claimed that the productivity scheme could put up to £15 a week in drivers' pay packages, but most Transport and General Workers' stewards who represent the 8,000 drivers involved reject this figure as nonsense.

## PRICE OFFENDERS

At the beginning of the month, the tanker drivers issued a warning to filling stations that if 'excessive prices' were charged for petrol, they would not receive their petrol deliveries. Last week they refused to deliver to several offending garages. This is a step which can avoid the usual attempts to pit consumers against workers in struggle.

And it can deter filling stations who have upped prices to as high as 90p a gallon.

## DELIVERY CUTS

It is estimated that the overtime ban will cut deliveries by 30 per cent — and if the drivers remain solid — a further 20 per cent cut is envisaged. Drivers employed by Mobil have already settled for the 15 per cent.

The Road Haulage Association — a federation of private companies employing 15,000 lorry drivers — have announced that the action taken by oil tanker drivers may also begin to affect food deliveries.

Lorry drivers are also in the midst of negotiations concerning their claim. Half have already won increases which break through the Government's 10 per cent, establishing a new basic rate of £53 for a 40-hour week. In practice, this amounts to a 10 per cent rise, plus the consolidation of pay

supplements into the basic rate for overtime pay calculations.

To date, drivers in Scotland, Tyne and Tees, Leeds, Bradford, and Sheffield have opted for this settlement, and London drivers are expected to follow.

The unofficial four day strike by South Wales lorry drivers ended last weekend after ACAS stepped in to 'remind both sides of the Government's guidelines'.

This settlement is not the end of action by drivers. Besides the oil tankers' action, the claim of 25,000 public sector drivers employed by the National Freight Corporation also calls for a 15 per cent increase. Sir Daniel Pettit, chairperson of the corporation, has been threatened with the sack if he gives into a settlement beyond the 10 per cent limit.

## NOT JUSTIFIED

Whatever the result of the action taken by drivers, we can be certain that if it bites, it will be used as an excuse to justify further increases in petrol, food and other goods affected.

If this happens, the real culprit — the Labour Government and its policy of wage restraint — will get off scot free. That's why every effort must be made to ensure that support for drivers is organised now.

# UNION NEWS IN BRIEF

## Sparks fly

FOUR UNIONS representing 90,000 power workers rejected the offer made by the Electricity Council last week in the current round of negotiations. The Council wheeled out the familiar productivity scheme, in addition to a settlement within the 10 per cent limit.

The four unions involved — the Electrical and Plumbing Trades Union, the General and Municipal Workers, the Transport and General Workers and the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers — have until the next date for negotiations on 15 February to consider how to pursue their 30 per cent claim.

The productivity scheme offered so far is estimated to increase power workers' income by a mere £2.70 a week. That's a long way from meeting the many problems reflected in the power workers' claim — not least the fact that a full 40 per cent of industrial workers in power stations have lost their jobs over the past 10 years.

## NUM talk on

'A NON-negotiation' is how Arthur Scargill — president of the Yorkshire miners — described last week's round of

talks with the National Coal Board. The miners' union negotiating team decided at the bargaining table to push ahead with their 92 per cent wage claim. But this decision was taken against Scargill's move to recommend rejection of the offer and rapid industrial action. He was supported by only one other member of the executive — Emyln Williams, president of South Wales miners.

Union leaders turned down the NCB's offer of a £75m settlement — within Labour's 10 per cent guidelines — to be distributed throughout the union as the NUM sees fit. The NCB also rejected the miners' demand for a return to a wage settlement date of November, and maintained the 12-month rule.

Although a handful of local pits has already taken action since the imposition of the incentive schemes, there is no way that these local strikes will reverse the 18 per cent decline in earnings suffered by miners between April 1975 and 1977. And any wage increases on the road to making up this fall in wages — if confined to local productivity schemes — are carried out not only at the expense of the health and safety of miners, but also the fighting unity of their union.

Negotiations continued on Wednesday following Tuesday's meeting between the TUC and three executive members of the union, which discussed the 8-month settlement date the

## Hospital ancillary workers offer

HOSPITAL ancillary workers are currently being asked by their employers to accept an increase in wages within the 10 per cent guidelines. The offer amounts to a slap in the face for the policy adopted by the major unions involved — in particular NUPE — for a £50 minimum wage.

It offers a £3.20 increase in basic pay, with only £2 of the increases under phases one and two consolidated into basic rates. This would bring basic pay for even the highest grade worker to only £45.76.

Other aspects of the claim are dismissed equally as flippantly. The claim for longer holidays and a shorter working week are referred to further negotiation 'without commitment'. Should any hospital ancillary worker be worried that with inflation at 10 per cent living standards will be further eroded, management have promised that there will be 'meaningful discussions' if real living standards of ancillary staff fall below the value of the agreement.

Once again low paid workers are being asked to pay the rent with promises, and earn a decent minimum wage through endless overtime.



Workers at Garners' Steak House in London have been on strike for two weeks. The 85 workers went on strike after a number of them had been sacked for taking part in a demonstration asking the company to grant recognition to the Transport and General Workers Union. Garners' offered to take the workers back if they left the union, but the strikers rejected the offer.

Resolutions of support and donations should be sent to: Garners' Strike Committee, Room 84, 12-13 Henrietta St, London WC2.

Photo: MARK RUSHIER

## 'neither to laugh nor to cry, but to understand' In defence of Socialist Challenge

For the last eight weeks our correspondence columns have been full of a discussion on the content and character of Socialist Challenge. Many of the letters have been critical of some aspect or other of the paper. The three sources from which most of the letters have come have been Big Flame; ex-members of the SWP and other far left groups; and members of the IMG. We shall try to systematically answer the points which many comrades have made.

The comrades of Big Flame were remarkably open, frank and non-sectarian in their approach. They wrote: 'If Socialist Challenge disappeared next week, we would mourn its loss. It would leave an empty space which wouldn't very easily be filled again. Already in its short life it has proven the need for an honest non-sectarian and stimulating newspaper of the British far left.'

So it is fair to ask, why won't Big Flame commit itself to working closely with the paper?

Their main critique of the paper was that it was not a paper aimed at the masses and as such it was less accessible than their own paper, which they would continue producing. Fair enough! But let us explain what we understand by a mass paper and why we think that there are enormous pitfalls in the approach of the BF comrades.

In the first instance even a mass paper, in our conception, has to decide which section of the masses it is going to attempt to reach. Unorganised workers, unemployed, residents of council estates, trade unionists, Labour Party supporters, and so on. Secondly it has to have the capacity to be able to do so. This means an organisation with at the very least 20,000-25,000 members.

The early Communist Party directed its agitation and propaganda at the most politically advanced factory militants, many of whom were under reformist influence, but it had both the members and an industrial implantation. We do not believe that either of us or even the far left as a whole has reached that stage yet.

This does not mean that one does not provide a line of advance for the masses. We do

### VANGUARD

so, however, by arming the vanguard militants, responsive to the initiatives of revolutionary socialism, and desirous of taking the struggle forward. Our demand for the 'nationalisation of Grunwick under workers control by the Labour Government' is one such example. The fake speech by Benn was another. For it was a novel way of explaining that if left social democrats did start a fight against the Labour Government, even within their own political framework, it would be a step forward for the masses.

Now, of course, Big Flame comrades would disagree with that because of their views on the Labour Party, but that precisely raises the question of 'which masses and where?' It could be argued that even in producing a line for the masses the paper has been insufficient. We could argue that proposition but it would be an argument within our overall approach to politics.

What we are opposed to and what Socialist Challenge has — despite irritations in many quarters — studiously and consciously avoided, has been to posture as though we were speaking to millions. That only

for something that might never happen, seems to be their argument. Well, that is their choice and we cannot impose our opinions on them. Hopefully we will all learn from the development of British



impresses oneself and one's supporters. No one else believes it's real. It can often lead to fantasy politics and gross sectarianism. We also avoid the complementary attractions of substituting ourselves for the mass of workers, or even worse, impersonating them. That again is self deception and can even become a parody.

However there is one argument which the Big Flame comrades utilise, which in our view is both circular and smacks of demagoguery. They say that Socialist Challenge 'is the line paper of the IMG'. We have never denied that if the IMG remained the only organisation on the Editorial Board it would require either amnesia or mental gymnastics on our part to prevent the paper from essentially reflecting our views. But in our opinion even the criticism of the 'IMG stamp' on the paper isn't accurate. We would even go so far as to say that some of the weaknesses of the paper have been that on occasions we have failed to draw from the strengths of positions developed by the IMG. Some comrades have put it this way: the political orientation of Socialist Challenge on several crucial questions has fallen uneasily between that of 'Our Common Ground' (the programme on which the paper was launched which provides a principled basis for revolutionary unity) and the full programme of the IMG, to the detriment of the paper.

But even if one accepted Big Flame's concern on this score, there is only one way to change the situation. Understandably it seems a risk to many Big Flame comrades. Better stay with what we've got than risk it

politics in the coming period. Some non-aligned and IMG comrades who have written have made some interesting and useful criticisms, which we will try and take account of in future changes in the paper. Others have centred their objections on the Surplus Value and Under Review pages. These two pages out of sixteen have attracted the wrath of many comrades. 'Heavy', 'inaccessible', 'incomprehensible' have been only some of the adjectives which have been used. Neither these or any other comrades have made criticisms of the rest of the paper.

What does this reflect? This sometimes stems from a narrow and restricted definition of what constitutes a political

paper. Lenin, Trotsky and Gramsci — contrary to what many comrades believe — were not soft on any variety of syndicalism or economism. If Lenin could attack on his characteristically harsh invective the economism of Tsarist Russia — when every workers' strike was infinitely more important than in a modern bourgeois democratic state — one can only conjecture as to how he would have dealt with those who have reduced politics to what takes place at the point of production, thus inverting the social democratic distinction between politics and trade unionism.

Labourists say that politics is what happens in Parliament. Is our reply to them to be: No, politics is only what happens at the point of production. That, unfortunately, has been the reply of the groups who have dominated the British far left for many decades. We reject this view.

But stop, many comrades will shout. That's a distortion. We want reviews in the paper, we want theory, but make it more readable and accessible. One can agree with this and all comrades on the Editorial Board will admit that, on occasion, we have printed articles not easily comprehensible. But we feel that the criticism reflects something deeper if comrades only stop and think.

Their model of workers' papers is a souped up version of the Daily Mirror. Certainly, the Mirror can take up some issues in a very positive, agitational fashion, such as racism. But don't make a mistake about what the paper represents. It is the straitjacket through which the ruling class confines working class consciousness. Shop stewards, who are even marginally interested in politics or who take their stewardship seriously do not simply read the Mirror. They read the Guardian, Times, even the Financial Times and the Economist because these papers give them an insight into ruling class politics and ambitions.

### POLITICS

We are attempting to develop a paper which can foster an overall proletarian political intervention in British politics. We believe that such a paper can lay the basis for the development of an embryonic socialist alternative to Labourism. This means we reject



syndicalist and sociological notions of the paper which imply that it should be for 'the mass of workers', for 'revolutionary workers', for 'class struggle workers' or whatever. It is a paper designed for militants attracted to revolutionary socialist politics, ideas and policies for resolving the crisis.

### EVERY ASPECT

Thus we have to produce a paper which does more than simply report struggles and make general propaganda for socialism. We have to deal with every aspect of class society and confront every weapon of the bourgeoisie.

Some of the paper's weaknesses are due to lack of resources. We would like to have more research facilities so that our coverage of strikes develops beyond acting as cheerleaders. We would like to have local reports which, in addition to strikes, cover such aspects as debates on Trades Councils and the political forces involved in them, developments in local Labour Parties, the activities of the Communist Party and other groups, etc. If we could afford it financially we would have a regular correspondent in the House of Commons to report what goes on for our readers. We can assure comrades that our reports would be different to the entire bourgeois press!

What in our opinion has been a real weakness of the paper has been that we have not been able to present basic and elementary material of an educational character for militants just coming towards socialist politics. We will accordingly correct this flaw in the paper in the coming months.

To summarise: the paper should be taken as a whole. Its circulation has doubled, as compared to Red Weekly, not because it is better produced or has better journalists, but because the political conceptions on which it was founded have found an echo. This is the most important gain we have made.

As we pointed out in our first issue, we believe that on fundamentals (the state, parliament, soviet, democracy) we are correct. But this does not mean that we have the answers to every question. Nor does it mean that Trotskyism — a political current which grew up in a battle against stalinised marxism — has definitive views on philosophy, economics,

aesthetics. We do believe we are strong on history and politics, though even here we have much to learn. Therefore we have to reject the idea that every letter in our columns which criticises a particular aspect of Trotskyism or Leninism should immediately be replied to by the Editorial Board.

The ultimate logic of that position — a theoretical absolutism, only too common on the far left — would be a virtual suppression of 'unorthodox' ideas. On other issues we can have useful and educative debates for all concerned. A case in point is the debate initiated, incidentally as a strong attack on syndicalism and economism, by John Ross in our pages. For the point at this juncture was well expressed by the old philosopher Spinoza (who was not a member of the Fourth International): 'Neither to laugh nor to cry, but to understand'.

### The Editorial Board of Socialist Challenge.

\* IN ADDITION to the contributions to the debate about who the paper is aimed at, we have also initiated a related discussion around the paper's political basis. To date, we have received contributions from the International Communist League and the Revolutionary Communist Tendency.

We feel the importance of this debate cannot be underestimated, and hope to receive further contributions from both members of other left organisations as well as Socialist Challenge groups — and individuals who have not yet taken the step to join local readers' and supporters' groups.

The Editorial Board will be collectively responding to this debate now that it is underway in our columns, and urge readers to participate also. This will undoubtedly be an important point of discussion at the Socialist Challenge Conference which is scheduled for the last weekend in May.

We will be printing shortly further proposals and details for the national Socialist Challenge supporters' conference but take this opportunity to urge readers to contact local Socialist Challenge groups. This way readers can better influence the direction of the debate — as well as that of the paper — through collective political preparation for the national conference.



John Ross' article in the January 12-19 issues of *Socialist Challenge* leaves something to be desired in terms of setting the tone of a 'strategic debate'. Through the fraternal haze of that paper's new and open style we detect the steely glint of an International Marxist Group 'line' on the crisis and its reasons for its delayed political development.

Before we discuss the key issues of the current period some clarifying points need to be made about the content of John's article. He lumps together quite different political currents as 'centrist' and 'Eurocommunist'. For our part we have clear differences with the Eurocommunist currents in the CP on a number of issues, e.g. opposition to: 1) coalition-type politics; 2) the Social Contract in its present form; 3) gradualist notions of the socialist transformation.

The label 'centrist' plays a full role in his identification of false theory. But are all socialists in the Labour Party necessarily centrist? If so, would the term apply to the IMG's period in the Labour Party before 1969? Thirdly, John Ross roundly attacks the 'centrist' thesis of the 'invincibility' of bourgeois institutions. (A thesis without an owner it seems.) This argument is merely a straw person, easily scattered to the winds with a few blunt polemical thrusts. Of course, if we had argued that the socialist revolution was impossible then a debate on socialist strategy would be deemed pointless. It is therefore worth pointing out that we have never regarded bourgeois institutions as invincible, nor regarded socialism as impossible. We have simply tried to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy, and only ultra-lefts would regard such 'intelligence' activities as worthless.

**OILING**

On the long-term perspective we have important differences with the Trotskyist 'conception of the epoch'. The errors which arise systematically from the latter have been documented by us, as for example the derailment of the Trotskyist movement on economic perspectives, and expectations for parliamentary democracy, after the end of the Second World War. A common thread between those earlier errors, and the errors of the IMG in 1973-4 is a massive over-estimation of the mobilising power of the revolutionary left in relation to the power of social democracy. Hence, for example, the exaggerated optimism on the far left during the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974.

John Ross, in orthodox Trotskyist fashion, explains the recent period of working class passivity in terms of the 'betrayal' of the labour bureaucracy. Without hesitation we agree that some left trade union leaders, particularly Jones and Scanlon, and some members of the Tribune group in Parliament, particularly Foot, have played a major role in cushioning attacks on the right-wing policies of the Labour government. Indeed, they have been architects of those very policies in some cases. Their motives were complex, and their reasons diverse, but they, for their mistakes, are burdened with the responsibility of aiding the rightward drift of a government which was initially elected on a moderately radical programme. Personally, we endorse the opposition of *Socialist Challenge* and others to those right-wing policies.

However, in John Ross' hands the 'labour bureaucracy' is given a key and determining role in the whole affair. It appears that the downturn in the class struggle is simply due to the 'betrayal' of these leaders. But the key question for revolutionary socialists is not simply to place blame upon reformist leaders but to explain why masses of people still give these leaders their support. Why did the working class not reject the policies of the right and follow the alternatives which were

# Throw out the old prescriptions!

by Geoff Hodgson and Peter Jenkins  
(both members of the Labour Party and  
Independent Labour Publications)



presented by the left? This is not a simple question to answer, but we can note how militancy was sapped by unemployment, weakened by the promises of reform in the early Social Contract, and arrested by propaganda on the dangers of a detrimental wage-price spiral in 1975-6. The result of the EEC referendum in 1975 ratified the defeat of the Labour left and gave apparent legitimacy to Wilson's roll-back of several working-class gains. There was no massive working class resistance to the offensive of the Labour right because any Labour government seemed preferable to the return of the Tory backwoods persons.

According to the 'betrayal' thesis the working class ('instinctively socialist' according to the IMG) is held in check because reformist ideas rain upon it from up high, and because it lacks an adequate revolutionary party to show the way. Whilst we would accept the need to combat reformist ideas, and work towards the creation of a mass socialist party, it is hardly sufficient to analyse a defeat or downturn in these terms. Concrete analysis gives way to easy sloganising.

To reject the betrayal thesis is not to absolve the reformists. It is a move towards a concrete analysis of the mechanisms through which the traditional leaders maintain a mass following.

Any realistic analysis of those mechanisms must take into account the key role of institutions such as parliament, the Labour Party, and trade unions. This is not to say that these institutions are 'invincible', 'better' or 'more democratic' (we have never said that) but they have a social weight and significance which cannot be ignored. Furthermore consciousness and action are structured by such institutions and the relative weight of real social forces. Hence it is not simply a matter of the working class being drowned in reformist ideas or being misled by reformists. That approach is merely at the level of ideas and is not grounded on real social forces and institutions. We assert a materialist, rather than an idealist, approach to the problem.

The result of this perspective must be to reject many of the traditional strategic approaches that are found on the far left. It is not an adequate strategy, as some groups believe, simply to combat bourgeois ideology and theory. Nor is it an adequate strategy simply to 'expose' the reformists. Unless the real map of institutions and social forces is changed then there is no possibility of serious advance. It may appear that Ross seems to recognise this when he concludes, in the second part of his article, that the urgent task is to build a new united revolutionary socialist organisation. But in fact he simply displaces the error one stage back. For how is this organisation to be built? In his view, it seems, it is done by presenting revolutionary ideas and denouncing reformists.

**GREASING**

However, the only realistic strategy of advance is to key into the real forces and institutions which exist at present, not to magically hope new ones to come into being. Perhaps unfortunately, neither the IMG nor any other organisation on the far left represent a sufficiently powerful social force in British society. And they show no sign of becoming so in the conceivable future.

This leads us to the thorny question of the Labour Party. Despite the rightward shift of the government, most of the constituency organisations, and a major part of the National Executive Committee, have remained on the left. Due to external and internal pressure the Labour Party, (not the Labour Government, or the Parliamentary Labour Party) has, for example, mounted an important anti-racist and anti-fascist campaign which, despite its defects, has had a considerable effect in the country as a whole e.g. Joe Ashton's TV broadcast. The far left just has to admit that it has neither the resources nor the institutional weight to achieve similar results. The fact is that the Labour Party can be used to great effect by genuine socialists working within it. As long as the far left refuses to admit this it will lose massive opportunities and remain in the political wilderness.

Before 1965 the entire revolutionary left was inside the Labour Party. Then, during the late 1960s, most of the groups left, leaving the tiny Militant group, with its crude style of politics, to make massive and undeserved gains. From 1969 to 1974 the far left groups fed on the wave of industrial militancy that emerged in the period. But they were derailed by the victory of Labour at the polls. Now it is partially recognised that the industrial struggle is not the only struggle and a contest with the right on the electoral terrain is also necessary.

We would go further than that. The object of an electoral intervention should not simply be to spread propaganda but also to shift the material balance of forces on the parliamentary terrain. Unless that is done the working class will remain trapped by reformism. This is by no means an orthodox Leninist strategy, neither does it mirror the reformist fatalism of Kautsky (even the Kautsky of 1908). But we are not going to get very far by endlessly repeating the old prescriptions.

## What's Left

Rates: 3p per word. Display £2 per column inch. Deadline: 3pm Saturday before publication.

**INTERNATIONAL Socialists and Revolutionary Unity.** Conference sponsored by ex-IS/SWP activists. Sessions on IS tradition, political situations, revolutionary unity, Africa Centre King St, London WC2, 11 Feb. Details and registration [£1 includes documents in advance] from Martin Shaw, 67 Salisbury St, Hull.

**MANCHESTER CHILE** 8e 10a-12y Campaign day school on Chile, Sat 11 Feb, 11am-6pm. Plus social 6pm to midnight. At the Squal, Devas St, Manchester.

**DEFEND THE ARTS** campaign and March. Benefit night. North-westScanner, the group at the centre of the political censorship controversy will be performing Out of Control, plus live music, grab, and drinking. Sat 4 Feb, 8pm at the Squal, Devas St, Manchester. Tickets £1, claimants 50p.

**SOUTHAMPTON WOMEN'S** Centre benefit. Broadside's *The Working Women's Charter Show*, plus Sandra Ken, Sat 18 Feb, 7.30pm. At St Matthews Church Hall, St Marys Road. Tickets 75p from 16 Harborough Road, Tel: 29725.

**HULL IMG** is holding a day school on 'Revolutionary Socialism: Why and how', Sat 11 Feb, 11am-4pm. Council chamber, Hull University Students Union. Disco in the evening. Creche available. Registration forms from: D. South, 7 Parkside Close, Park Avenue, Hull, Tel: 492950.

**'SMASH THE NAZI NF'** badge. Black list and offering on green, 22p each, 10 for £1.95, 50 for £5.30. 100 for £12.00, all incl. post. From: Box HP, 341 Gosport Rd, Southampton.

**FIGHT RACISM** badges, 15p each plus 7p postage. Orders of 10 or more 11p each and post free. Send to: Badges, PO Box 56, London N1 2XP. Cheques payable to J. Wilson.

**LONDON IMG** will be organising a series of all-London aggregates over the next two months as part of the International Marxist Groups pre-conference discussion. Because of the crisis of perspective on the revolutionary left and moves towards revolutionary regroupment, the following organisations and individuals have been invited to attend the conference: Workers League, Big

Flame International Socialist groupings, Libertarian Communist Group and *Socialist Challenge* supporters. If you are a member of any of these currents and would like to attend the London discussion, write for details to: London IMG, c/o PO Box 50, London N1.

**CARDIFF** Debate between IMG and Communist Party: 'What strategy?' Mon 13 Feb, 7.30pm. Corporation Hotel, Crowbridge Road East. Admission 20p IOAPs and unemployed 10p.

**SOUTH WEST** conference on positive legislation and local campaigns, 11 Feb, 10.10am at Swansea University Students' Union. Contact Swansea NAC, c/o Bryn-y-mor Crescent, Swansea.

**BRISTON** Socialist Club 10 Feb: Real Union Irish Folk Band, Canterbury Arms, Canterbury Crescent, London SE24, 8pm. Entrance 50p, 14 Feb: A Night of Progressive Rock with Henry Cow, Red Balans, Avaro, Lambeth Town Hall, 8pm. Entrance £1.00.

**THE IRISH** Struggle. Scottish conference on the fight against Britain's presence in Ireland, including speakers from Ireland, workshops and debates on strategy, creche, anti-nuclear march. Organised by the First of May, 11am-6pm, sat 18 Feb. Edinburgh Trades Council, Picardy Place, Edinburgh.

**DROP** the Official Secrets Charge! Demonstrate against the prosecution of Aubrey Berry and Campbell! March on Sunday 19 Feb, the anniversary of their arrest. Assemble Tolmers Square NW1 (Euston/Waterloo St. tubes), 1.30pm. Move off 2.00pm via 'Official secret' buildings to the Home Office. More details from ABC Defence Campaign, 374 Gray's Inn Rd, London WC1, (01-775 2377).

**ERITREA: The Revolutionary Struggle.** Mary Dinos, director of War or Want who has recently returned from Eritrea, will lead discussion chaired by a member of the EPLF. Int. title of Race Relations, 247.9, Rostonville Rd, London N1. Wed 13 Feb at 5.30pm.

**SOCIALIST FEMINIST** Education: Women, Low Pay and the Unions, 12 Feb, 10.30-4.30 at St Anne's Hall, Venn St, Clapham. SW4 (one minute from Clapham Common tube). Goodie available. For further information ring 01-726 7316.

**REVOLUTIONARY Communist No. 7.** Main feature is a full length political analysis of the CPGB's Draft British Road to socialism 1977. The article discussed the vital issues of imperialism, the state and revolution, democracy and the working class as raised in the draft BRS. Included also is the first issue review of the New Communist Party. Other articles include: Trade Unions and the State - the Struggle Against the Social

contract. The CPGB and Ireland: Underconsumptionism and Crises. Politics of Technological Control. Price 50p plus 15p postage from RCG Publications Ltd, 49 Ralston Rd, London SE24 0LN.

**CALENDAR** for 1978. Calendar featuring 600 photos by Soviet artist, Vladimir Tatlin. 260 pages (brown and blue) full-colour size only 600 incl VAT plus 15p postage and packing. Available from RCG Publications Ltd, 49 Ralston Rd, London SE24 0LN.

**HANDS OFF IRELAND!** is a regular anti-imperialist bulletin calling for the immediate withdrawal of British troops and self-determination for the Irish people. Articles in issue 3 include: Torture, the RUC and the British State, Irish Prisoners in English Jails by Jackie Kaye and Building an Anti-Imperialist Movement. Price 20p plus 7p postage from RCG Publications Ltd, 49 Ralston Rd, London SE24 0LN.

**NUT EXECUTIVE** Election meeting. ANSW and STA candidates have been invited to speak. Political groups are welcome. This is the first political debate between left-wing candidates. 26 Feb, 7.30pm at the Princess Alice, Romford Rd, Forest Gate, Essex SE from Walthamstow. Central or Hainbow, 26 or 85 from Aldgate, St A. End. Box or Romford. Train to Forest Gate from Liverpool St.

**'WHY ZIONISM'** is the main obstacle to

peace in the Middle East - hear Mick Ashley (Brighton) Chairperson Norman Temple, Sun 12 Feb 2pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London EC4Z. Entry free. On 26 Feb: Zionist oppression of oriental Jews in Israel. Tickets 1 free from BAZO, c/o 58 Old Broad Street, London.



The badge with the anti-racist slogan that no militant should be without. Out next week. 20p plus 7p p&p for one; or 16p each for ten or more. From J. Wilson, PO Box 50, London N1. PO/cheques should be made out to J. Wilson.

# THE RACIST MENACE

On Saturday 4 February, 2,000 anti-racists marched through Wolverhampton against racism.

## 'Surely you don't take these attacks seriously?'

'THE POLICE are now denying they've had any information about racist activity. What a bloody mockery. They've been informed of the attacks. We've got the information. We should call them "liar" to their face.'

That was the comment of Bishan Dass, a Labour councillor, at last week's meeting of the Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee, which unanimously decided to compile a dossier of the recent knifings, burnings, and threats against the black community.

Dass himself has received numerous abusive phone calls and letters. 'The Popular Front for the Liberation of Britain has been formed to combat invaders and to free the country of foreign influence and indigenous treachery. The invaders will be driven out and all traitors punished. You leave now.'

That was the text of a letter received by N.S. Noor, a leader of the Asian community, on 28 January — the very day that the West Midlands deputy chief constable, Maurice Buck, was denying to the world any knowledge of racist activity.

### ABUSIVE

Noor, like Dass, is well used to abusive threats. They come regularly in the post and on the phone. They are all reported to the police. And the response of the police? 'Surely you don't take these seriously?' is what the community leaders are told.

Anti-racists and the black community are taking very seriously the latest incidents. These include:

- A knife attack by three white youths on Noel Samuels, a West Indian, outside the Connaught Hotel on 25 January. This was the incident which led, two days later, to the decision by some three hundred black youths to surround the George pub, a hangout of the fascists.

- The Guru Ravi Das temple has been burgled on numerous occasions, and slogans such as 'Black bastards go home' daubed on its walls. On the night of 14 January, the back of the temple — a newly-built section — was firebombed. A police officer told the temple officials: 'This is nothing new. It happened to you in Uganda, and now it's happening here.'

- On the same night as the burning of

the temple, paraffin was used to set fire to three Indian shops, in Park Street South, Lea Road, and Cannock Road.

### TEN THUGS

Militants consider that there are probably no more than ten racist thugs in the town who are taking direct action of this kind. But coupled with the failure of the police to even acknowledge such incidents — quite apart from the consistent racist harassment of the police themselves — this is quite sufficient to put the black community in a nervous and combative mood.

The Wolverhampton police have a lot to pride themselves on. On 14 June last year, for example, they managed to arrest a teenage white as he was burgling an Indian shop. After persistent inquiries from the community about what happened to this youth, deputy chief constable Buck had a little admission to make in a letter he sent on 20 December:

'I am satisfied that the officers concerned were at fault when the man escaped and they have now been suitably advised. Despite subsequent inquiries...the suspect has not been re-arrested and the latest information indicates that he has now left this country.'

The biggest fear of the black community are the reports of gangs of youths touring the streets at night and putting on white hoods before attacking lone blacks. No doubt to their complete embarrassment, the police arrested two white youths on 28 January, one of whom was carrying a white hood.

Just in case he 'leaves the country', *Socialist Challenge* is revealing that he is Paul McNally, whose mother, Alice McNally, stood as the NF candidate for the Weinsfield North ward in the council elections held in May, 1976. Of course, this evidence is purely circumstantial...

### INQUIRY

In addition to handing their preliminary dossier to the police after Saturday's demonstration, the anti-racist committee is demanding that the Home Office should set up a non-police inquiry into racism in the town's police force and commit itself to the removal of all racists among the police. They also want an open labour movement inquiry into racist and police activities.



# Wolverhampton black 'SELF DEFENCE' ONLY ANSWER

Enoch (not Powell, but a stock character in Black Country jokes) saw his friend Eli thrashing about helplessly in the canal. Enoch did not go to his aid. Instead he ran all the way to the foundry where Eli worked.

'Have you heard the terrible news about Eli drowning?' he breathlessly asked the foreman. The foreman nodded. 'Can I have his job?' Enoch asked. The foreman shook his head: 'The bloke who pushed him in the canal has already got it.'

Wolverhampton, thanks to a certain MP who ten years ago spoke about rivers of blood, has become something of a by-word for racism in Britain.

But it is necessary to know a little about the nature of the Black Country to understand the background to the recent wave of physical attacks on black people in the town, and the kind of response which the labour movement has made.

The Black Country — the brick and concrete belt that reaches from Birmingham in a north-westerly direction to border on Wolverhampton — derives its name from the long decades of smoke deposited by foundries and smelting shops on the scarred landscape; once chain-making country.

### FIERCE LOCALISM

To the visitor, it is hard to tell the difference between one part of the belt and another. Yet there is a fierce localism, reflected in the morbid competitiveness of Enoch and Eli humour. 'Everyone in Upper Gornall is mad', they will earnestly assure you in Lower Gornall.

The metal-based, skilled industries continue to be the main employers; and in Wolverhampton, militants use terms like 'labour aristocracy' to describe the traditional backbone of the labour movement, adding the word 'geriatric' in reference to the local leadership of the unions.

It was the town's south-west constituency which returned Enoch

Powell to Parliament. The Tories still hold it, and while Labour controls the town council — with a slim majority — there is not too much to distinguish their official views on race issues. Wolverhampton is not, at least at present, a stronghold for the National Front, and it is reasonable to surmise that Labour and Tory officials have not been over-anxious to shed the racist vote.

Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee, formed in the autumn of '76, has twice circulated all the union branches affiliated to the trades council. It received just one response, from the secretary of the local WE 247 branch of the Engineering Union.

On official AUEW paper, F. Wenlock wrote: 'My members feel (even if contrary to AUEW policy) that if any racist policies are being practised in this country it is not anti-black, but anti-white.' He went on to ask such profoundly socialist questions as: 'Why the majority of black youths will not conform to a society that at one time made us the greatest nation in the world?'

### REFERENDUM

Brother Wenlock considered it would be useful to hold a referendum on 'emigration'. Powell's mantle has stretched well beyond the local gentry, shopkeepers and workshop owners who can be counted on to cast their votes in a Conservative direction. David Edgar's characterisation in

Destiny of the Labour candidate with his racist opportunist standing in West Midlands by-election is only too credible.

### PHYSICAL ATTACKS

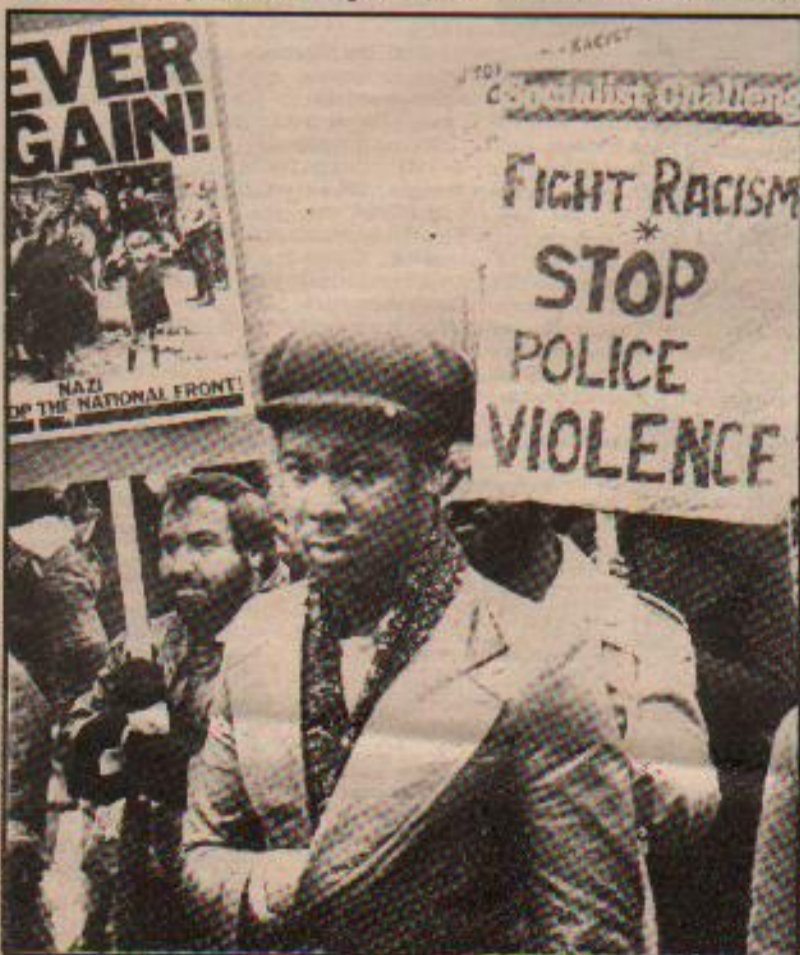
Though it has to be added that the grotesque chauvinism and incipient racism that weighs on the labour movement at official levels in Wolverhampton finds its counterpart in many other areas of the country.

In Wolverhampton, as in so many other areas, racism is not limited to



STEVE LOYDEN

routine discrimination in jobs, housing, education and social life, but manifests itself in direct physical attacks. The dossier on these pages discloses the



Scene from the 4 February demonstration, when 2,000 marched against racism.

All photographs: ANDREW WIARD (Report)

Asian youths joined the demonstration as it passed by.

GEOFFREY SHERIDAN reports from Wolverhampton on the plans that have been laid to

confront incipient



-racists  
ant the

recent attacks on black people in Enoch Powell's former stomping ground. The march had been

called at three days' notice, and set off with just three hundred. Over a thousand West Indian and



# ks say: NCE VER'

members of various left organisations — should have been able (within the space of two hours) to virtually unanimously decide on a firm political offensive. (That development alone stunned this particular visitor, well-used to the wranglings of such meetings.)

## DEMONSTRATION

Jefny Ashcroft, a member of the International Marxist Group, who chaired the meeting, sums it up this way: 'After the so-called riot, the police and press tried to use the incident to further harass the black community. Now the objective is to bring out all the details of attacks on blacks, the role of the NF, and of the cover that the police effectively provide for them.'

'To show that neither the police nor the racists will get away with it.' She adds that much of the black community trusts the anti-racist committee, and feels that in a time of crisis it's worth turning to. 'We have something of a tradition in this town of showing that we do stand up to racism, and support the combativity of black people.'

The decisions taken at the meeting were these:

- To hold a local demonstration last Saturday to show Wolverhampton, as Mel Chevannes, a Jamaican and member of the Communist Party, put it: 'The demo will be an important step in building the unity and organisation of black people. The action on 27 January showed that the fightback is on the way.' A national demo is planned for 11 March.

- For the labour movement to support black self-defence. As a teacher told the meeting: 'In general black kids feel threatened, harassed, and fearful.' A poly lecturer added that he'd seen students break down and cry with fear. NS Noor, president of the Indian Workers Association, states the issue bluntly: 'When the police are not there to protect you; when we know what happens in the courts, then self-defence is the only answer.'

- To call for an end to police harassment; the dropping of the charges against the seven black youths arrested on 27 January; and the setting up of a defence fund. Bishan Dass, a Labour councillor, told the meeting: 'I know how many times the police have tried to pick me up. The events on 27 January were the product of years of discriminatory behaviour by the police.'

- To compile a dossier of racist attacks, to present at a press conference after Saturday's demo, and to organise an open labour movement inquiry on the background to these attacks.

'When we carry out this inquiry,' says Socialist Challenge supporter Dave Stevens, secretary of the anti-racist committee, 'I think we'll unearth a tremendous number of attacks we just don't hear about. The degree of police harassment here is incredible.'

The committee didn't just happen to be in the right place at the right time.

When it was formed, eighteen months ago, it was the first organised expression of anti-racism established in Wolverhampton, and it has since been actively organising demonstrations, anti-fascist leafleting, and work on multi-racial education.

It was clear at the emergency meeting that both black community leaders and



JEFNY ASHCROFT

labour movement figures such as Sam Clark, secretary of the trades council, regard the committee as the most effective means of taking up the local fight against racism and fascism.

Steve Loyden, a Labour Party member, Anti-Nazi League sponsor, and president of Wolverhampton Poly students union, says the union has been one of the major supporters of the committee from the start.

## FACILITIES

'We have provided facilities for its work and will continue to do so as long as the committee functions in an open and democratic way, which it has done.' In the National Union of Students he comes closest to supporting the CP-backed Broad Left, but is extremely critical of its policies on racism.

'I was horrified,' he says, 'when NUS president Sue Sliptman attacked what happened at Lewisham. When she accused the far left of being brick-throwing thugs, she was accusing us too. The more people who become involved in the anti-racist fight the better, but at some level of basic agreement.'

'The minimum should be "No platform for fascists" — which the Broad Left with its Tory alliance has succeeded in defeating. It's laughable,' Loyden adds, 'to think that Tories in Powell's old seat will come in on our side.'

# No go areas for black youth

For what it's worth, the Government recently endorsed an EEC resolution calling for special tuition for migrant and immigrant children in the language of their 'host' country, and the maintenance of their mother tongues and cultures. On 8 July last year, Denis Grayson, the director of education in Wolverhampton, had this to say on the proposals:

'We would resist any move in the direction of specialist provision for any particular culture. That is a slippery slope and it would never stop.'

It is the likes of the 'enlightened' Grayson who are the first to denounce the alienated West Indian and Asian youth when — often out of desperation — they take action. Naranjan Singh Noor is only too familiar with the racism of education in Wolverhampton. He has worked as a teacher for the past ten years, and is both local and national president of the Indian Workers Association (GB).

'There is,' he says, 'no reflection in the schools of the culture of Asian and West Indian children. School is entirely divorced from home. There is no liaison service. There are no black studies, and no teaching of black languages.'

## NO GO AREAS

'The identity of black children,' he adds, 'is systematically demolished. Some head teachers suffer from pedagogical pessimism. They say there is a limit beyond which the black child can't go. There are no go areas for the black child shaped by the lower expectations on the part of the teachers. Black children are placed in the lower streams and taught not to learn.'

Racism in education takes many forms. Noor cites the example of Sharon Johnson, a West Indian who — in spite of A-plus marks in practically every subject at her primary — was refused admittance to Wolverhampton High School for Girls. The education authority refused to reveal the details of its selection system.

'All we were told is that selection is on merit,' says Noor. 'We can only presume that black children have no merit.' After strenuous local protest and the intervention of the Jamaican High Commission, Johnson was quietly admitted to another grammar



N.S. NOOR

school.

The issue of multi-racial education has been taken up by the IWA(GB), backed by the anti-racist committee. After petitions and months of negotiations, the local education authority has agreed to set up working parties on humanities and languages, with representation from the authority, the National Union of Teachers and the anti-racist committee.

The committee, meanwhile, has been denounced as being 'racist' by no less a figure than the leader of the Labour council, John Bird, because of the committee's demands for special treatment for blacks in schools. Another Labour Party member, Percy Young, who is chairperson of the town's pathetic Community Relations Council, has praised the 'superiority' of the English language, suggesting that it should be learned throughout the world.

## NATIONAL FRONT

'The majority of Labour councillors,' says Noor, 'are in my opinion as racist as the Tories.' In the local elections next May, the IWA(GB) will be standing candidates in Wolverhampton. Their theme will be that there can be no justice in a racist society. 'We start by being committed anti-racists, and every thing follows from that,' Noor explains. Over two thousand attend his organisation's main local functions.

With racism built into the social system, it comes as little surprise to learn that the National Front has begun to organise in the schools. One black teenager described to a reporter what happened on her way home from school last week when she was approached by a white youth she used to know in her class.

'He said that I should watch out because he had joined the NF now. He wanted my family to move out of the district and said if we didn't there'd be trouble. He told his friends that I had brothers and sisters that they should look out for. He said there were loads of others like him.'

In one school, Highfields, the Front has about ten members, including a prefect. Ten students from the school are presently involved in a Socialist Challenge group.

## GRIM FUTURE

In Wolverhampton, as in the rest of Britain, black youth face a grim future. Youth unemployment in the town numbered 6,700 at the end of last year, with just 300 jobs going. And unofficial estimates put the proportion of unemployed Asian youth at twice the average, with unemployed West Indian youth four times higher than average.

The mass media are undoubtedly right when they refer to the situation in Wolverhampton as 'explosive'. With a mass anti-racist and anti-fascist movement, the explosion will cripple the machine that's designed to keep blacks 'in their place'.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE  
MEETING in  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
DAVID EDGAR  
on  
'SMASH FASCISM'  
Wednesday 15 Feb. 7.30pm  
at the Vine, Stafford Street,  
Wolverhampton

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On Saturday, 18 February, the  
Young National Front will be  
holding a national rally at  
Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham.  
Birmingham Trades  
Council is likely to call a  
counter-demo. Be ready!

he outbreak of racist violence, and on the racism that hangs over the town.

# THE RACIST MENACE

Photo: G.M. COOKSON/Socialist Challenge



Photo: G.M. COOKSON/Socialist Challenge

## Cliff on Ireland

## SWP leader speaks

On 29 January in London, Tony Cliff — a leader of the Socialist Workers party — spoke at the Bloody Sunday Commemoration rally in London. Below we re-print what comrade Cliff had to say on the Irish struggle and solidarity with it in this country.

Socialist Challenge disagrees with a number of points and interpretations which Tony Cliff made, but we print the bulk of his speech because we believe it is important to record what a comrade of Tony Cliff's reputation has to say on an issue as important as Ireland.

Next week we will be publishing comments on this speech from the Irish organiser of the International Marxist Group.

OVER a century ago Marx said that a nation that oppresses others cannot be free. Therefore the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland is not only in the interests of the Irish people, it is in the basic interest of every worker in this country.

But let's be clear about it: British imperialism will not withdraw unless there is mass pressure on British imperialism...

### COLLAPSE

Now how do you build the mass pressure? There is a man who all of us can learn very much from. And that was James Connolly. Because James Connolly — the important thing I think — he was all the time emphasising that there was no difference between the class struggle and the struggle for national independence.

Unlike many other people talking on the left about different compartments he believed that the industrial struggle and the political struggle shouldn't be separated from each other.

This was his great contribution not only in Ireland, but also in Britain. The beginning of a real Marxist movement in Britain was with James Connolly. Before that the Marxists in Britain used to talk about the idea of socialism, the ideas of Marxism.

When he (Connolly) came to Scotland, when he started the... Socialist Labour Party... what was his main emphasis? That the industrial struggle organises workers. Organises millions by action industrially, and at the same time politically.

And before I get into a lot of argument on that point... I will tell you a very important story. Do you remember? The lock-out of Dublin — 1913. Now what happened at that time? It is true that it was not British workers who were locked out but interestingly the support (in Britain) was mass working class.

In Manchester 30,000 workers came to hear Jim Larkin. In Edinburgh more than 10,000 came to hear him. And in Glasgow, in London, all around the country... there

was mass support. Not only from Irishmen, but in the rest of the working class.

Then there was a TUC conference at the same time, a special conference, and they put the knife hard and good into the Irish workers; into James Connolly and Jim Larkin. What did they do? Remember it.

The Trades Union Congress was 90 per cent full-time officials. And there was a demand, 'No Action, No Action'. The railwaymen did go on strike... it is simply not true that (British) workers are not ready to go into solidarity with Irish workers.

What is important when the strikes (of Irish people) took place is that they cut across sections. For example 1911 in Liverpool. The seamen were on strike and the dockers were on strike. Not only that, the buses were out on strike. Two Royal Navy boats were in the port, 10,000 soldiers were in the streets. What do you think happened then?

The workers from Everton — the catholic area — the workers from Bootle, from the protestant area, joined forces to build barricades against the army. They were expert at building barricades. They had built them before. But now they knew which enemy; the enemy was the army and they built them against the army.

### STRIKES

It is very interesting that in all those cases the rank and file went one way, the leadership acted another way. It was a shame and disgrace what happened in 1916 when in the House of Commons. And you should remember it.

In 1916 when James Connolly was executed who led the uproar for the execution? Who was it? Arthur Henderson, secretary of the Labour Party... (member) of the Coalition Government. Therefore you should not, and in no way say that the leaders and the rank and file are just the same... And the great thing about James Connolly is that he knew the word 'rank and file'. He introduced the concept

of the 'rank and file' into the political activity in Britain and Ireland....

All of us here are for the withdrawal of troops from Ireland. We take it for granted. The only question: what are we going to do about it?

(Comrade Cliff then went on to give the example of the Anti-Nazi League, arguing the main fight against fascists is through working in factories and offices).

... And the Irish question. It is not an Irish question — it is a British question. British imperialism is there. We have to work exactly the same. We have to turn it into every factory, every

trade union branch, etc. etc.

It is no good us having an Anti-Nazi League unless we have Dockers Against Nazis, Building Workers Against Nazis, Engineers Against Nazis, Teachers Against Nazis. It is no good at all having it as an umbrella organisation unless it is going to have a relation to building workers, engineers, teachers, etc. etc.

### CENTRE

The British Army in Ireland and the police on the Grunwick picket-line are more or less the same tree. And we have to link the struggles because it is

together. The multi-nationals of the whole South (of Ireland) and the multi-nationals of all Britain, and the multi-nationals of all the world. They are the same bloody multi-nationals.

And I would never dream that it is the job of the British workers to tell the Irish workers how to fight. But let's be clear. If there is a march for the Right to Work in Britain, I don't see any reason at all why there shouldn't be a march from Dublin to Belfast on the question of unemployment — of 50 people who are all unemployed. Or if it can't go to Belfast, then a march from Dublin to Derry. I would love

to see the Orangemen shouting at them!

I want to see what impact there is on consciousness because unemployment in the South is as bad as the North. In fact it is worse.

### SHARE

What I am trying to say here is a very simple thing. We are speaking here to the converted. What we have to do is to turn what is here into a movement. A movement that is in the factories, in trade unions, in the localities. In every area where we go back tonight and tomorrow.



EAMONN McCANN and BERNADETTE McALISKEY, who — with Tariq Ali — were the other speakers at the rally

## New paper launched in Ireland



TWO HUNDRED people crowded into a room at Trinity College, Dublin to attend a rally last Friday evening to launch the new joint paper of the Movement for a Socialist Republic (Irish section of the Fourth International) and People's Democracy. The paper Socialist Republic is part of a process of far-left regroupment which is taking

place in Ireland. The MSR and PD hope to fuse in the early summer and build a common organisation.

The meeting heard Bernadette McAliskey from the Irish Socialist Party, Michael Farrell of People's Democracy, Brendan Kelly of MSR and Tariq Ali, editor of Socialist Challenge. McAliskey and Farrell both stressed the need

for left unity in order to face up to the tasks confronting Irish socialists.

They admitted that many, many mistakes had been made over the last ten years by left groups ('A reflection of the weak implantation of revolutionary marxism in Ireland' — Farrell), and that the lessons had to be learnt. Brendan Kelly explained the development of politics in the South, and stressed the importance of the recent defeat of the Coalition government.

Tariq Ali outlined the overall political situation in Britain, the project of Socialist Challenge and Socialist Unity and the importance of the Tribunal on British Presence in Ireland as a way of reviving activity on the Irish struggle.

The meeting responded generously to appeals of solidarity from a member of the IRSP against repression and from a leader of the Liffey dockers for support for their struggle. The atmosphere of the meeting as a whole was non-sectarian and enthusiastic — an indication that the mood against sectarianism is not confined to Britain.



**SOCIALIST REPUBLIC**  
New joint monthly paper of People's Democracy and Movement for a Socialist Republic (Irish section, 4th International) can be ordered from:  
Belfast: Connolly Books, Avoca Park, Andersonstown, Belfast B11.  
Dublin: 18 Clanawley Rd, Killister, Dublin 5.  
Subscription rates: Ireland £2, Britain £2, Europe £2.50, USA £3.25 (airmail).

Photo: G.M. COOKSON/Socialist Challenge

Dr. Owen's overseas practice

# Gunboats—a cure for everything

'So sexy! That's the dishy doctor': a fairly typical press reaction to the appointment of the Rt Hon David Anthony Llewellyn Owen PC, MB, BChir (etc.) as Foreign Secretary nearly a year ago. It was not an opinion shared by the left, either inside or outside the Labour Party. And, argues RICHARD CARVER, plenty has happened in that year to show that we were right and the dishy doctor brigade were wrong.

Unbridled hatred was the reaction to Owen's appointment in all quarters but the most reactionary. The Labour left has a pretty pathetic record on foreign policy (not to mention the health service, which had been Owen's previous responsibility) but there are still enough ex-miners among them to generate a healthy dislike of the pompous ex-public schoolboy.

## CHARITABLE

Owen comes from a 'comfortable' West Country family and was chairperson of Decision Technology International, a company dealing with computer applications. Then there was his directorship of World Security Trust — described as a 'charitable organisation interested in sponsoring research into peacekeeping and world security problems.'

Add to that his reported arrogance towards subordinates and his political oppor-

into Belize and Bermuda, as well as appointing a military Resident Commissioner in Rhodesia.

When Red Army Faction supporters kidnapped Hans Martin Schleyer, the head of the West German bosses' federation, *Socialist Challenge* claimed that there was a Fleet Street conspiracy to cover up his Nazi past. It turns out that it was the Foreign Office under Owen which intervened, unofficially of course, to prevent these embarrassing details getting out.

The Bermuda incidents at the end of last year are perhaps the best illustration of how the man's mind works. Two blacks were sentenced to death and the colonial government was afraid of popular reaction to the executions. Because of its colonial status they were unable to commute the sentence, so referred it back to Owen in London. 'Christian Socialism' suddenly went out the window

the many political, economic, defence and other factors which affect our interests, and not least the practical consideration that our views often carry the most weight with those governments with which we maintain good relations.'

## APOLOGY

This last point is presumably the guiding principle behind last week's grovelling apology to Saudi Arabia. The Foreign Office is not notorious as a left-wing haven, but it still issued a statement condemning the execution of Princess Mishal and her husband. When Owen heard he was furious and issued an immediate apology. This of course has nothing to do with Britain's massive defence contract with Saudi Arabia. It is instead an application of the 'practical consideration that our views often carry the most weight....'

This is not just a quirk of the Owen regime at the Foreign Office but the underlying method of Labour foreign policy. As in every other matter a Labour Government is responsible to no-one but Britain's imperialist interests. It is no accident that although 'lefts' are occasionally let into suitable areas such as Health and Social Security (though not at a time of cuts) the Foreign Office has been exclusively the preserve of the party's right wing.

## SUPERB

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Labour foreign policy has been indistinguishable from Tory. For example, America could hardly have found more enthusiastic backers for the Vietnam war if it had been someone like Maudling in office in the 1960s.

Nowhere is this better shown than in southern Africa. Every year party conference has faithfully passed a resolution calling for an end to economic and military links with South Africa, which is equally faithfully ignored by the Labour administration. Last October it passed one on Zimbabwe, calling for backing for the guerrilla struggle. Instead we get the Owen-Young plan for a transition to 'majority rule' policed by Ian Smith's army.



Harrier jump jets land in Belize.

To be fair, Owen cannot be held directly responsible. He probably played no part in drawing the thing up — that was done in Washington — and is only following the policy of successive Labour Foreign Secretaries: kill the guerrilla struggle and save an independent Zimbabwe for imperialism.

Owen's contribution to this project has not been startlingly original. All the fundamentals of the Owen-Young proposals have been the stock-in-trade of

British Foreign Secretaries for years: a prolonged transition to majority rule in which control of the state apparatus will be partly maintained by the white settler regime; a multi-million pound fund to compensate dispossessed whites; and British supervision of the transition.

The political weakness of the Labour left and the Zimbabwean nationalists has given this con-trick credibility. Both have called on Britain to carry out its colonial responsibility and Owen can justifiably claim that

that is just what he is doing. And of course 'colonial responsibility' has been Labour's rallying cry from Malaya to the Falkland Isles, from Aden to Cyprus.

## LAUNCHING PAD

Owen's particular variant of this formula is an unashamedly military one. The British troops have not been sent into Zimbabwe... yet! But Owen's appointment of Field Marshal Lord Carver as Resident Commissioner — the person who supervises the transition in Zimbabwe — shows an incredible lack of finesse. The imperialist project requires a large degree of collusion by the Zimbabwean nationalist leaders.

Yet Carver is universally detested in nationalist circles — not surprising considering his colonial credential was the brutal repression of the Kenyan nationalist movement in the 1950s. The Zimbabwe nationalist movements see that as an omen of what might happen to them. The fear is a real one, and this time it could well be a Labour Government that supervises the murder.

And what better man to have in charge than Dr Owen, the man who brought 'gunboat diplomacy' back into the language?

# Prescriptions

Some samples from one of Britain's leading political thinkers:

'I think the fundamental attitude in politics which I hold is respect for and deep commitment to democracy.'

'I do not wish to give Communism anywhere a spurious credibility, particularly in

Europe.'

'It cannot be stressed enough that a total maritime blockade of South Africa is a perfectly viable strategy providing the will exists among the major powers.'

'We've got to have more self-confidence in this country — if you call that arrogance, so be it.'

tanism and you already have a pretty despicable character. The story goes that Mervyn Stockwood, Bishop of Southwark and friend of the 'Christian Socialist' doctor, on being told that Owen was planning to enter politics, asked 'Which party?'

But that's not the only thing which gets up the Parliamentary left's noses. It will take a long time for Owen to live down his association with the right-wing Roy Jenkins grouping and his pro-Common Market resignation from the Labour front bench in 1972.

## WILDERNESS

Others who resigned at the same time stayed in the political wilderness out of some bizarre idea of political principle. Not so Dai Bach. (He likes to describe himself as Welsh, though he probably isn't.) He was back in a flash as soon as Labour came to power in 1974.

He quickly worked his way through the Department of Health and Social Security at a time of the most drastic cuts in the history of the Health Service to become the youngest Foreign Secretary (and the sexiest) since Anthony Eden. The comparison is an apt one. Eden, remember, was the Tory who sent British troops to Suez on British imperialism's last big fling.

Eden was quite a lot older by that time, but Owen doesn't want to wait for the grey hairs of middle age before he establishes his place as imperialism's hit man. He has already sent troops

and the two men died. Owen sent in British troops to deal with the predictable protests at this judicial racist murder.

The Belize episode has shown a similar cynicism. After repeated military displays by British forces, in the guise of defending the interests of the colony against Guatemalan territorial claims, Owen has now agreed to partition the country, giving way to Guatemala's demands.

Britain's real concern for Belizean rights had already been shown by its projected arms deal with El Salvador. The sale of armoured cars to the Central American dictatorship raised considerable protest in Britain. Owen assured the Commons that the El Salvador Government had agreed not to pass the armoured cars on to Guatemala for use against Belize.

The cheeky El Salvadoreans came out the next day and said that they had made no such agreement and nor would they. Collapse of Owen's position. It was that stupid diplomatic mistake, more than any concern for human rights, that led to the cancellation of the contract.

Not that Owen is unconcerned about human rights. Far from it! The Foreign Office letter we quoted last week in connection with surveillance of Iranian students in Britain stresses that, 'Dr David Owen makes a practice of raising human rights questions wherever necessary in his meetings with other governments.'

But the letter adds that, 'In pursuing the question of human rights we must take into account

# Zimbabwe Talks

THE DISHY doctor can claim a minor success in his talks with the leaders of the Zimbabwean Patriotic Front in Malta last week. He won Patriotic Front agreement to circulation of documents to the participants in the 'internal settlement' talks in Salisbury. This is a slight back-tracking by the Patriotic Front leaders and an indication that they are afraid of being out-flanked by developments in Salisbury.

Nationalist leaders Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe appeared to be pleased with the outcome of the talks. Certainly

the British and American representatives reacted favourably to the Patriotic Front proposal of a ruling council to supervise the transition to majority rule rather than a Resident Commissioner.

But Nkomo and Mugabe in turn conceded an important point when they agreed to the need for United Nations troops to police the transition. That is simply imperialist military presence by another name. Remember Korea or Cyprus.

Their agreement to send the conference documents to Salisbury is part of a self-made

problem; their acceptance of the mediating role of British and American imperialism is only different in degree from those nationalist leaders who are prepared to sit down and treat with Ian Smith. This is not because of lack of support. The guerrilla forces are stronger now than at any time in their history.

Owen's plan is to eliminate the problem of two separate sets of negotiations by linking the negotiations with the Patriotic Front to the internal talks. The outcome of the Malta talks was not decisive, but it was a small step in that direction.

## French election campaign

# No more bluff and blackmail

MURRAY SMITH reviews the past week of the French election campaign.

THE LAST week has seen a dramatic acceleration in the pace of French political life. Five weeks before the first round of the legislative elections, the time for bluff and blackmail is over and the main lines of the campaign are taking shape.

### RECEIVED

President Giscard d'Estaing made a long awaited speech on 27 January in which he outlined his attitude to the campaign and its possible outcomes. Of course he appealed to the electorate to vote for the parties of the so-called majority — hardly surprising since he is the leader of it, or tries to be. But the real interest of the speech lay in his remarks on the possible victory of the left in March.

He made it clear that in such an eventuality he would appoint a Prime Minister of the left (i.e. Francois Mitterrand, leader of the Socialist Party)

and not obstruct legislation based on the Common Programme of the Left. In this he was following his long established strategy of avoiding a direct confrontation with the left (as the Gaullists would like), and trying eventually to finally detach the Socialist Party (PS) from the Communist Party (PCF) and put together a Centre-Left government.

For the PS and PCF Giscard's 'constitutional approach' was an offer they couldn't refuse. Apart from pointing out the contradictions between Giscard's roles as President and leader of the 'majority', Mitterrand didn't even try to hide his satisfaction and proclaimed that he had never thought that the President of the Republic could do otherwise than apply the Constitution.

A couple of days later, Georges Marchais, leader of the PCF, made it abundantly clear that Communist ministers

would be happy to take office under Giscard and the 1958 Constitution, and that they were ready to enter a government with the PS, dropping their previous reservations.

At the same time the PC stood down in two constituencies in favour of left Gaullists, reminding those who needed reminding of how far to the right their concept of the 'Union of the People of France' extends. And this is the party which has just spent four months denouncing the PS for its supposed 'swing to the right'.

### POCKETED

While the developing reconciliation between the two big workers' parties made a government of the left more likely, the right looked increasingly divided. It now seems certain that in the first round Jacques Chirac's Gaullist RPR will be opposed in many constituencies by the

justification the kidnapping of an industrialist and some particularly shocking crimes of violence, the Cabinet last week approved 23 new measures in a 'law and order' package.

Also, the Ministry of Culture (sic) banned several films at a gay cinema festival in Paris. Some of these films had already been shown publicly (one of them on television). Shortly after this, the audience at another film in the festival was attacked by a gang of fascists armed with iron bars. The police acted promptly — and arrested two of the attacked gays. A subsequent sit-in at the Ministry of Culture led to more arrests, and

the five gay liberation candidates in the elections have been threatened.

These attempts of a dying regime to rally the most backward elements in society are unlikely to save it, but it would be dangerous for the workers' movement to leave them unchallenged.

The working class is not passively awaiting the outcome of the elections. After the police evacuation of a sorting office near Paris which had been occupied by postal workers, there were immediate sympathy strikes and there is the possibility of a national stoppage as we go to press.



'New Philosopher' Andre Gluckmann (centre) was among those arrested for protesting at police harassment of gays at a Paris film festival.

## Wanted: a government of the workers' parties

# Even clichés are true

Not so long ago the outcome of the forthcoming French election was assured in the eyes of the mass of French workers. It would be a 'left government'.

The workers' parties still hold a clear lead in the opinion polls, but the break-up of the Union of the Left has thrown all those ideas about government into question. RICHARD CARVER reports.

There was always a problem with the type of government anticipated by the French working class — two problems really. The two major workers parties, the Communist and Socialist Parties (PCF and PS) kept a tiny ruling class grouping, the Left Radicals, in tow, and the PCF has even agreed to support 'Left Gaullist' candidates in two constituencies.

These obscure and apparently meaningless sects went almost unnoticed until the Left Radicals tried to assert their independent role in the September crisis that meant the end of the Union of the Left. The importance of the Left Radicals was — and is — only part of a wider problem.

### PROGRAMME

The Common Programme of the Union of the Left — in either the PCF or PS version — was class collaborationist to the core. Above all it was tied to the acceptance of the existing constitution and the preservation of the vast powers of a right-wing President. The logic of its policy of piecemeal reform to defend living standards was an austerity policy not so different from that of the Labour Government in Britain or the Socialist Party Government in Portugal.

The Left Radicals fitted neatly into that strategy; a living — or almost living — example of how reasonable the ruling class could be and why it was therefore necessary not to upset them. That is why, with the collapse of the alliance, the PCF set off in pursuit of some nice Left Gaullists and there was muttering in corners about an impending agreement between the PS and Giscard's majority.

It now looks as though the split between the PS and PCF can be patched up. There is certainly

strong pressure in that direction. Militant workers were getting fed up with what they saw as a rightward drift by the PS and bizarre sectarianism from the PCF.

Since there was no fundamental difference on programme — despite Marchais' claims to the contrary — why couldn't they get back together to defeat the right wing? There is even a secret opposition in the PCF demanding as much.

This reflects a basic and healthy working class instinct for unity. But unity is not enough. The question must be: unity with whom, and for what?

The first step must be for the workers' parties to ditch the Left Radicals, Left Gaullists and any other ruling class baggage that comes their way. These parties are significant only because they provide the justification for the failure of the PS and PCF to provide more radical measures.

The workers' parties are sounding a conscious echo of the French Popular Front of the 1930s. Only then the electoral weight of the Radical Party provided the workers' parties with an excuse which was plausible even if it was fake. Their allies now are just a farcical shadow.

The PS and PCF must take government alone — not because they are revolutionary organisations (not by any stretch of the imagination) but because they are still the parties based on the mass organisation of the working class, the parties that most workers look to for leadership.

So the question then becomes: what sort of leadership can these parties provide? The slogan of the Socialist Party-Communist Party government may be a hoary-old Trotskyist cliché, but like most clichés it has a firm core of accuracy. The main reason we argue for these parties

standards, with a minimum wage, across-the-board rises and maintenance of buying power on a trade union price index; guaranteed jobs for all and nationalisation without compensation under workers' control of firms creating

defence against sexist violence.

It gives extensive coverage to the defence of the democratic rights of young people and the conscript soldiers and against all forms of state repression, as well as demanding an end to France's colonial role, its withdrawal from NATO, and the abolition of the nuclear strikeforce.

It's not a programme the Socialist and Communist leaders would be too keen on. But it is one that answers the immediate needs of the mass of workers. Nor is it a 'programme of government' in the sense understood by the reformists and much of the European far left. Instead it's a line of advance for the mass struggle of the working class — a struggle which will be made that much easier if the working class parties come to power.

Even if every single measure were introduced by a government (which is hardly on the cards!) socialism would not have arrived. There would still be the final stronghold of capitalist economic and state power to conquer. That is not the point. The fight for such a programme, particularly under a PS-PCF government will help to arm the working class to break down those strongholds.

Yes, it may be a bit of a cliché. But the demand for a government of the Socialist and Communist Parties and the fight for a class struggle programme just happens to hold the key to the current political situation in France.



1936: building workers march on the parliament building after the election of the Popular Front Government.

to take power is that this provides the best conditions for advancing the mass struggle and for workers to challenge their reformist leaderships.

To do that we have to put forward a programme that we fight for such a government to implement. We don't do this in a spirit of sectarianism towards the mass parties, nor simply to 'expose' them, imagining that this will automatically solve the problem of revolutionary leadership. The programme we fight for is one that is based on the immediate and long-term needs of the working class.

In France the revolutionary slate which is standing in the first round has begun to present such a programme. There's hardly room to spell out all the demands here, but we can give an idea of the sort of thing we mean.

In France today one of the central problems for any government of the PS and PCF must be the rejection of the Gaullist 1958 constitution, which gives vast presidential powers of veto over government decisions, and which would effectively stifle any attempt to introduce working class policies.

The revolutionary slate also puts forward a comprehensive programme in defence of living

redundancies. The programme demands the end of racist immigration laws and all restrictions on immigrants' democratic rights, and defence against racist attacks; an end to sexist discrimination, equal pay, free abortion on demand, and



DE GAULLE: his shadow hangs over the election campaign.

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THE successful national docks strike in West Germany is dramatic evidence of a new opposition which is emerging against the class collaboration of the traditional labour leaders. These trends are analysed in an article by Ann Armand in the latest Intercontinental Press/Inprecor [Vol. 16, No. 5], 'What the Polls Show — and Don't Show — About West Germany'.

Other features in this issue include a declaration by the Fourth International on the Vietnam-Cambodia border war, an interview with an Italian Trotskyist active in the abortion movement, coverage of the Soviet satellite crash and other nuclear hazards, and the text of a recent speech by Fidel

Castro analysing Cuba's relationship to the world capitalist crisis.

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Biermann replies to East German dissidents

# German Democratic feudal socialism

RECENT weeks have seen an outpouring of oppositional statements from East Germany. Most impact has been created by a manifesto reprinted by Der Spiegel, the West German magazine, purportedly written by a group of Communist Party members.

At a conference on Eastern Europe in Brussels on 20-21 January, WOLF BIERMANN, the exiled East German poet and singer, replied to this document. Here we print the bulk of Biermann's reply and OLIVER MacDONALD reports on the Brussels conference.

I THINK it is justified and good that you devote so much space in your text to the parasitic customs of the princes of the German Democratic feudal socialism ... Even more than their daily problems, these are what make the workers bitter.

It could well be that the wrath provoked by that hypocrisy, especially the hypocrisy of the top people, transforms itself into anger — the sort of anger that provokes action. When they read this part of your text many people in the GDR will slap their thighs and think of this chorus by Heinrich Heine: 'I know they were secretly drinking wine

And publicly preached that we should only drink water...'

You describe very well the economic chaos of the GDR. But why are you so soft on the 'new economic system of planning and direction' of the late Ulbricht? I don't think the Stalinist economic illness can be cured by capitalist remedies. The increased reintroduction of capitalist norms in the process of production and exchange in the GDR — even if it is hidden by a revolutionary language — makes the people intoxicated with false hopes and then gives them a real hangover.

The more the GDR becomes a mirror image of the consumer society of West Germany, the more people will want to get acquainted with the more attractive original rather than its pathetic copy. The neo-Stalinist bureaucracy wants to satisfy the desires and needs of the people with the Western carrot but it only produces counter-revolutionary dreams (...)

I don't think, as you do, that if Marx was alive today he would drop the thesis of the class struggle because it is 'out of context' today. On the contrary! Because of this fundamental truth our high priests wouldn't just stamp on his identity card. They'd stamp on his head.

The almost Chinese anti-Soviet nature of much of your argument has upset my Spanish comrades. You cannot invoke Carrillo on that subject because his attacks on the Soviet Union are more differentiated. It is true that Carrillo does not live in a country occupied by the Soviet Union. But, if you can get hold of them, please read the chapter of my *Winter Tales* about the Red Army soldiers at the border between the two Germanies! Even after 12 years with my mouth shut in the GDR, I still hold that position here in the West.

We can't let anyone force us into hysteria about things that concern us — the Soviet Union, the GDR, the party. Bear the contradiction in what we love, and also in what we hate! Be consistent — unlike the high dignitaries of the SED (East



German Communist Party) who tell the most horrible jokes about the Soviet Union as soon as they are in private and pissed out of their heads (...)

You write: 'Stalinism and fascism are the same'. Honecker (the East German party boss) and Co are described as 'Nazis painted in red'. But isn't this a confusion of terms, caused by justifiable bitterness? The identification between fascism and Stalinism gives a good cover to many ex-Nazis, because their own crimes appear in a softer light. And this obvious mistake is also very good for disillusioned Stalinists.

Yes! 163,000 communists were killed under Hitler. Yes! Two million Soviet comrades were killed by Stalin! Out of 11 members of Thaelmann's political bureau (in the German Communist Party of the 1930s), six were liquidated by Stalin and five by Hitler's men. Yes! And compare the six million Jewish victims of the Nazis with the 20 million innocent Soviet citizens (the lowest estimate I know) assassinated by Stalin (without counting the dead of the Great War).

But what do these figures tell us? No! Fascism was and still is a bourgeois dictatorship, defending the capitalist mode of production against the poor. Stalinism was and is the socialist revolution infected by bureaucratic syphilis. That's a fatal illness certainly, but only if you treat it as you would a common cold! (...)

I cannot imagine, as you demand, 'free and secret elections in the whole of Germany for a national assembly and the 'progressive juridical unification at all social levels.' Because even if the high priests of the GDR were expropriated and deprived of their power — which is a precondition for moving in that direction — you'd still have the big and petty bourgeoisie with their well-established positions. And there would still be this terrible weakness of the working class movement.

How could there be free elections in these conditions? Think of the GDR. The population for decades suffered the indoctrination of our high priests. Who says they will pronounce themselves at such elections for the sort of freedom we're talking about, and not the petty freedom of the exploiters?

Let's not put the cart before the horse! We first have to have a 'Prague Spring' in the GDR — one that lasts and is not silenced by the tanks! There has to be a socialist party in West Germany — a different party from the present social democracy.

First an independent communist movement must grow in the GDR, and the *Bürgerinitiativen* (a system which tries to organise a certain direct democracy in West Germany) must reach their full development. Then we will be seriously able to start a debate on the question of reunification. Otherwise the door would be open to all the old German fantasies (...). We must not fight the Stalinist devil with the nationalist devil! (...)

Don't let yourselves be insulted by the questions about the 'authenticity' of your Manifesto so that you want to prove it! I beg you, let's stay anonymous! Who would benefit from your being put in nick and then expelled? Your document is passed around anyway, even in West Germany. It will give many people courage — courage to think.

Too many of us have been morally crippled in our prison cells — and too many here in the West too. We want to think again of the best forms of organisation for the GDR. I think that the detente policy between East and West will continue. And with people like you around the tensions will grow in the East the same as in the West.

The forthcoming class struggles will be different and much tougher. But, as our old master said, contradictions are so many hopes.



THE BRUSSELS conference was organised by a broadly based labour movement body called the First of May Committee which campaigns in defence of all those in Eastern Europe being repressed for attempting to exercise democratic and working class rights. It was the first of a series of events that will be taking place in a number of West European countries, including Britain, to mark the 10th Anniversary of the Prague Spring of 1968.

The proceedings opened with a film on the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. The film was made by a Belgian TV camera crew that arrived in Czechoslovakia just before the invasion of 21 August 1968.

It included an interview with Antonin Liehm, the editor of one of the most radical official papers during 1968, *Literary*

*Duty of the Czech Writers' Union*. Speaking two days before the Soviet tanks entered Prague, Liehm prophesied that if an invasion did take place it would destroy the unity of the international Communist movement for good.

The film showed thousands of demonstrators in the centre of Prague surrounding the Soviet tanks, immobilising them, swarming over them and forcing the young Russian soldiers to discuss the criminal invading role that they were being forced to play. The bewildered faces of the soldiers, some crying, others asking questions, yet others listening in silence eloquently expressed the mortal wound that the invasion has left on the authority of Stalinism throughout Eastern Europe and the USSR.

Zdenek Mlynar, one of the half dozen most powerful leaders of the Czechoslovak Communist Party under Dubcek, the author of the Party action programme and the most senior official of a ruling CP to go into exile since Trotsky's enforced exile in 1929, described a conversation he had had with Marshal Grechko, chief of the invading forces, in August 1968.

He had warned Grechko that the Russian soldiers were becoming demoralised, that the Russian army rank and file might disintegrate under the impact of the fraternisation and political agitation amongst them being carried on by the Czechoslovak masses. Grechko nodded, saying he was well aware of the situation, but reminded Mlynar that the troops could be withdrawn and replaced 10 times over before their reserves were exhausted. And this indeed was what happened.

Jiri Pelikan, the head of Czech TV under Dubcek drew out the crucial importance of internationalism in the struggle against Soviet domination of

Eastern Europe. He pointed out how the invasion had taught socialists in Eastern Europe that they must unite their efforts in different countries and present a united international front against the Russian military power.

Other East European speakers later in the conference indicated the scope of the international movement of opposition to the bureaucratic dictatorships within the various East European countries. Wolf Biermann described the hundreds of small groups of anti-Stalinist opponents of the regime scattered throughout East Germany.

Krzysztof Pomian, a leading Polish socialist exile, described the extensive opposition movement today in Poland and explained the background to its emergence. He pointed to the solidarity between the Workers Defence Committee in Warsaw and Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and argued that the regime in Poland had become increasingly incapable of governing the country.

## OPPOSITION

Vadim Byelotserkovsky, a former Soviet journalist on working class life, described working class opposition to the Kremlin bureaucracy and a recently exiled Czech Charterist described the development of the Charter movement and the repressive drive of the Czechoslovak authorities against it. A Bulgarian dissident, Marinov described how even in Stalinist Bulgaria there were signs of growing opposition to the regime's suppression of democratic rights.

The conference ended with a discussion between a leader of the Belgian CP, a leading Belgian socialist and Ernest Mandel from the Belgian section of the Fourth International, on the attitudes that the Western left should take towards the struggle for democratic rights in Eastern Europe. The CP leader called for firm condemnation of all violations of democratic rights in Eastern Europe.

After the conference, activists from various socialist defence committees in Western Europe discussed ways of strengthening international co-ordination of efforts to strengthen working class solidarity with all those suffering repression in Eastern Europe.

## CORRECTION

IT HAS been pointed out to us that the 'Open Letter to Wolf Biermann' reported on in our issue of 19 January, which defends proletarian democracy but attacks the Eurocommunists, dates from November 1976 and not November 1977. The error arose as the result of misinformation.

It should also be noted that Biermann himself has not sought the publication of this text, fearing that it could be a provocation by the East German police or the work of a small and totally unrepresentative group; and that the journal *Konkret*, which more or less defends Eurocommunist positions, has claimed that the text is not authentic but the work of a 'centre of falsification' based in West Berlin.



ZDENEK MLYNAR: top Czech Communist leader

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# COMMENT

## CP fantasies

I WAS appalled by the Communist Party women's 'Reply' to Cath Cirket and Val Coultas' article on the CP and the women's liberation movement. Its consistent misrepresentation of the International Marxist Group women's stated positions would suggest that they did not even bother to read the original article but preferred to manufacture fantasies of what they imagine the IMG position to be.

In many cases they attributed to the IMG a position which the IMG women have actually criticised the CP for! For example, Bea Campbell et al summarise the IMG position as follows: 'The basis of women's oppression is material, i.e. the sexual division of labour within the family'. On the contrary — Cath Cirket and Val Coultas argued that it was the family as an institution, isolated and privatised, which was the primary source of women's oppression under capitalism.

They also roundly criticised the C.P.'s programme for merely calling for an end to 'the sexual division of labour within the family' — precisely because it is not enough for men to share the washing up and take the kids out for a walk — it is the isolation of these tasks within the nuclear family unit that oppresses women. The solution lies in the socialisation of these functions, not in sharing them with a man.

The CP women make other equally inaccurate assertions — e.g. that the IMG has 'no theory of autonomy'. This is untrue. The IMG makes it clear that it sees the organisational autonomy of the women's liberation movement (WLM) as essential, but hope that politically the WLM will become part of the struggle for socialism.

The CP women's so-called 'reply' does not attempt to answer any of the specific challenges made by the IMG women on the CP's strategy in practice: 1) Will the CP leadership — not just this or that individual CP woman — condemn the policies of Eastern European Governments in relation to women? 2) Will they adopt the six demands of the WLM into their programme? 3) Why has the Italian Communist Party viciously attacked women's abortion rights? We could do with some real answers.

Debate on the women's movement and revolutionary strategy has not been advanced by this muddled, self-righteous, hypocritical, manipulative and slanderous article. I hope a fully reply to it will be printed as soon as possible, although this would not have been necessary if Bea Campbell, Jane Roberts and Caroline Rowan had engaged in a clear and honest debate based on fact not fiction.

Sue Aspinall (N. London)

## NAC benefit

WE'D LIKE to take up some of the points raised by the sisters from North London in their letter about the NAC benefit at the Roundhouse.

Firstly, yes, it did turn out to be a 'fund raising only' gig. It was offered to us on a plate — all the groups played for free and many of

the Roundhouse staff worked unpaid. NAC is permanently skint when it isn't massively in debt, and we rely entirely on fundraising and donations to keep going at all. The Roundhouse gig brought in £2000.

Yes, NAC should have had more of a presence. This reflects partly on the fact that we had almost nothing to do with organising the gig — although we should have — and partly on human error: the banner and bookstall were missing through a last minute mistake, not through policy.

But would stalls and banners really have challenged the phenomenal sexism of the Roundhouse audience? How should a gig that will attract an audience from outside the women's movement and the left be organised so that it will convey our politics to the punters?

We'd welcome discussion on these questions and on how sexism in rock should be challenged.

Sisters from NAC Steering Committee

## Political clarification the key

A WORKING class united in opposition to the bourgeoisie is a precondition for the overthrow of capitalism. Although it is capital which creates the working class as a coherent social force, capital also divides the working class — into skilled and unskilled, productive and unproductive workers. Racial and sexual differences acquire a new form and significance under capitalism.

In the crisis the bourgeoisie has reinforced and exploited these divisions in an attempt to drive down working class living standards. The working class has been deeply divided in its response to this offensive. Because its dominant consciousness is reformist, the British labour movement has subordinated the unity of the working class to the unity of the nation.

Reduced militancy and acceptance of the Social Contract over the last three years have been accompanied by a fall in real wages, mass unemployment and cutbacks in welfare services.

The resulting demoralisation of the working class has produced a parallel despondency in the groups of the radical left. The long anticipated 'fightback' against the Labour government has failed to emerge on any significant scale and the radical left has resorted to a series of tactical manoeuvres designed to overcome isolation, fragmentation and lack of influence.

The latest of these schemes is the IMG appeal for 'far left unity'. This substitutes a campaign to unify the radical left for the struggle to unite the working class. In the Socialist Unity electoral platform and the Anti-Nazi League alike, emphasis on organisational unity obscures the central task of political clarification.

The radical left ignores the need for a marxist

understanding of the crisis and of racism and fascism. It places first its own desire to increase its numbers, on the basis of a shared commitment to abstract 'class struggle' and 'anti-fascist' sentiments.

Instead, revolutionaries must train a vanguard with a clear Marxist analysis which can show that the divisions in the working class are forms of expression of the fundamental conflict within bourgeois society — the conflict between capital and labour. The development of such a vanguard is essential as the political basis for uniting the working class around a revolutionary programme in the struggle for socialism.

The most practical contribution that revolutionaries can make to the disputes which arise today is propaganda which exposes the inadequacy of reformism and indicates the revolutionary alternative. The IMG approach, which obscures important political issues in the interests of spurious unity between radical groups, cannot advance the independent interests of a working class which finds itself divided in the face of the most severe capitalist crisis since the Second World War.

Revolutionary Communist Tendency

The above is a contribution to the debate on the project of Socialist Challenge submitted by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency.

## Fundamental error

FIRST of all, Socialist Challenge is a very good paper. It is also the only left wing paper that consistently and regularly discusses the politics of women's liberation. But in the 26 January issue, Socialist Challenge has made a fundamental error, inexcusable because of its political implications.

That is: the sixth demand of the women's liberation movement (WLM) is Not: the right to a self-defined sexuality. It is an end to all discrimination against lesbians and the right of women to a self-defined sexuality. I can well imagine many readers of Socialist Challenge saying that's just a pointless semantic dispute. Well, for those semanticists, and to ensure Socialist Challenge does not repeat the error, I would like to explain a few points about the sixth demand.

In discussing whether the WLM ought to have a lesbian demand; the national WLM conference of 1974 (Edinburgh) realised that lesbianism was a part of the wider whole of sexuality. Discrimination against lesbians (e.g. employment, custody of children) is quite separate from the differing forms of sexuality, the problems of relationships, monogamy, orgasms.

The situation since 1974 when the demand was passed has changed considerably in emphasising the difference between the two halves. Even the limited rights of lesbian mothers and of lesbian rights to artificial insemination by donor have been eroded away; while cases of employment discrimination like Louise Boychuk are on the increase. And the right wing have hardened their reactionary views against minority groups.

On the other hand, our understanding of sexuality and all that entails has broadened far beyond the limited knowledge (both in theory and practice) available to the women's movement in 1974.

The possibility of splitting the sixth demand into two separate demands is far more feasible now, and perhaps necessary. But until such time as the WLM takes that decision, people must remember there are two very important parts to the sixth demand, and both are totally integral to the fight for women's liberation. So please, Socialist Challenge, don't make the same mistake again.

Ms GERRY AHRENS (Canterbury)

## The Other Cinema

REGARDING THE article on the closure of The Other Cinema (TOC) in Tottenham Street, London (Socialist Challenge, 26 January 1978).

Quote: 'It's worth emphasising that a film culture, "left wing" or otherwise, cannot be developed without an audience.' Implication: nobody came. Fact: during the 15 months it was open, TOC had almost 100,000 admissions.

Quote: 'The whole question of aesthetics as an ideological weapon remains marginalised. To erode that marginalism is integral to developing a "left wing film culture".' Quote in contradiction: 'More modest facilities are required.' One of TOC's aims: to introduce work that engages with the politics of aesthetics (e.g. Godard, Straub) into an institution that had thousands of film-goers in its orbit, to help erode that marginalism.

Class collaboration: as an independent left-wing cultural group, TOC demanded of the state (in the form of the British Film Institute) money we needed to pay off our opening debts

and keep going. The state refused this demand, and the cinema was compelled to close. Anyone in the movement is entitled to debate and criticise our specific aims and our way of struggling to realise them. But this article does so in order to back the state's refusal of money. Quote: 'TOC... should have ensured that the project would sustain BEI scrutiny in the event of a request for money.'

Should car workers 'ensure their project can sustain the scrutiny' of Ford management? Should the EGA workers 'ensure their project sustains the scrutiny' of the NHS? This article crosses class lines.

PAUL MARRIS. (Former programmer of The Other Cinema, in a personal capacity).

## Enough of Widgery pokery 1

WHEN YOU take away all the sectarian personality bashing in his letter (Socialist Challenge 29), these are the reasons David Widgery gives for the SWP's 'genuine disinterest' in Socialist Unity:

1. SU 'lacks commitment to working class politics'. It is too intellectual.
2. IMG controls Socialist Challenge.
3. Fourth International controls IMG (Ernest Mandel controls the FI).
4. Red Mole 'failed', therefore so will SU.
5. Independents will come off worst.
6. The concept of 'revolutionary' unity in struggle and that of unity at elections are mutually antagonistic.
7. SWP's journals are better than IMG's or Big Flame's.

1. Possibly arguable.
2. Undeniable.
3. Deniable!
4. Illogical.
5. An assertion based on a hypothesis.
6. Incorrect.
7. Braggart.

Marks out of ten — 1.

Get to the point David, you are not interested in Socialist Unity because you are not interested in Socialist Unity because you, etc. etc.

PAUL ANDREWS (SE London)

## 2

IN HIS reply to Dave Widgery, Chris Roseblade says, 'We are merely saying that a fusion between the IMG and the SWP could marginalise the real sectarians'.

Leaving aside the issue of just who comrade Roseblade presumes he is speaking for when he says 'we', can he note that in the last few months the SWP has set up an Anti-Nazi League from which the CP and the far left were explicitly excluded; brought in 'big name candidates' in by-elections in an attempt to get more votes than other far left candidates; refused to even reply to appeals for joint far left election candidates.

It has also refused to discuss the standing of common far-left candidates in union elections; declared in the name of its front 'Rank and File Movement' a general strike; persistently censored from its newspaper criticisms of these policies; and so on and so on.

Could comrade Roseblade then tell us that if it is not the SWP, then who exactly are the 'real sectarians'?

MICK GOSLING, TOM MARLOWE (N. London)

## You're wrong!

ON THE question of Socialist Challenge and the British Leyland slash fund documents, I strongly regret your decision not to publish since I feel that you are in possession of information of absolute importance to the socialist movement in this country. Because you haven't published — as you so properly did in the Dobson racist case — you are depriving us of a most valuable insight into a key industry, and one which has a most important role to play in social democratic ideas of control of the generation of surplus value.

For if there is a slash fund, and if you are in a position to prove it, it means that a nationalised industry is prepared to pay large sums of money over to corrupt officials in, presumably, other parts of the world (we don't know, because you won't tell us) which will eventually end up on the price of the car or lorry that the people of that country want to buy.

Is that really what we want? Paying some trader his graft for gold-plated bath taps or gambling money for the Playboy Club cannot be defended because 'they all do it'. That's the sort of nonsense we can expect as a defence; if there is an argument for nationalised industries in a social democracy, part of it must be that they can use their power to influence those kind of decisions.

By not feeling strong enough to publish what you have, you deprive the movement of ammunition to argue with. It's no defence to bleat about Fleet Street's censorship; after all what did you expect? That's why we subscribe to papers like yours isn't it?

DAVID CLARK (SE London)

## Socialist Challenge EVENTS

### NORTH WEST

For details of activities in the Northwest write or ring the Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre, Third Floor, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester 1. Tel: 061-236 2352. Open Tuesday 6-8pm, Thursday 6-8pm, Saturday 10-1pm. Room available for meetings. Duplicating facilities available.

BURY Socialist Challenge group meets every Wednesday, 8pm at the Wheatsheaf pub, Bury New Road, Whitefield (near Whitefield bus and train station).

LIVERPOOL Socialist challenge group meets fortnightly on Wednesdays at the Dolphin, Canning Place.

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

SOUTH MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge group meets every other Thursday at the Albert, 100 Wilmslow Rd. Help sell Socialist Challenge between 11.30am and 1pm at Moss Side shopping centre or Longlight Market, Dickenson Rd. Further information from 061-236 2352.

### NORTH EAST

DARLINGTON Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Northern Rock on High Row 11am-1pm.

MIDDLESBOROUGH Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Boots at Cleveland Centre, 11am-1pm. Socialist Challenge is also available from Harrison's (Newsagents) in Linthorpe Street.

DURHAM Socialist Challenge Group meets every first and third Thursday, 7.30pm to 9.15pm in the Big Jug pub, Claypath, Durham City. Details from Jim Fox, 41 The Avenue, Durham. Next meeting 16 February. Socialist activity in the unions.

### YORKSHIRE

HULL: For details of Socialist Challenge events ring David, Hull 492850.

HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge is an event Saturday from 11am-1pm outside the Library in the Piazza. Next Socialist Challenge group meeting on Thursday, 9 February, at the White Lion pub, Cross Church Street, 8pm and fortnightly thereafter.

### SCOTLAND

For information on Socialist Challenge contact Scottish Socialist Socialist Challenge bookshop, 64 Queen Street, Glasgow. Tel: 041-221 7481. Open weekdays 10-4, late closing Thursdays at 6pm. Wide range of Fourth International publications.

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

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge meetings every second Wednesday. Contact George Karavan, 12 Merchiston Grove, Edinburgh. Tel: 061-395 0456.

ABERDEEN: Information about Socialist Challenge activities ring Jim on 42696 (after 6pm).

### SOUTH WEST

BRIGHTON Socialist Challenge forums. Next meeting Tuesday 14 February, 8pm on Women and the women's movement. All meetings held at the Resources Centre, North St, Brighton.

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

### LONDON

SOUTHALL Supporters group meets fortnightly. For details ring 01-575 5955.

ISLINGTON Socialist Challenge readers group meeting, Wednesday 15 February, 7.30pm at Hemmingsford Arms (corner Offord Rd and Hemmingsford Rd, NI). The fight against racism. Speakers invited from London Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee, and Women Against Racism and Fascism.

NEWHAM Socialist Challenge forums are held regularly. Details from Newham SC Forums, PO Box 50, London N11. Tel: 226 0571.

BRENT Socialist Challenge group. For details of meetings write to London IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

HARROW Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. Anyche interested please contact PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

HAMMERSMITH Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly — details from London IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

LAMBETH Socialist Challenge group's first meeting, Wednesday 22 February at 8pm in Clapham Library, Clapham Common. (Clapham Common tube, or 35, 37, 38, 137 bus) Boo Pennington on 'The socialist challenge to Labour's attacks'.

HARINGEY Socialist Challenge readers group meets fortnightly in the West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road 104 West Green Road.

GREENWICH/LEWISHAM Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly. For details ring Fay 01 650 1187.

SOUTHWEST LONDON Socialist Challenge supporters meet every two weeks in Bexley. Further information from 26 Litchamere Road, London SW17.

CAMDEN Socialist Challenge supporters group. Meeting on Socialist Feminism. Introduced by women who went to Manchester conference. Quiet room N, London Poly, Prince of Wales Road, Kentish Town, Wednesday, 15 Feb, 7.30pm. Further details from Neil on 309-8285.



This article is called

# Barricade of flowers



It's ironic, but not surprising, that most of what passes as representations of surrealism today in Britain would have been violently attacked by the surrealists themselves. Certainly that's true of the current jamboree in London, which centres on the 3 month 'Dada and Surrealism Revisited' exhibition at the Hayward Gallery. This and all the TV discussions, Sunday supplement reminiscences and lectures that it's spawned, are all part of a process in which surrealism has been reduced to a colourful and slightly scandalous period in the eternal 'history' of European Art. Helped in this by the fame of Salvador Dali and the mistaken notion that he typifies surrealism (in fact he was expelled from the group for his sympathy with fascism and re-christened Avida Dollars), surrealism is left with an image which is only 'revolutionary' in the sense that washing powder ads give the word.



But there's another side to this new interest. Two books on surrealism have just been published by Pluto, one an introduction by someone who is still a 'surrealist activist' to the other, a vast anthology of material by André Breton, who was the dominant figure in the movement. Taken together, they can remind us that surrealism is an important part of the history of revolutionary politics. It's a long-overdue reminder. The Breton anthology includes examples of most kinds of written products of surrealism — from manifestoes to experiments in reproducing states of 'mental disorder' — few of which have previously been available in translation. Penguin have followed suit with a collection of English and American surrealist poetry and a cheap edition of the *Songs of Maldoror*, a vision of what one surrealist called 'the everyday monster...' (the iron man forged by capitalist society' by Lautréamont, one of the 'literary predecessors of the movement).

Who were the surrealists? Surrealism was to become an international movement, with groups active in most European countries, in Latin America, North Africa, the Middle East and Japan. It began in Paris, in 1921-3, with a small group of intellectuals, mostly in their early twenties, who had lived through the First World War and witnessed the Bolshevik revolution. Some of them had formed part of the Paris Dada group.

**ILLUSTRATIONS.** (Top) André Breton 'The Count de Foix Going to Assassinate His Son', 1929. Photo: Our comrade, Benjamin Peret, insulating a priest. So what's Uncle Joe up to? It's the cover of a surrealist pamphlet condemning Aragon's role during the trial of the Russian writers Dautiel and Sinavsky, 1966. André Breton and the First Principles of Surrealism — Franklin Rosemont; Pluto £1.80. What is Surrealism. Selected Writings of André Breton; Pluto £5.00. History of Surrealism by Maurice Nadeau; Penguin. The Songs of Maldoror — Lautréamont; Penguin 95p. English and American Surrealist Poetry; Penguin £1.25. The above books are obtainable from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1. If ordering by mail, add 10 per cent

There are lots of glib formulas which pretend to explain the split between surrealism and Dada: Dada as destructive or negative, for example, surrealism as constructive or systematising, or conversely surrealism as neutralisation of the 'total revolt' of Dada. It is true that the surrealists were bored with the repetitious, random attacks of Dada, especially because these were very much confined within the arena of art. One indication at least of the basis of the differences was the crucial importance, for the surrealists, of the work of Freud and Marx.



## Following the fringe

**BELT & BRACES Roadshow** has a new production touring the country just now. Following their successful rock-musicals *Not as Green as His Cabbage* and *A Day in the Life of the World*, which they took to Sweden last summer, they have switched tack and have come up with a more naturalistic production, *Mrs Colley Pepper* which is described as 'a play about ageing'.

It will be on in London at the Half Moon Theatre from 13-25 February at 8pm. On 28 February it will be at the Wallend Arts Centre, Tyne-and-Wear, and from 2-4 March at the York Arts Centre. For further information or more bookings ring B & B on 01-485 2872.

**RED LADDER Theatre Group**, based in Yorkshire for the last two years, is taking a rare trip South this month, with their new show *Taking Our Time*. This is described as a show about 'those who spun the thread and wove the cloth' and is based on a year's research into the lives of workers in the Yorkshire textile industry in the nineteenth century.

*Taking Our Time* is a piece of working class history brought to life through drama, comedy, song and music. This is a must. London dates and venues: Mon 13 Feb. Jackson's Lane Community Centre, Archway Rd, Highgate, 7.30pm. Wed 15 Feb. Hammersmith Town Hall, 7.30pm. Thur 16 Feb. St. Hilda's East Club, Club Row, Bethnal Green, 7.30pm. Fri 17 Feb. Waterloo Action Centre, Bayliss St SE1, 7.30pm. Sat 18 Feb. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., WCL, 7.30pm. For more info ring Red Ladder on (0532) 792228.

**ROADGANG Theatre Group**, based on Tyneside, has undergone a considerable transformation in recent months. It is now a Women's Theatre group — one of the few such groups outside London — and has produced a show which certainly warrants their new feminist commitment. Entitled *Opportunity Blocks*, the play is based on the well-known TV show of similar name and looks at the lack of opportunity for women in education, training, employment and the trade unions through the format of songs and variety acts.

Roadgang has done other shows too — last autumn they supported the Socialist Unity candidate in Ladywood through a series of anti-racist songs and sketches in the streets and at an anti-NF demo. The latest show can be booked by political organisations, trade unions, and women's groups. Ring (0632) 775615.

'To transform the world, to change life, and to remake human understanding from scratch' (André Breton) is probably as good a summary as any of the aims of surrealism. 'Transform the world' comes from Marx; 'change life' is taken from Rimbaud, the poet who tried to become a 'seer' through 'the complete disordering of all the senses'. The surrealists wanted to change not just the economic conditions of life, but every aspect of how we live in the world, how we perceive it/ourselves, how we communicate. Particularly, all that was excluded from the 'poor' reality of everyday life, needed to be released. So they were concerned, from the start, with dreams and with the unconscious, as a source of new experience which had, in some way, to be merged with 'conscious' life. They pinned great hopes on that potential unity. Anything which could break through the barrier of consciousness and the institutions that channelled and sustained it (ideologies, though they usually talked of 'moralities') was valuable. Automatic writing, drawing, painting (produced in various forms of controlled trance), chance events and meetings, the bringing together of unlikely objects/ideas, verbal and physical attacks on religion, patriotism, the family. The paintings and poems are records of this exploration. 'Messages, not lizards, are hidden under every stone', wrote Breton.

Benjamin Peret, one of the most consistently active surrealists (later, till 1948, a member of the Fourth International) said, 'the poet of today has no other choice than to be a revolutionist or not to be a poet'. One of the many questions begged by that was what kind of relationship they were to have to 'the social revolution'. They agreed, in 1925, 'we are not utopianists, we can conceive of revolution only in its social form'. Even if overthrowing capitalism was only a starting point for 'changing life', there was still the problem of how to reach that point. From 1925 to the early 30s, the surrealists debated that question. For some of them, even vague support for the Bolshevik revolution was too much. Louis Aragon called it a mere 'ministerial crisis' (he changed rapidly — ditching surrealism and embracing Stalinism in 1932, just as many surrealists, including Breton, were being expelled from the French Communist Party for their continuing attacks on the degeneration of the USSR). For others, faced with the fact that their own government was engaged in an imperialist war in Morocco, and that there was a Left Opposition, under threat, within the Third International, it was time to take sides more specifically.

Pierre Naville, a member of the original surrealist group, tried to force the issue. 'Was the abolition of the bourgeois conditions of material life a necessary condition of the mind's liberation?' The surrealists were already collaborating in producing *Clarte*, a journal of oppositionists within the PCF. How much further would they go? Breton replied



evasively, repeating his criticisms of the PCF (which Naville shared) and arguing the surrealists' need for autonomy (which Naville wasn't disputing). Naville drifted away from them (he was later one of the founders of the French section of the Fourth International) and concentrated on more traditional political debates, often in a notoriously sectarian way. Breton, during and after a brief stay in the PCF, maintained his support for Trotsky (visiting him in exile in Mexico where together they drafted the manifesto of the International Federation of Revolutionary Artists), but also his distance from any active involvement with the revolutionary left. The debate was never resolved.

Even on the level of tactics, the surrealists weren't faced, as we are, by TV, say, or national communications and leisure industries. It's easy to forget — because it won't apply now — how effective some of their attacks on literary figures were, or how much impact their writing and printing had. Politically, the most obvious indication of the theoretical limitations of surrealism is the development of feminism. Women, for the surrealists, were sources of inspiration, the voice of the unconscious, menacing and caucing. With some notable exceptions, they were rarely collaborators. Breton wrote of the 'transcendent vocation' of women — a concept which is just one more reactionary version of 'earth mother' or 'muse'. But all the limitations were also, of course, shared by Marxism at the time. And with the gulf between 'theoretical practice' and everyday political struggle as wide as it is today, and the question of why we are fighting, of what expectations we're pinning on the end of class society so often dismissed as 'utopian', it would be crazy to think we've 'gone beyond' surrealism.

And the problem remains. In that sense, and because its project hasn't been realised, surrealism continues. For Franklin Rosemont, the author of the Pluto Introduction, it would be unacceptable to talk of surrealism in the past tense; to assume it ended with the death of Breton is as stupid as assuming Marxism ended with the death of Marx. That's quite a different question. Surrealism was a specific historical movement with an exclusive theoretical doctrine. Rosemont generally

# Socialist Challenge

This Saturday there will be a demonstration and rally in London to demand the quashing of the convictions for 'blasphemous libel' against Gay News and its editor, and for the repeal of the blasphemy law. The protest has already received the formal support of trade union branches, trades councils, anti-fascist committees, as well as organisations of the gay movement, reports JAMIE GOUGH.

Mary Whitehouse's use of religion to secure a conviction seeks to appeal to deep reactionary impulses in society; a yearning for past stability, for eternal values that need not be questioned.

When the prosecution upheld the split between mind and body ('This poem is not about love, it is about buggery') it tried to reinforce the split between what we want and what we do. When Whitehouse attacks gays, she tries to suppress any questioning of our sexual lives, of the 'natural' sexuality and of our repressed desires.

Whitehouse's attack on the existence of the gay press is dangerous enough in itself. But it is only one of the increasingly frequent attacks on lesbians and gay men by the courts, the police, the fascists, the Tory right, sections of the press, and the morality squad itself.

## DECISIVE

Because of this, a decisive answer on Saturday is more than a blow for the rights of often isolated gay people to communicate with each other; more than a blow against State imposition of the established Church's doctrine.

It can be a call for an end to

# Demonstrate Saturday 11 Feb to DEFEND GAY RIGHTS



Photo: BOB WORKMAN (Gay News)

all forms of discrimination against gays; an end to anti-gay prejudice and violence.

The attack on Gay News is therefore an attack on the ability of all of us, gay or straight, to determine our sexual lives. But, even more, it

is an attempt to strengthen authoritarian capitalist relationships in society. That is why you should be there on Saturday. Gay News' appeal begins in the High Court on Monday.

The demonstration assembles

at 1pm at Temple underground. It will march to a rally in Trafalgar Square with speakers from the Labour movement, civil rights groups, and the women's and gay movements.

## An international issue

AN ATTEMPT to close down the country's main gay paper. A hysterical press campaign to prevent children being 'exposed to' lesbians and gay men. Massive and arbitrary police raids on the gay community... Sounds familiar? All these have happened in Canada over the past few months.

On December 30, the Toronto police, acting on the instructions of Ontario's Conservative Government, raided the offices of *Body Politic*, Canada's mass circulation gay paper.

Under the pretext of collecting a copy of an 'obscene' article, they confiscated subscription and advertising lists, account books, and editorial copy in an obvious attempt to close down the paper.

The raid comes after a wild right-wing campaign, ably orchestrated by the Toronto Sun, and including an anti-gay march of 15,000, built on the alleged murder of a boy by a gay man.

By an extraordinary coincidence, these attacks coincide

with a move to outlaw discrimination against gays through an extension of the Ontario Human Rights Code. A similar extension of the Human Rights Act in Quebec was made in December — in spite of the valiant efforts of the Montreal police, who found it necessary in October to arrest 146 people in a gay bar.

## RESPONSE

The fight for anti-discrimination laws is something that so far distinguishes the gay struggle in North America from the present struggle in Europe.

The gay movement in Canada has responded to these attacks with unprecedented strength, unity, and coordination. Two thousand marched in Montreal, and 800 picketed in Toronto. As with the battle in Florida, there has been an international response. In Britain, 50 people picketed Canada House on 27 January and a letter in solidarity with *Body Politic* will be handed in there on Saturday's Gay News demonstration.

## OUR FUND DRIVE

IN THE last couple of weeks local Socialist Challenge Groups have been busy. The London groups have been springing into activity all over the city.

In Islington, 17 people attended its second meeting. Many of these were never previously in contact with the paper. Down the road in Camden, 20 is the usual attendance figure. Haringey recently organised a meeting with the paper's Irish editor, Geoff Bell, to which over 20 readers came.

Meanwhile in South London, Harry Wicks, a veteran revolutionary who was a member of the Communist

Party in the 1920s and today is a member of the Workers League, spoke along with John Ross, of the International Marxist Group, on "The need for a Revolutionary International".

Two new readers groups are just about to take off in East London. The Newham Group meets for the first time this week and another in Hackney is

due to be launched soon.

Outside London, Bob Pennington shared the platform with two Fire Brigade Union officials (in personal capacities) in Wolverhampton. One of the FBU leaders commented on how the support they received from the immigrant community and women had helped to break down racism and sexism among their members.

Meanwhile in Leicester 30 readers came to hear Geoffrey Sheridan, member of the editorial board, open a discussion on the past and future of Socialist Challenge.

With the date now fixed for the first national Socialist Challenge conference as Saturday, May 27, many groups are beginning to prepare by making their own assess-

ment of the strengths and weaknesses of the paper. If your group would like to hold such a meeting then editorial board members are available to speak.

With our local supporters' groups expanding all the time we hope to see our emergency fund drive building up and the Tatlin tower turning red. The emergency appeal brought in £97.20, including one donation of £50 from an East London NALGO supporter. The Tatlin tower meanwhile benefited to the tune of £160.33, which keeps us just on target for the quarter. But we cannot afford to relax.

With creditors close on our heels we need every penny you can spare. Rush a donation to either the emergency appeal or the Tatlin tower.

This week our thanks to:-

G. White 1.50  
S. Cass 5.00  
S. Jacobson 2.00

O. Davies 2.00  
Anon. 5.00  
South London readers 28.00  
Reading supporters 3.00  
D. Flimay 20.00  
C. Smith 1.00  
Anon. 60.00  
R. Martin 10.00  
R. Stewart 1.00  
A. Barratt 1.50  
D. Boyle 2.50  
D. Johnson 4.50  
A. Bishop 1.00  
East London readers 7.70  
City University supporters 4.00  
Islington SC Group 2.85

C. Richards 5.00  
Southampton supporters 2.50  
Anon. 2.00  
S. Walmsley 3.00  
London readers 9.70  
Total 97.20



Become a walking bill-board. Two-colour Socialist Challenge supporters' badges are popping up all over the place. Obtain yours from the address above, 20p each plus 7p post. Ten or more 16p each, post free.

## SPECIAL OFFER

\* Russian Revolution special. Text by Isaac Deutscher, design by David King. 50p.

\* 1978 Calendar. 13 posters from Paris. May 1968. 4 colours. £1.

\* Subscribe for one year to Socialist Challenge (£10) and receive a calendar for 1978 free.

\* Set of 6 postcards of Peter Kennard photomontages on South Africa, Ireland, 1974 miners strike, Seveso, USSR and Chile. The set £1.

\* Socialist Challenge supporters badge. 20p each plus 7p postage. Orders of 10 or more 16p each, post free.

All available from Special Offers, Socialist Challenge, PO Box 59, London N1.

## SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Domestic: 6 months, £5; 12 months, £10  
Abroad: Airmail, £16.50. Surface, £10 per annum.

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I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of \_\_\_\_\_

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'.

Complete and return to:

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