

Socialist Challenge

TGWU leaders threaten Cowley 11 with expulsion

PURGE!

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Dear Comrade McLennan:

WE ARE writing to you in this fashion because what we are witnessing in Oxford is an unprecedented witch-hunt not seen in the Transport and General Workers Union for some time. As you are probably aware, the TGWU are recommending that 11 members at the British Leyland plants in Cowley are disciplined by the union, facing possible suspension and even expulsion. These include Alan Thornett and Frank Corti, Chairperson and Secretary, respectively, of the largest TGWU branch in Oxford.

This represents, in our opinion, a blatant and flagrant breach of workers democracy, and worse still, a threat to the unity and strength of the union at Cowley. Despite a vicious campaign orchestrated by the right wing and fanned by the local press, Thornett was elected as Deputy Convenor only last December. Bob Fryer, another of those charged, was elected Convenor. Those who had collaborated with management were defeated.

The management, which still refuses to recognise Thornett as Deputy Convenor, recognised that his election as well as that of other socialists to these positions marked a setback for their plan to inflict redundancies in the name of 'rationalisation'.

Already Fleet Street papers like the London Evening Standard have lauded the T&G for 'bringing its militants into line'. Leyland management and the capitalist press will be rejoicing at seeing the union do their job for them.

The Oxford District Committee of the T&G has been hostile to Thornett and his supporters for some time. Last October saw unconstitutional moves to discipline him. Now a two-day hearing is scheduled for 27 and 28 February. Even before the hearings start, some inefficient official sent out letters saying that expulsion of Thornett and suspension of Corti were being recommended. The cat is out of the bag sooner than had been planned. What it reveals is that the decision has already been taken. The TGWU District and Regional Committee are prosecutor, judge and jury.

You are General Secretary of a Party whose militants have, in the Twenties, Thirties, Forties, and Fifties been the victims of numerous witch-hunts. When these took place you were supported by many in the labour movement who were not Communists. They acted on the excellent principle that 'An Injury against One is an Injury against All'. We are well aware that you do not agree with Thornett's political positions. But it is your duty, despite that, to

throw your party, its press and its trade union membership into a campaign to defend the Cowley 11, and for the dropping of all charges. The position and strength of the CP in the TGWU is well known. That is why your intervention could be of vital assistance to those under attack.

If there are any complaints against the 11 by the TGWU, and we do not believe there are, these should not be investigated behind closed doors. Let us have an investigation before the Cowley workers and let them be the judges.

We are therefore asking for you to join with us in waging a common and broad campaign in defence of these militants for the immediate dropping of the absurd charges and even more absurd sentences. What is, in effect, being challenged is the right of militants to defend the living standards of their fellow workers in the most effective fashion. What is at stake is the independence and unity of the union at Cowley from and against management.

We are anxious to hear from you on this matter and will publish any response from you in our next issue.

Yours fraternally,
TARIQ ALI
EDITOR
SOCIALIST CHALLENGE

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Editorial

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For whom the horn blows

THE WAR in the Horn is a tragedy. It is a tale of lost opportunities, of cynicism on the part of both the imperialist powers and the Soviet Union, as well as their respective supporters.

In February 1974 the Ethiopian peasants and workers arose in a remarkable upsurge which ultimately led to the overthrow of the feudal despot, Haile Selassie. The final blow was delivered by junior army officers, who responded to the upsurge by first wrangling with the monarch (memories of Cromwell and Charles I) and finally removing him from the throne. The new military council (the Derg) governed with the support of the pro-Moscow Communist Party, but was opposed by other workers parties and an important section of workers' and peasants' unions.

The upsurge did not abate, but continued to gain strength. The Derg finally instituted major reforms, which broke the shackles of feudalism. But on the national question the radical Jacobinism of the Derg provided no answers. Cromwell butchered the Irish patriots. Robespierre refused to sanction complete independence for Haiti. Mengistu continues to prosecute a murderous war against the Eritrean people.

The Derg, despite its Marxist rhetoric, represents the most extreme form of bourgeois radicalism. Its 'red terror' is the terror of Robespierre. It is progressive against feudal despots, but, like Pancho Villa and Zapata in Mexico, it cannot go beyond that stage. Certainly the revolutionary process in Ethiopia has not yet exhausted itself. But the possibilities can only be realised by a complete overturn of existing social relations and an accomplishment of all the tasks of the radical bourgeois revolution, especially democracy and right of national self-determination.

The national question which now focuses world attention on the Horn is a product of imperialism's rule. Eritrea was arbitrarily dragged into the Ethiopian federation by Italian and British imperialism. It has an indisputable case for separation. In the disputed Ogaden desert in the south it is again colonial boundaries that are at the root of the problem. The nomadic inhabitants of the region are Somali — no question about it — but incorporated into Ethiopia under the Amharic ruling elite. So their case for self-determination also seems strong.

But imperialist interests again come into play as the big powers want to re-establish their hold in the area after the loss of Ethiopia to the Soviet sphere of influence. The reactionary Arab regimes want to turn the Red Sea into an 'Arab lake'. Hence the backing for Somalia — from Britain, France, West Germany and the USA, as well as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Sudan. Hence too, the backing for Ethiopia from Israel.

The Soviet role has been disastrous. After years of backing both the Somalis and the Eritreans it has now turned its back on them to support Robespierre Mengistu, the Ethiopian dictator. This is not 'Russia's Vietnam' as the bourgeois press is saying, echoed by some currents on the left. But it is a case history of the bankruptcy of Soviet foreign policy. If you adhere to the Russian strategy — create spheres of influence without overturning existing social relations — why not switch sides from one radical nationalist regime to another? Any why not stop helping a liberation movement and switch to the side of their oppressors?

The Soviet attitude is a betrayal of the Ethiopian and Eritrean revolution. But it is worse than that, for Soviet attitudes have succeeded in driving the Somalis and even the Eritreans into the arms of people like the Shah of Iran and Numeiry of Sudan. Imperialism is not known for its concern for the legitimate aspirations and demands of these movements.

It is a sad thing, but it is the responsibility of revolutionary socialists — and probably us alone — to support the struggles of the Eritrean and Ethiopian workers and peasants. Nobody else will.

Waiting for the General Election

by
TARIQ
ALI

LAST WEEK saw a virtual collapse on the wages front. Union after union retreated before the Labour Government's onslaught. The miners accepted a deal within the 10 per cent norm and were thanked in the House of Commons on behalf of a grateful 'nation' by Callaghan. The steel unions accepted, without any concessions from the British Steel Corporation, the closure of a plant near Cardiff, which will create 3,300 redundancies. It looks as if nationally there will be 30,000 steel workers joining the dole queues in the coming months. The engineers and the workers in the water industry also bowed before the Government.

The power workers threatened action looms over the horizon, but the only possible strike immediately threatening the Government is that of the tanker drivers. However on this front as well, all the necessary preparations have been made. In an exclusive front-page scoop last week, *Socialist Worker*, to its enormous credit, revealed the details of 'Operation Raglan'. What has been planned is a military requisitioning of the tankers (at the point of guns?) by soldiers in an attempt to smash the strike. The experience of the recent FBU defeat has obviously given the strike-breakers in the Labour Government new heart to continue on their course.

RUTHLESS

The blacklisting of British firms, including the smallest and least significant, for acceding to wage demands over the 10 per cent limit is another indication of how seriously Labour takes the task it has set itself: the efficient managing of the capitalist system. We have to face up to the facts of the situation. Callaghan and Foot have, up till now, had a remarkable series of successes. The ruthlessness with which this Government has dealt with any sign of mass working class discontent must have won it the unstinted admiration of both the City of London and the International Monetary Fund. True it has also led to growing demoralisation amongst its traditional base of support in the country as a whole. Party activists, in particular, are extremely discontented. But this has not yet found a serious reflection inside the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The House of Commons, and the entire way in which it functions, was designed precisely to isolate and insulate its Members from the world outside. True there are some Labour MPs who, in private, are savage and unsparring in their attacks on Callaghan, Foot and Benn. Some have developed a completely nihilistic attitude to politics. At least two are actively considering not returning to Parliament. But this is, in reality, a reflection of their own crisis of perspectives.

on previous promises, she would lose three senior Tory leaders: Whitlaw, Carrington and Gilmour. The paper suggested that in a party desperately short of talent, credible replacements might not be forthcoming. Thatcher's dilemma is certainly understandable. The Labour Government has not just stolen a march, but it has walked away with most of the Tories' clothes. What can she do except try and outbid Callaghan on racism and make attacks on the 'corporatism' of the Labour Government.

just for the ruling class. Working class politics could also be shaken up.

UNITY

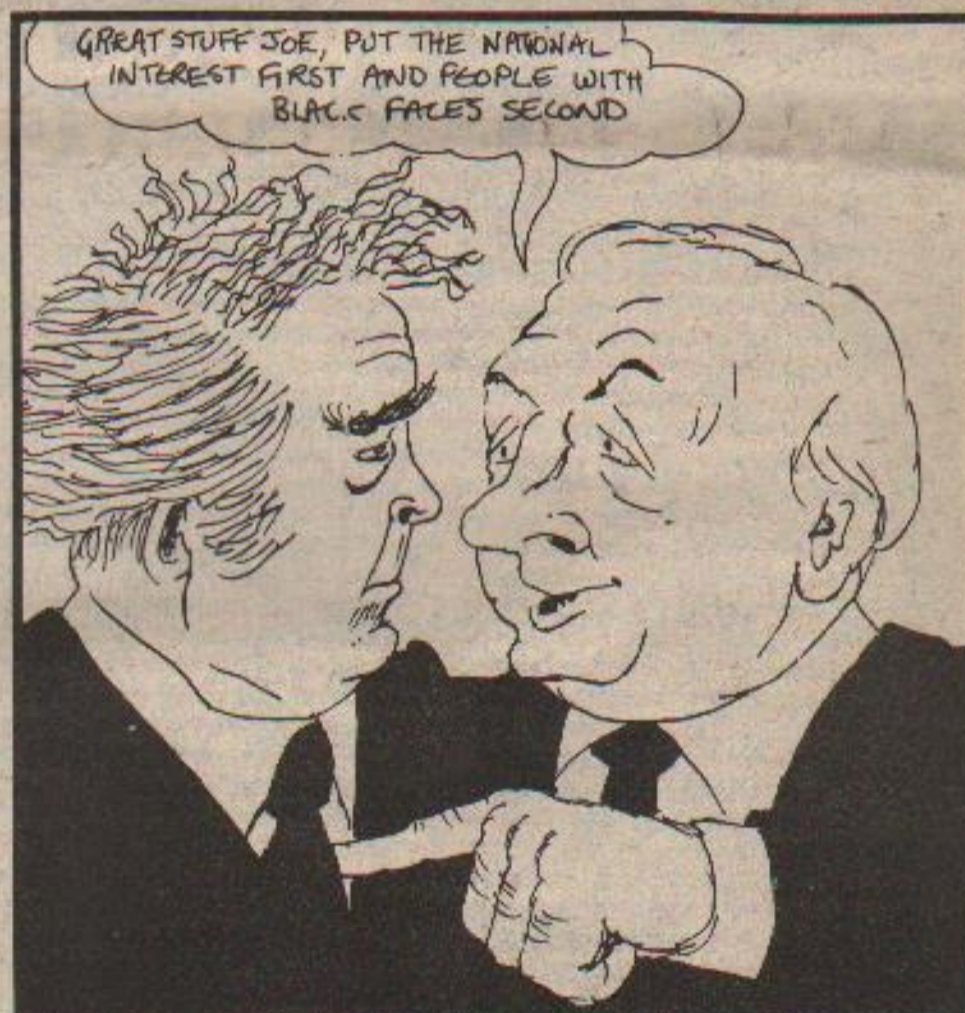
Socialists will, as usual, call for the return of a Labour government. This is not because we believe that Labour's policies for managing capitalism are better than the Tories, but because the Labour Party remains, unfortunately, the only mass working class alternative in national politics. At the same time it is certainly not sufficient merely to state our intentions in this regard. We have to mount a political intervention designed to demonstrate that there exist a genuine set of socialist policies for dealing with the crisis.

It is here that the Socialist Unity campaign to mount an electoral challenge to reformism becomes of key importance. A decision by the Socialist Workers Party to develop a common front with Socialist Unity against both reformism and the Tories would make our intervention the most powerful political campaign ever mounted by the revolutionary left. The fact that this common front still seems some way off is an indication that we too have not been totally immune to the political crisis which has afflicted every working class organisation. The sooner we can surmount it, the better. And not just for us, but for all working class militants who want to fight back now.

TEST

The first test of the impact of Callaghan's successes and Thatcher's racist outburst will come with the Ilford North by-election early next month. Given the swing against Labour in preceding by-elections, it is expected that the Tories will win the seat. An important indication will be the size of their majority. At the same time, however, it is worth remembering that it will, at best, be only a partial test. Ilford North is not a typical Labour stronghold. The Labour majority was under 100. It has been a traditional Tory seat for many years.

The real and ultimate test, of course, will be the next General Election. That is what will decide the immediate future of British politics. For the impasse reached on the wages front makes the event of even greater political importance, and not



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

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I am interested in more information about activities in my area.

I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs.

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NAME

ADDRESS

Send to Socialist Challenge, 328/329 Upper Street, London N1.

OUR POLICIES

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

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

* To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

* To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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 irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will in the long run be achieved by defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

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

4 The Communist Parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the 'Euro-Communist' nor the pro-Moscow wing 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 WATCHFUL eye of the West Germany state. The humble petitioners in the background are Nazis. They could hardly expect the same protection if they were socialists.

Exposed! State plans to disrupt Russell Tribunal

How the West was won

SUBVERSION, disruption, destruction. Not the preserve of 'terrorists', but the plans of the West German Interior Ministry to deal with the Russell Tribunal investigating alleged civil rights violations in that country. RICHARD CARVER reports.

The document prepared by Interior Ministry officials, and now translated and published in Britain, itself deserves to be evidence for the Tribunal — and probably will be.

The document is divided into three sections: the political background to the Tribunal, including the debate among the supporting organisations; an 'evaluation' of its potential effects; and 'possible counter-measures'. This is a fascinating insight into the very thing of which the state accuses the Russell Tribunal: prejudice.

Garbled account

The first section is a predictably garbled account of differences among the far left and other Tribunal backers, which hardly deserves attention.

The 'evaluation' section is equally predictable: 'The mentality of the prominent groups which constitute the driving force behind the Tribunal and the experience with similar campaigns at home and abroad elicits the observation that the civil rights and democratic order of the Federal Republic is to be defamed by this Tribunal.'

What makes them so sure? It can only be the fact that the allegations under review by the Tribunal are true. The two 'similar campaigns' conducted by the Russell Foundation were the investigations into US war crimes in Vietnam and human rights violations in Latin America. Who can deny that the guilty verdict in each case was true? Obviously the authors of this document would like to,

Of course the backers of the Tribunal (and its two predecessors) have been overwhelmingly from the left, generally the far left. We are biased, certainly. But that is because we can have a shrewd guess at the outcome of any objective inquiry.

Legal sanctions

So can the authors of this document, for in the final section ('Possible counter-measures') we have an indication of the real 'civil rights and democratic order' in West Germany.

First, the document toys with the idea of infiltrating the Tribunal to influence the verdict! Then it considers official statements to discourage participation in the proceedings, but concludes that that would give the Tribunal too much publicity.

No, the best solution seems to be legal sanctions against the Tribunal. The legal possibilities break down like this:

●The law on meetings makes it possible to ban the 'expression of statements, opinions perhaps, on the part of so-called judges, witnesses and others which have as their subject matter a criminal act or an offence which needs to be followed up for the sake of public order...'. The authors reason that the Tribunal will fall into this category.

●The law of societies allows banning 'provided it can be ascertained that the purposes and activities run counter to criminal laws or that they are directed against the consti-

tutional order.'

●The aliens act means that foreigners living in West Germany 'can be forbidden to participate in the Russell Tribunal by a prohibition concerning political activity...' and foreigners can similarly be kept out of the country.

●Withdrawal of subsidies can prevent the participation of any publicly funded organisations.

●Forfeiture of basic rights can be implemented, 'if it can be established that persons in preparing or conducting the Tribunal misuse basic rights mentioned in Art. 18, e.g. freedom of expression of opinion (Art. 5), freedom of the press (Art. 5, Abs. 1), freedom of association (Art. 8), or freedom to combine (Art. 9) in the fight against the liberal and democratic basic order.'

The authors conclude that this last procedure would be 'too incommensurate and spendthrift time-wise', but that's not quite the point.

There it is in black and white. Opponents of the regime can have their political rights taken away on the say-so of some turd in the Interior Ministry.

If this was East Germany, the bourgeois press, Jimmy Carter, David Owen and all would be screaming blue murder. But not a peep.

One of the questions the Russell Tribunal is investigating is: 'Is censorship being exercised through provisions of the Criminal and Civil Law and through extra-legal measures?' Here is their answer.



Legal Nazis

THE WEST German attitude to civil rights is — how can we put it kindly? — a little uneven.

Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld has just brought out a book on the Nazis in France that details where many of the leading fascists are now. Many of them seem to have gone into the legal profession, which must indicate something.

Kurt Lischka: head of Gestapo in France. Now retired prosecutor in Cologne.

Herbert Hagen: Bordeaux police chief and SS political adviser. Now company director in Warstein.

Ernst Heinrichsohn: Angers police chief. Now lawyer and notary in Leer.

Fritz Merdsehe: Orleans police chief responsible for throwing thirty people down a well near Bourges, 'because there was no transport for the camp at Drancy.' Now a retired judge and legal journalist in Frankfurt.

And so the list goes on. We are duly impressed with the West German state's standards of tolerance and decency.



Weaving Away

SOME MEMBERS of the Peterborough General Branch of the National Union of Public Employees had become interested in the National Association for Freedom as a result of its anti-Trade Union activities at Grunwick's. When the organisation moved into the Peterborough area recently, apparently under the leadership of a NUPE member in the local hospital, their interest deepened.

NAFF has succeeded in recruiting a few members in the hospital, including the Head Porter and one or two medical staff. Mr. W. Weaver, a departmental manager, remains, however, the main energy source. He recently organised a public meeting for NAFF in the town recently at which he wore a badge describing him as 'CHIEF STEWARD' and during which it was stated that he is in charge of their activities throughout Cambridgeshire. The small meeting itself must have disappointed him as the small audience was evenly divided between existing supporters and opponents, and the unconverted general public were conspicuous by their absence.

As for NAFF activities in the hospital, they appear confined to aiding Bro. Weaver in a personal vendetta against the officers of the NUPE Branch there. It seems that anti-trade-unionism is, for the moment, uppermost. The NUPE Branch Secretary says that there are no signs yet of anti-Health Service activity. Bro. Weaver's activities are, however, being closely observed.

Moses' tablets of stone

DOCTOR BERRY Beaumont, Honorary Secretary of the Socialist Medical Association, recently wrote a letter to James (my son-in-law thinks I'm Moses, actually I wrote the Commandments) Callaghan, reminding him of the recent decisions of the Labour Party conference on abortion rights. Callaghan, naturally, couldn't reply. But his Political Assistant, a Ms Jenny Jeger, sent a letter to Dr. Beaumont which contained the following gem:

'This is an extremely emotive issue which crosses all political, social and religious boundaries. The debate at Labour Party Conference did not result in a policy decision to be adopted by the government but was merely a vote which reflected the mood of the Conference'. To paraphrase Brecht: the problem for Labour Prime Ministers always seems to be the Labour Party conference. Why not dissolve these and elect new ones!

Helping out

BRITISH ADVISERS have been helping the Colombian Government deal with opposition. The director of the Administrative Security Department (DAS), Guillermo Leon Linares, recently told El Tiempo that 'a mission sent by the British Government had been advising the Colombian authorities on kidnapping and urban guerrilla activities.'

The British 'left' satisfied with the way we were dealing with the

problem'. Linares said that the mission had made recommendations 'which we have been putting into practice, and which have been a great help.'

No prizes for guessing where these 'advisers' got their training. Large prizes, though, for other details, since all the relevant Government departments disclaim any knowledge of the mission. This is strange since El Tiempo generally reflects the official line of the Colombian Government and it is unlikely that the paper could have revealed this information without official approval.

The official line is that the mission was there to help deal with 'criminal' kidnapping, so why has the British Government gone so coy all of a sudden?

Intelligence tested

PALACE WATCHERS (if there are any left) will be astonished to learn that a member of the Royal Family has been given a job in British Intelligence! The lad with the IQ is tobagganist (sorry, bobsleigh champion) and Royal Hussar Prince Michael of Kent.

His rather routine job at the Ministry of Defence Intelligence Directorate, where he will be carrying out 'analytical studies of an intelligence nature' does not bring any extra money or promotion. But the icy price may be reflecting on the successes of the Llewellyn family, where paterfamilias Harry Foxhunter has long-time Intelligence associations.

The Foxhunters are now almost part of the Royal Family. Roddy has now been lauded on a chart-topping career and baby brother Dai meets all sorts of interesting people. Among them is Pier Luigi Torri, the successful Italian 'banker' who sadly no longer walks our green and pleasant land.

Yes, it's a man's life in today's Intelligence Directorate.



OFFICIAL SECRECY in action. The above filing cabinet is the property of Duncan Campbell — C of ABC, who are now celebrating the first anniversary of their arrest. The birthday is to be marked on Sunday with a solidarity march, assembling at Tolson's Square, Easton, London NW1 at 1.30pm, and visiting a number of officially secret buildings. The marchers hope that Special Branch officers will not all be tied up in public conveniences.

200,000 jobs could go Solihull rejects Edwardes plan

ROVER SOLIHULL shop stewards have rejected the Edwardes' plan for slashing thousands of jobs in British Leyland. The stewards voted 96 to 67 for a resolution condemning the plan and 'the practice of the union and management together voting on a management plan.'

The resolution went on to call for a meeting of all Rover Group shop stewards 'to consider the effects of Edwardes' proposals and to draw up a plan to defend the interests of the members in Rover.'

It is now clear that 12,500 jobs is an absolute minimum figure. According to Edwardes this figure is 'based on the most optimistic market forecast' and 'present levels of productivity'.

But Edwardes' speech makes it clear that present levels of productivity are going to change, and that he does not

believe that the present market forecast would be realised.

If productivity is brought to the new levels demanded by management, and if the market share of Leyland does not change dramatically, then the real number of jobs lost could be anything between 20,000 and 30,000.

It is estimated that for every one job in cars there are five jobs in the component industries. So the proposals for Leyland could mean a total loss of between 100,000 and 200,000 jobs in the industry.

In his speech Edwardes went into some detail on model development in the two new companies Austin Morris and Rover/Jaguar/Triumph. Significantly no details were given on the future of Triumph.

Triumph is considered by many as the most likely area in the specialist cars section for cutbacks with only the name being retained and the drastically reduced production being switched to existing Rover and Jaguar plants.

CLOSURE

The Speke plant in Liverpool and the Canley plant in Coventry would face the possibility of closure. Already some component firms in the Midlands have started redundancy pro-

grammes and the number will increase in the coming months.

SOLIDARITY

This is the proposal which trade union leaders have sanctioned, the Labour Government has backed and which the Morning Star considered would have been appeared irresponsible to have voted against.

Throughout Leyland cars, militants should follow the example of the Rover stewards and prepare to fight these plans at a local level, but also working towards a national response. In particular this means preparing the ground for solidarity action with any section or plant fighting the plans.



Photo: LAURENCE SPARHAM (IFL)

Defend Alan Thornett

THIS militant has fought tooth and nail for the interests of car workers. He has been elected into the leadership of his factory on that basis. Now he faces...
EXPULSION FROM THE UNION!

In a decision taken at the highest levels of the Transport and General Workers Union, an all-out assault is being aimed at revolutionary militants in the leadership of the Leyland Cowley Assembly plant. At least eleven trade unionists will appear before the union's disciplinary bodies on the 27-8 February charged with 'bringing the union into disrepute'. Although two right wingers have been included, the real target is the revolutionary left.

Alan Thornett is the main target. Thornett was recently elected deputy senior steward at the plant. Management refused to recognise the result.

Now Brian Mathers, Regional Secretary of the TGWU, has officially informed Thornett that the court will have before them a recommendation for his expulsion from the union.

LIFE BAN

Others, including the secretary of the Cowley 5/293 branch, Frank Corti, face being banned from union office for life.

The moves started last year, but were brought to a halt around the time of Thornett's election. The new attack added another militant to the list, Tony Homer, and fits in neatly with the rapturous reception given by union leaders to Leyland axe-man Michael Ed-

wardes. That response meant the green light for Leyland management in their campaign to chop 12,500 jobs. But it also meant dealing with a revolutionary alternative to the collaboration of the Communist Party and the Labour left senior stewards.

DEMOCRACY

So the fight against the victimisation of militants in Cowley is not only a fight for democracy in the union, but against the Edwardes plan as a whole.

However time is very short. An emergency recall conference of the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement has been called to plan the immediate action necessary to defend workers democracy.

Given the way in which union leaders and management are working hand in hand in Leyland mass action will decide the outcome of this victimisation. Support must be sought in other Leyland plants. This means immediately starting to counter the enthusiastic campaign which the press will make behind the union's disciplinary drive.

It is the union leaders working hand in glove with management that 'brings the union into disrepute'; not those who fight to defend the interests of their members.

Joint Negotiating Committee They only negotiate defeats

by Pat Hickey [Rover Solihull Shop Steward]

LAI-D-OFF workers in the Rover SE 1 plant in Solihull were informed last week that they were the first to receive the benefits of the 'security of earnings' document drawn up by the Joint Negotiating Committee.

The information came not from the union representative, but from the local press. The first 'security of earnings' document was overwhelmingly rejected by the mass meeting of Leyland shop stewards in early 1977. The latest document only included minor changes, but despite this Joint Negotiating Committee has accepted it. The decision was ratified by a meeting of convenors held at Kenilworth immediately after their meeting with Edwardes.

The new document, which has been presented as concerning staff status of hourly paid employees, contains this pen-

alty clause: a single dispute lasting more than four hours can disqualify workers engaging in industrial action from receiving lay-off pay in the whole succeeding quarter.

DISCIPLINE

The penalty clause will be used as a disciplinary device by management who will be able to fine workers several weeks pay without recourse to any of the normal disciplinary procedures. This will undoubtedly be used to strengthen supervision and the power of the foreman.

The fact that documents like these are being accepted by senior stewards will revive calls for these decisions to be referred back to mass meetings. However it is unlikely that the Joint Negotiating Committee will follow such a course of action.

It will have to be replaced by a body based on the existing shop stewards organisations and recallable by them.

The JNC is now negotiating on the incentive scheme which is designed to create even



further job loss. In the context of the Edwardes plan these negotiations are a serious attack on Leyland workers. We urge Leyland stewards to pass resolutions of no confidence in

the JNC and to reject discussion of the implementation of this scheme on a plant level. The fight against the JNC must be got under way before the negotiations on the 1978 pay deal start.

AUEW sounds the retreat

THE possibility of a fight to win a national pay claim for engineers disappeared last week. The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions climbed down on the original claim for a minimum skilled rate of £70.

To the delight of the Engineering Employers Federation, the unions — led by John Boyd and Hugh Scanlon of the AUEW — re-set the target at £60. As JOHN GRAHAM reports, this is the last in a series of backtracks on the original claim.

The claim was largely withdrawn before the negotiations got underway. Scanlon persuaded the AUEW November National Committee to support the 12 month rule, thereby ensuring that there would be no common date of implementation of any agreement.

The original claim demanded a 35-hour week without loss of

pay. The Confed reduced that to a claim to be implemented only over a 5 year period. Since then John Boyd has written in the AUEW Journal about the national claim but without even mentioning the 35 hour week.

The November National Committee of the AUEW unanimously called for a recall National Committee and special shop stewards quarter-

lies in all districts immediately after the reply to consider industrial action.

Despite several meetings with the Engineering Employers Federation, which failed to produce any agreement, no district shop stewards meetings were held.

Confed officials met the employers, and without consultation reduced the claim from £70 to a £60 minimum time rate. In return for this abject capitulation, the EEF upped its original offer of 2.5 per cent to 4.5 per cent — that is £57 for skilled workers. This ditching of the claim was later endorsed by both the Engineering Union's National Committee and the Confed.

The most dangerous aspect of the employers' offer is that it is made on condition that



JOHN BOYD

further locally negotiated increases above the minimum time rate must not push increases above the Government's 10 per cent limit. Whether or not the Engineering Union leaders openly endorse this, the fact that they are prepared to accept such small

increases in the minimum rate will set a norm of similarly low settlements in local negotiations.

Because of the 12-month rule, which forces workers in each company and plant to negotiate wage increases at different times, any challenge to the 10 per cent limit will be localised and far more easily defeated by the employers and the Government.

Unfortunately the Broad Left, the traditional opposition in the AUEW to John Boyd and the right wing clique, has done nothing to oppose this backtracking operation. Despite a lot of talk in Broadsheet — the Broad Left's bi-monthly paper in the AUEW — and at the Broad Left national conference about fighting for this claim, nothing has been done to

mobilise the rank and file membership behind this claim.

The Broad Left has carefully confined its opposition to the right wing in the corridors of the AUEW offices and hot-air at the National Committee. With Bob Wright's presidential election coming up in March, they have been making sure that they do not rock the apple-cart.

HOPELESS TACTICS

Such tactics are hopeless. They make it easy for the right wing to patch up shoddy pay deals with the EEF which makes no advances towards the 35 hour week, and still leaves the low-paid unprotected by a decent national minimum time rate.

Miners, power workers, tanker drivers expose The real face of Tony Benn

REPORTS about that Tony Benn is preparing a real fight over the forthcoming Budget. He is calling for a £4,000 million boost to the economy, twice the figure being considered by the Treasury.

A paper, drawn up by the Labour Party's home policy committee which Benn chairs, calls for tax cuts and increased public spending, reports JONATHAN SILBERMAN. This, it is argued, will help to provide the necessary economic stimulus to create 1.5m jobs. Benn's paper describes the extent of unemployment as 'appalling'. It calls for the Government to expand the National Enterprise Board and impose import controls as added attacks on unemployment.

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But the picture of Tony Benn as prize fighter against unemployment is rapidly fading. His real stance on unemployment was shown by the backing he gave to the miners' incentive scheme. The deal is certain to result in pit closures and redundancies, let alone its impact on safety standards and the fighting unity of the NUM.

Energy Minister Benn is also ultimately responsible for the tanker drivers and power workers' claims. The power workers' union, the EEPTU, met the employers on 15 February. The background to their claim is not only the decline in real wages brought about by 2½ years of wage restraints, but the loss already of some 70,000 jobs from the industry. Benn's position on increased productivity can only increase that total.

The very idea in Benn's document that pumping money into the economy will lead automatically to eliminating unemployment is fallacious, when the employers are clearly refusing to invest. Moreover, those few who do invest do so in order to increase the productivity of labour — to increase their profitability, not employ more workers.

HYPOCRITICAL

But assuming that Benn actually believes in what he is saying, he should know that the biggest possible boost to the spending power of workers has nothing to do with paltry tax cuts which increase wages by £1.50 per week.

Even by his own standards, Benn is hypocritical. Not only does he fail to back workers struggling to defend their living standards, but he actually conspires with the most right-wing employers to prevent workers achieving this. The Government has plans — jointly with the oil companies — to break any future tanker drivers' strike through the army requisition-

ing the tankers and taking the place of the drivers.

The plan, Operation Raglan, has been exposed in last week's Socialist Worker. It provides for the country to be divided into emergency divisions, with control placed in the hands of the oil companies themselves! Again, the Minister in charge is Tony Benn.

Benn and the rest of the Labour leaders see salvation in co-operation with the oil companies, using North Sea oil to shore up the flagging balance of payments. But by his own admission in *The Sun* on 4 January, Government revenue from North Sea oil will not rise to £3,500m until the mid-1980s — and that's only a mere five per cent of the gross national product.

Finally, the import controls which Ben calls for suggest that the solution to the problems of the British working class are to be found in an alliance with British bosses. This is not only reactionary — it is rubbish. How will import controls save the jobs of the miners thrown out of work by the Benn-backed incentive scheme?

Jobs could be created by an emergency programme of useful public works. Redundancies could be prevented by nationalising firms threatening to put workers on the dole queues and placing them under workers' control. Jobs could be saved by cutting hours in order to share work with no loss in pay. Benn calls for none of this. He campaigns for even less. His 'alternative budget' is little more than a public relations exercise designed to boost his own flagging image.



Photo: BM COCKSON (Socialist Challenge)

1,152 workers face the dole The Swan Hunter fiasco

Swan Hunter shipbuilders announced last week its intention to make 1,152 workers redundant at its Tyneside yard. In an area where unemployment is already hovering around 10 per cent, the sackings threaten to have severe repercussions for the whole population of Tyneside.

Geoff Bell reports on a job crisis for which as usual the national press have been only too eager to blame the workers.

The current attacks on the workers at Swan Hunter began in December when outfitters at the yards refused to end an overtime ban. The owners of Swan Hunter, the nationalised British Shipbuilding, then announced that it would transfer from the yard seven

orders for ships destined for Poland.

A ferocious witch-hunt was launched against the outfitters, who were claiming parity with boilermakers. And yet the following month the reasonableness of the outfitters' claim was recognised when they won a £5.40 a week fair wages award.

Unfortunately the boilermakers then felt they had to maintain their differential, and it was because their overtime ban allegedly led to the confirmation of the loss of the Polish orders that Swan Hunter

has insisted on redundancies.

In many shipyards the craft mentality of boilermakers is often deeply resented by other skilled workers, and on this occasion their insistence on maintaining their differential has undoubtedly given Swan Hunter management the excuse to threaten redundancies. But the basic reason why both outfitters and boilermakers are using the parity argument as a way of increasing their wages is that both sections of workers have suffered more than average losses of earnings in the period of the Social Contract.

SOLUTION

The comparison can be made with the nearby ship repair yard in Sunderland. There the boilermakers and the outfitters have parity, but they also enjoy considerably higher wages than their counterparts at Swans.

Clearly this is the solution which both outfitters and boilermakers at Swans should be fighting for, but they face in their 'nationalised' employers a management which is proving every bit as ruthless as the private employers were.

Not only is management quite content to see different sections of workers in Newcastle fight over the few crumbs British shipbuilding is making available, it is also exploiting the willingness of the Communist Party-dominated trade union leadership in Govan Yard, Glasgow, to scab on the Newcastle shipyard workers.

The Glasgow shop stewards accepted the Polish order taken away from the Newcastle yards. It was one more indication of the urgency for a national trade union response to the many problems facing shipyard workers up and down the country.

North Shields Tenants clash with Labour Council

THE Meadow Well information shop in North Shields has been occupied day and night by tenants and shop workers since 13 January. The Labour-controlled council has refused to extend the contracts of the workers employed there — much to the anger of the local tenants who have given the occupation their full support.

Many are actively sitting in, while others have been delivering leaflets, petitioning, and taking part in street meetings to build further support for the

occupation. Over 1,600 signatures on the petition have expressed antagonism that exists between the right-wing Labour Council and the needs of the people in the area.

Peter Dawson, a member of the Tenants' Association, explains:

'These workers have built up confidence in their relationship with the tenants over the past year. The decision to sack them is a political move because they were thorns in the flesh of the Council.'

Tenants have had to fight repeated attempts by the council to close this shop. Their success means that tenants and trade unionists in the area could continue to use its valuable

resources in the shop and seek advice on issues such as housing, unemployment, pensions, industrial injuries and social security entitlement for those involved in industrial disputes.

Now the tenants feel that they have been betrayed by the Labour Party by not being allowed to keep an information shop under independent control. They feel that an information shop staffed by the council will be run by mere puppets.

This had led to real disillusionment with Labour Party in the area.

As Betty Kenny, another tenant says:

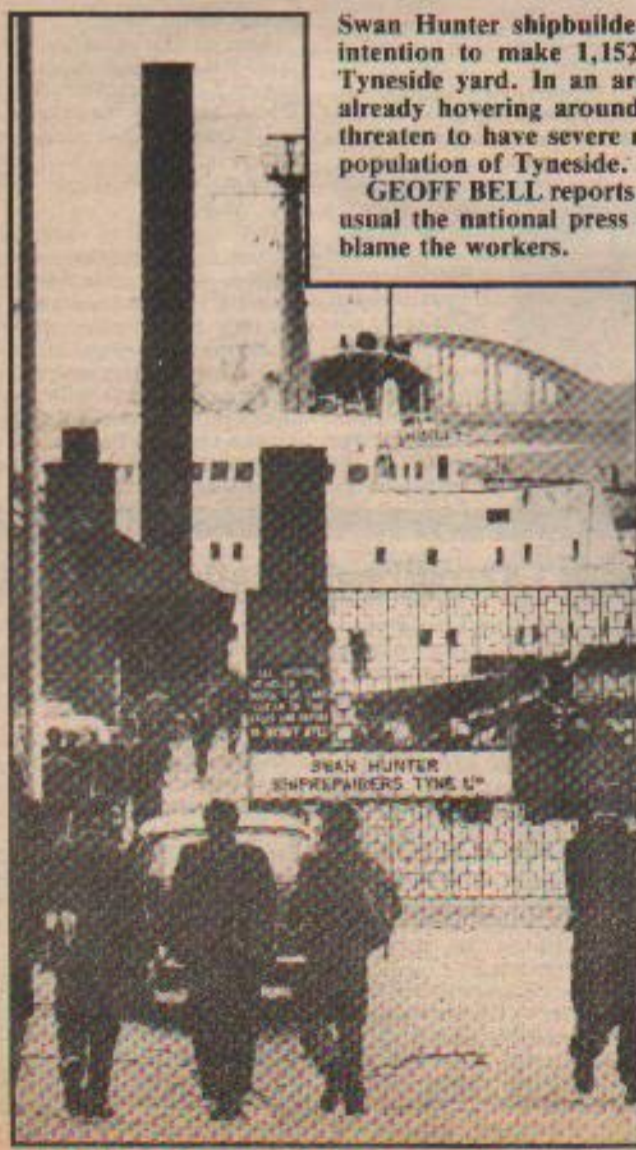
'The people want the workers in, and the council want

them out. I have voted Labour all my life but never again.'

The immediate problem facing the occupiers is threat of eviction. The council has already applied for an eviction order and this is likely to be carried out in the next week. This has especially angered the tenants as they see the Labour Party using the courts to evict them from an information shop that they believe is theirs as of right.

While the union involved (NUPE) has made the dispute official this has not gone beyond sympathetic support.

Money and all messages of support should be sent to: 'The Occupation Committee', Meadowell Information Shop, 75 Ripley Ave, North Shields.



Anti abortion bill appears as Campaigning for day care services stepped up

The anti-abortionists are alive and well. And Sir Bernard Braine, Tory MP for South East Essex, aims to prove it on 21 February when he will bring an anti-abortion bill to Parliament.

Sir Bernard Braine's bill will be introduced under the '10 minute rule'. A vote will be taken to decide whether it should be allowed a place in the queue for a second reading. If successful, it's unlikely to get any further.

As SARAH ROELOFS explains the National Abortion Campaign is not yielding to the persistent efforts of the anti-abortionists. The campaign sees that even if this bill does not succeed, any vote by MPs to back its proposals will strengthen the hand of the anti-abortionists.

National Abortion Campaign groups throughout the country are stepping up their activity in the fight for women to have control over their own fertility.

● **Cleveland** NAC has joined up with Newcastle for a regional day care campaign. They are producing leaflets to win support; addressing the Trades Council; and circulating community health councils and area health authorities with their demands.

● **Oxford** campaigners have won support from a local hospital branch of ASTMS, the white collar union, and from other union branches for their long standing day care campaign. A recent area health

authority report to local papers announced that a newly built hospital will not be opening, and that existing services are to be drastically curtailed.

● **Cardiff** is a different story. Campaigners have recently won a small victory when health authorities decided to provide limited day care abortion facilities. The group is now fighting for extra staff and increased facilities — today they are open for a mere one day a week.

● **Leeds** activist Geordie Walton reports: 'In April last year, Leeds Western community health council expressed its concern over the lack of NHS abortions. They did this,

thanks to the pressure from NAC. The council urged the area health authority to set up a day care unit.

CAMPAIGN

'Our abortion group realised we couldn't rely on the community health council, and called a meeting to launch a town-wide day care campaign, to involve more people than those active in NAC. We were pleased with the attendance and support from local trade unionists and representatives from the British Pregnancy and Advisory Service, the health council, the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party and the International Marxist Group. We're now out to get local trade unionists to pass resolutions to send to the health authority.'

In the May council elections the Socialist Unity candidate has agreed to put day care into the manifesto, and in one word the Labour Party has also given the okay.

● **Hackney** NAC in East London has called a public meeting jointly with the City and Hackney community health council on 7 March. The

meeting will urge the authority to extend the day care abortion clinic which exists, so that all women in the East London area have access to it.

Hackney NAC is petitioning and leafletting in local markets and seeking support from trade unions, women's groups, and the Labour Party. The Community Health Council has been contacted. The next action called by local campaigners is a picket of the area health authority meeting on 9 March when this issue is scheduled for discussion.

DAY-CARE

Day care abortion facilities on the NHS in every area are essential if women are to have the right to control their fertility in practice. Day care facilities:

- * reduce delays in obtaining an abortion, making the whole procedure safer and easier for women;
- * reduce the load on gynaecological departments increasing the efficiency and quality of the community's health care;
- * reduce distress to some staff and patients in gynaecological wards.

Revolutionary unity conference

ONE HUNDRED and seventy militants gathered last Saturday at a Conference on Revolutionary Unity organised by former members of the Socialist Workers Party. Its decisions registered an important advance for all those fighting for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary organisation. BRIAN GROGAN reports.

It was in many ways a remarkable event. This is a time when syndicalist and economist notions of developing the class struggle have received severe setbacks. What is needed, more than ever before, are militants with political and trade-union

experience capable of educating those who lack this experience. And here was present a large bulk of the former cadre of the largest organisation on the British far-left. Fortunately their talents will not be wasted.

The decisions these militants took reflected a desire for a total break with all forms of sectarianism. They decided to work towards the creation of an International Socialist Alliance at a recall conference in June. The aims of this conference were to be:

a) to maintain and develop the positive aspects of the IS politics as part of the wider development of socialist politics at this time.

b) to work for the creation of a new revolutionary socialist organisation with the IMG, Big Flame and other Socialists.

c) to test all possible forms of

united action including working where relevant to build Socialist Unity in the localities and nationally by intervening not just in elections but on other issues in the class struggle, and by generating discussion within it of the tasks of socialists today;

d) to contribute in relevant ways to the attempt to develop Socialist Challenge as a popular agitational paper of a unified revolutionary left.'

HESITATIONS

The conference inevitably reflected the hesitations of a number of militants who, bruised by their experience in the SWP, were reluctant to immediately embark on the creation of a new organisation. These hesitations were articulated by Richard Kirkwood and Stephen Marks of the Workers

League and they won the day. Martin Shaw's more ambitious proposals to commit the conference to creating a new revolutionary organisation and making Socialist Challenge its weekly paper were watered down by a series of amendments.

JOINT WORK

Paul Thompson of Big Flame attending as an observer, explained that his organisation, too, was, at this time, only prepared for joint work. He did not think the time was right for anything else.

The Socialist Unity local election campaign will offer many possibilities for joint work in the coming period. There is no reason why this, together with other joint work, cannot form the basis for a decision at the June conference.

Squatters — Upping the ante

FOLLOWING THE first use of the new Criminal Trespass Law against squatter Alan Beddoe in Battersea — he was charged with "resisting eviction" — a campaign is under way to get the charge dropped.

In Wandsworth, South London, the Labour Party and Trades Council have gone on record against the new law, which is seen as the thin end of a wedge which will be used against all occupations, whether by students or by workers fighting redundancies. But the council in Wandsworth started the evictions in the first place.

Apart from motions to Battersea police to drop the charges, support is being organised for a demonstration at South Western Magistrates Court on February 22nd.



OVER 5,000 people marched in London on Saturday to demand that the conviction of Gay News and its editor be quashed. The appeal against the conviction started on Monday in London.

As well as gay groups from all over the country, the demonstration received unprecedented support from non-gay organisations, including anti-fascist committees and left groups.

At the end of the rally which followed the demonstration, thousands of marchers occupied the nearby Charing Cross station and closed down the WH Smiths bookstall there in protest at last week's refusal of Smiths to distribute Gay News.

The national Gay News defence committee has called for country-wide pickets of Smiths for this Saturday.

* A meeting to discuss future organisation against attacks on gay people has been called by the National Gay News Defence Committee. It is at the Birmingham Gay Centre, 9 Broadley Street, Digbeth on 25 February from 11am-6pm. All groups concerned with the gay issue are urged to send representatives. Photo: ANDREW WIARD (Report)

Students: united campaign threatened

In recent months the Tories have stepped up efforts to overrule student union decisions by using the power of the Courts. And now the Government has moved in with a public accounts committee investigation into the funding of student unions.

A major attack on student union autonomy is underway, and a united response to the Government's attacks is vital. However the campaign is already seriously divided, as REDMOND O'NEILL, IMG student organiser, explains.

Attacks on union autonomy come from many corners. The courts can use the charity status of most unions to rule virtually any 'non-student' activity illegal. And local education and college authorities refuse even the absolute minimum of funds needed for an independent union. Hundreds of small colleges all over Britain are affected by decisions of these authorities. The Government is also moving to limit unions' control over their funds, but before making any definite moves it would like the support of the National Union of Students.

The bloc between the Federation of Conservative Students and the Broad Left — which dominates the NUS national executive, has accepted these measures. At December's NUS conference, they got this position endorsed by a hair's breadth.

The Socialist Students' Alliance didn't let this go unnoticed. They called for a campaign of mass action on student autonomy. Over 200 students endorsed this call and they will be gathering in Manchester on 18 February alongside other supporters from 20 student unions, the further education sector conference of NUS, and the polytechnics sector.

NOISS

Unfortunately, another conference centring on union autonomy has already taken place. It was scheduled, despite the announcement of the Manchester conference, attended by delegates from 60 colleges, this conference was held at North London Polytechnic on 5 February. It was strongly supported by NOISS, the student wing of the Socialist Workers Party.

This conference elected a four person steering committee, with only two additional places for students elected by the Manchester conference, no

matter how many individual student unions were represented there.

The eight SSA members who were present argued that each conference should be proportionately represented on the committee. They were defeated by the surprisingly close margin of 52 votes to 42.

LCDSU AGAIN

At the Manchester Conference, IMG students will be arguing for the establishment of a Liaison Committee for the Defence of Student Unions based on delegates from affiliated unions. They will argue that any initiatives taken by the campaign should be jointly planned with militants from the London conference.

At the same time, however, we will make it clear to NOISS members that we do not reject a broader unity on the left. On the contrary, the IMG is 100 per cent in favour of a united left tendency in NUS which includes the IMG, independents, members of the National Organisation of Labour Students, and NOISS. But such a tendency cannot be cobbled together around two or three issues. It requires a programme answering all of the major questions facing students, from grants to women's oppression in education.

After all who could honestly say that these questions are any less related to autonomy than that of 'fascists in the colleges'. Furthermore such a tendency should be based on individual membership like the NOISS and the SSA.

To attempt to affiliate unions as a whole to such a tendency would only split the union. So NOISS should make up their minds; either democratic mass campaigns around each question, from autonomy to racism, or a socialist tendency in NUS on a full programme for students.

On the part of the IMG, we would like to see both!

NALGO militants plan fightback

ONE HUNDRED and eighty delegates from branches of the local government union met in London on Saturday to map out a wages fightback, reports DAVE BENNETT. They responded to a call from a number of NALGO branches in Scotland, which submitted a motion opposing: wage controls, cash limits, and the acquiescence of the TUC in the Government's policies.

The motion, overwhelmingly endorsed by the delegates, called for a special conference of the union to overturn NALGO's support for the Government's pay policy.

It is certain that a conference will now be called, since 85 branches indicated that they could attempt to sponsor it and only 50 are required under

NALGO's rules. This represents an important step in challenging the grip of the right-wing on the union's national executive.

But the conference will be weakened by the form of the resolution adopted. Delegates rejected the proposal that the union should campaign for £15 across-the-board, which could have acted as a clear basis for mobilising rank and file support in the build up for the conference.

Instead delegates called on the union to 'settle for no less than the level of increase in earnings currently being achieved both in the private sector and in those sections in the public sector where bonus and productivity deals' have been negotiated.

After the 35th Congress



Photo: GIM COCKEON (Socialist Challenge)

British Communists still in trouble

THE 35th CONGRESS of the Communist Party of Great Britain, held last November, accepted a new draft of the Party's programme, *The British Road to Socialism*. In this fashion, the CPGB donned the mantle of 'euro-communism', formally incorporating many of the positions and formulations recently developed by the French, Spanish and Italian CPs. The question arises: to what extent has this helped to resolve the crisis facing the CP in all areas of its work?

A recent meeting of the Party Executive

struggle for immediate economic aims. (*Morning Star*, 20th December 1977 — emphasis in original). That the CP faces a crisis of tactics, programme and strategy is undeniable.

Up to the fall of the Heath Government in 1974, the CP was in the forefront of every major trade union struggle. From the opposition to 'In Place of Strife' through the fight against the Industrial Relations Act, and Heath's incomes policy, the CP put their Broad Left strategy into practice. This culminated in the EEC referendum, where the CP was part of an 'anti-monopoly alliance' against entry to the Common Market. But throughout this period the Party failed to grow.

During the first major upsurge of working class struggles since the Second World War, the CP in fact continued an almost uninterrupted decline. The situation which confronts Party members today is one where many of the militants they want to bring into their ranks prefer to remain outside.

A series of important CP leaders in the trade unions have left the Party — Jimmy Reid, John Tocher, Dave Bowman, Bernard Panter, Pat Farrelly, Cyril Morton, and now David Bolton. The split which produced the New Communist Party has further weakened the CP in the white collar sector — NALGO and the CPSA. In unions such as UCATT and the AUEW, the Broad Left formations have declined dramatically.

The root of the CP's 'failure' lies in its left-reformist programme, which centres on demands to solve the immediate needs of the working class, within the framework of the capitalist economy. The 'counter-crisis strategy' advanced by Bert Ramelson, in a recent special series of *Morning Star* articles starts: 'Expand the economy and modernise it. Increase wages and pensions, increase social services spending...' and so on. There is no link which connects demands such as these with expositions of capitalism and the propaganda for socialism. The working class has fought throughout its existence for better terms for the sale of its labour power, for better working and living conditions. The task of socialists is to find ways for the trade union struggle to be transcended into an anti-capitalist struggle.

For us the trade union struggle, on wages, conditions or jobs is linked to the struggle for working class power through a system of transitional demands, which clearly identify the

Communist International to counter the programmes of Social Democracy, which had a list of minimum demands 'for today' and maximum demands (i.e. socialism) relegated to the distant future.

In the fight for higher wages we advance the demand for increases to be protected through being linked to rises in the cost of living. Inflation is a product of the capitalist system, which is not the responsibility of the working class. Therefore working people should not pay for the problems of the bourgeoisie by having their wages cut. The question is then posed of who determines and controls the price index monitoring inflation. We fight for the trade

groundswell of popular discontent over pay and denounce incomes policies as unconditionally anti-working class does not help to win understanding that voluntary pay planning matched by extensions of social control over the economy at company, industrial, community and national levels, must be part of any viable alternative programme.' (*Morning Star*, 30 November 1977)

Purdy argues that workers should accept cuts in their living standards, in return for 'extensions of social control over the economy.' This is like asking a condemned man to discuss what method he would prefer to be executed by. It falls into the same argument as used by the capitalist class and their Labour lieutenants who argue that we face a national crisis in which we all have to make sacrifices. Purdy proposes we accept sacrifices, but ask for 'extensions of social control' in return. This is unrelated to any fight for workers control — for free access to information by the unions, the opening of the books, the development of alternative workers' plans, etc. What Purdy means is that the working class should fight for participation in the capitalist decision making process.

The clearest indictment of this is again British Leyland. The Communist Party, recent converts to the fight for democratic rights, never took the issue of participation to the shopfloor at Longbridge to ask the membership if they wanted it. Now after two years of tame participation under the Ryder plan, we have Michael Edwards re-organising Leylands at the expense of thousands of workers' jobs. Participation has aided Edwards', not Leyland workers!

These facts reflect the permanent character of the malaise which afflicts the Communist Party. The re-election of a Labour Government in 1974 and the integration of left social-democracy (from parliament and the trade unions) within the overall projects of Wilson and Callaghan, have imposed severe strains on the CP's ideology. For the perspective of a Left government consisting of Labour lefts and CP MPs is a completely utopian hope. In fact the CP's strategy appears to be totally unrelated to the developments in British politics.

As a small, cadre organisation it should have turned away from left social-democratic reformism and linked up with forces fighting against class collaborationism. It refused to do so, thus exacerbating its crisis of perspectives. For in a country where social democracy is so powerful, any serious left social democrat will prefer to join the parent organisation.

The main attraction of the CP in recent years has been for intellectuals who have found that it was possible to debate and discuss important issues within the party's press. Many of these issues were not related directly to the CP's political line, but nonetheless it appeared to be a better option than the syndicalism of the far left. Given the recomposition which appears to be taking place at the moment, even on the intellectual front, the far left could, if it pulled itself out of its rut, outdistance the CP. Then its crisis will become uncontainable.

By Clive Turnbull



Photo: ANDREW WIARD (Report)

GORDON McLENNAN

Committee, the first since the Congress, gives an indication of just how little progress has been made (see 'Comment', 21 January 1978).

A call went out to the CP membership to prepare for a General Election over the coming months. However it is likely that the Party will only be able to field around 30 candidates. This will probably be less than half the number that Socialist Unity and the Socialist Workers Party will stand. The votes for the candidates of SU and the SWP in last year's local and by-elections were in every case higher than the average votes for CP candidates. The champions of the parliamentary road to socialism thus face the gloomy prospect of being overshadowed by the 'ultra-left' on the bourgeois electoral terrain. The real choice which confronts many CP militants is either to continue tailending left social-democracy, or moving towards class struggle politics.

The tensions and divisions in the CP's work on women's oppression are such that the Executive Committee is searching for a 'unifying campaigning issue' to overcome the 'sectional attitudes and differences of view' which have 'held back the full support that should have been given to some of the women's campaigns'.

The Executive Committee assessment of the 35th Congress was one of a 'great advance for our party', which '... probed and deepened our understanding of many of the most important questions of the revolutionary process in Britain'. Even to CP members, this is clearly nonsense.

Since the Congress a debate central to the 'revolutionary process in Britain' has dominated the letters column of the *Morning Star*. Under the heading of 'economism', Party members have been discussing the relationship between the mass struggles of the working class on issues such as wages, and the fight for socialism. This is a question which should have been at the centre of the 'British Road' debate, and resolved at the Congress.

In a major article, Jack Woddis, head of the international department, writes: 'The problem we face is not that of having too many industrial actions for higher wages; it is the failure, so far, of the left, including the Communist Party, to find the most effective ways of assisting the working class to advance its political understanding in the midst of its



Photo: GIM COCKEON (Socialist Challenge)

responsibility for the capitalist crisis with the capitalist class. We thus reject all talk of the working class accepting any responsibility for that crisis. Such a method is based on developing the independent self-activity of the working class, placing no reliance on the trade union bureaucracy, or the bourgeois state, to carry through the struggle. Incidentally this method was not invented by Trotsky with the 'Transitional Programme' of 1938; it was first developed at the Fourth Congress of the



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES

BERNARD PANTER, ex-CP member

unions to do this, on an index of items of working peoples' expenditure. It was over proposals of the Andreotti Government in Italy to exclude certain items from the wage index that the Italian CP was recently prepared to collaborate when promoting a 'workers austerity' policy.

A graphic example of the limitations of the CP's reformist programme is the present British Leyland crisis. In response to Edwards' plan, Derek Robinson, CP Longbridge convenor, calls for any reorganisation to be based on selling 1,000,000 cars, which is the capacity of the existing workforce and plant. This is completely utopian. In the short term 1,000,000 cars could only be sold on the capitalist market if the price was massively reduced. This would require a slashing of wages and jobs, unless the Labour Government subsidises the price!

The alternative to the capitalist rationalisation of Edwards cannot start from criteria of market share of profitability; it has to start from the needs of the Leyland workforce, and the working class as a whole, who bear no responsibility for the failure of this capitalist enterprise. Instead of participating with the employers in discussing how many redundancies, or how great a speed-up, Leyland shop stewards should be taking a leaf from the book of Lucas Aerospace Combine, which produced a workers plan of alternative production, for which their workforce and plant could be used.

The Communist Party's programme suffers not just from the method of the reformists, it embraces their reactionary and backward demands such as import controls. At the Executive Committee we now find that: 'Import controls are an assertion of the democratic right to exercise some measure of social control over matters hitherto left entirely in the hands of multi-nationals, EEC bureaucrats and 'market forces'.'

The CP thus proposes that workers ally themselves with their capitalist exploiters in demanding that these problems are 'exported' onto the backs of workers in other countries. The fight for import controls hides the role of the British ruling class, and instead feeds national chauvinism which is already enough of a problem in the British working class, fed for decades on Empire, King and Country. The links between 'import controls' and 'immigration control' are too obvious to need restating.

From within the CP, critics such as David Purdy argue that: 'Simply to join the



Hot off the press is International the quarterly theoretical journal of the International Marxist Group. Featured is a hitherto unpublished article by Isaac Deutscher entitled 'Marx, Engels and The Russian Revolution', and one by Norman Geras on 'Lenin, Trotsky and the Party'.

Other articles include one of William Thompson on education, a review of Tom Naim's *The Break-Up of Britain* and an analysis of the role of the Communist Party in the National Union of Students.

International costs 50p and is available from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

The more it changes, the more it remains the same

Between 1875 and 1914 nearly 120,000 Jews came to Britain. Most of them settled in the East End of London. In 1898, Lord Hardwicke moved a Bill to control immigration. On 23 May of that year, Hardwicke stated in the House of Lords:

'It would be a very serious matter if the type of population which is now to be found in many districts of the East End, where there is a strong alien element, were to become at all a common type in the poorer districts of our large cities.'

'It would mean, my Lords,' Hardwicke continued, 'that these classes would become to a great extent non-English in character, and that, both in physique and in moral and social

customs, they had fallen below our present, by no means elevated, standard.'

On 29 January 1902, the Tory MP for Stepney, Major William Evans Gordon, moved an amendment to the King's Speech demanding immediate immigration control. Gordon stated: 'Not a day passes but English families are ruthlessly turned out to make room for foreign invaders. Out they go to make room for Rumanians, Russians and Poles.'

'Rents are raised 50 to 100 per cent and a house which formerly contained a couple of families living in comparative decency is made to contain four or five families which baffle description... It is only a matter of time before the population becomes entirely foreign...'

'The rates are burdened with the education of thousands of children of foreign parents,' Gordon explained. 'Among the thousands who came here there is a considerable proportion of bad

characters, and the competition with home industries extends to burglaries and other cognate crimes. I should have thought we had enough criminals of our own...'

'CRIMINALS'

'These are the haunts of foreign prostitutes... A band of Italians, every one with a knife which he is too ready to use, is at this moment causing great anxiety to the County Council... The working classes know that new buildings are erected not for them but for strangers from abroad; they see notices that no English need apply placarded on vacant rooms; they see the schools crowded with foreign children and the very posters and advertisements on the walls in a foreign tongue...'

'It is no longer within the power of an English working man in many parts of East London to enjoy his day of rest...'

A storm is brewing which, if it be allowed to burst, will have deplorable results.'

In 1905, the Conservative Central Office distributed an official leaflet timed for intervention in a by-election. It was fairly explicit:

'Let them come' is the radical cry. The radicals by their obstruction to the Aliens Bill are evidently glad to see all foreigners who are criminals, who suffer from loathsome diseases, who are turned out in disgrace by their fellow countrymen, who are paupers who fill the streets with profligacy and disorder. The radicals welcome them all.'

In the same year, W. Hayes Fisher, Tory MP for Fulham and an expert on London's sewage system, stated: 'Just as one river could carry a certain amount of sewage, but not the sewage of the whole Kingdom, so one portion of London cannot carry the whole of the pauper and diseased alien immigrants who come into the country.'

Conversation with a racist

CONVERSATIONS about immigration 'causing' and 'worsening' the crisis take place all the time up and down the country. In the wake of Thatcher's racist speeches these sentiments are given an added boost. The reply given by Labour leaders is normally of the variety: 'No need to worry, there aren't all that many coming in.'

This feeds the rampant racism which already exists. Far from fighting racism it panders to it. The following questions and replies, compiled by ROGER TANNER, are ones that militants cannot ignore.

RACIST: I'm fed up with all your left wing crap. This country is overpopulated and we shouldn't let any more immigrants in.

ANSWER: But more people leave this country than come into it. There are no serious barriers for white immigrants entering in any case. It's just the blacks who are kept out. Also it's not really a question of overpopulation, but of how existing resources are used.

The problem is that existing resources are controlled not by us but by the bosses. Their aim is to make profits. In times of crisis making profits can only be done by attacking living standards of all workers, black and white.

Look here, I'm talking about things here and now. We have two million unemployed. Isn't it crazy to let more in when we can't employ those we've got?

But who causes unemployment? Is it immigrants? The highest areas of unemployment are Scotland, Northern Ireland and Tyneside. The number of

immigrants there is tiny. Or take the south of Ireland. Unemployment there is much higher than in this country. But there are no immigrants there at all. And remember the Thirties? How many blacks were there in Britain then? Almost none.

Unemployment exists because this system is planned only to produce profits for a handful of people. Is the steel industry sacking tens of thousands of workers because of immigrants, or because the whole system is in crisis? Just think about it.

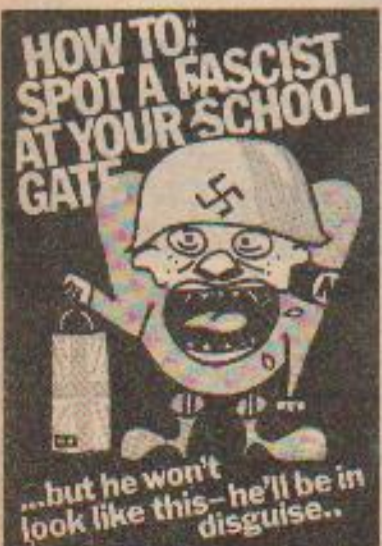
But most of the blacks are scroungers, aren't they. It's the health service and social security which brings them here.

I'm glad we've dropped the word 'immigrant' and are now just saying blacks, because that's what it is, isn't it? Now listen. The Tories say that all unemployed workers are scroungers. You don't agree with that, do you? Well you're unemployed. If you heard that in South Africa you could get a job with more money than you ever earned here

Spot a Nazi

LEICESTER'S anti-racist committee has not waited for the Young Nazis to turn up outside schools. With the help of the trades council, the committee has already produced 20,000 copies of a four-sided leaflet headlined: 'How to spot a fascist at your school gate'. It will be distributed by members of the National Union of School Students and the Socialist Students Alliance.

In Leicester, a stronghold for the National Front, the Nazis hold a licence



from the council to sell their paper, and the pitch — in the town hall square — is now the site of a weekly picket, which the anti-racist committee will maintain until June when the licence comes up for renewal. 11 March has been designated as a day of mass action on the picket line, and the committee is urging all anti-racists in the West Midlands to attend.

US threatens Mexican militant

A taste of things to come from the other side of the Atlantic, where immigration laws are being used for overtly political ends. The United States Government is trying to use the entry laws to kick out Hector Marroquin, a Mexican militant.

Marroquin was a student at the University of Nuevo Leon in Mexico when he was forced to flee the country after false allegations of 'terrorist' activity. His room-mate was shot dead by police.

In the US, Marroquin joined the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance, supporters of the Fourth International. As a member of the Teamsters union he was one of the

leaders of a unionisation drive at the Coca Cola bottling plant in Houston, Texas. That earned him the attentions of la migre, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service, after a visit to Mexico to consult his lawyer last September.

The past year has seen increased attacks by the INS on foreign workers, particularly Mexicans. With startling originality, the Government is attempting to offload the blame for the economic crisis onto immigrants without papers. Marroquin could face the rest of his life in jail, or even death,



if he goes back, and la migre knows it. He is now trying to win political asylum.

A dynamic and widely-backed Hector Marroquin Defence Committee has already managed to win important concessions. First, la migre tried to exclude Marroquin without a hearing. That was blocked, and then the authorities were forced to postpone the

hearing beyond the original date of 17 January to allow time for the preparation of an adequate defence.

The latest news is that Marroquin is to be allowed to tour the country speaking in his own defence. At the end of December, Marroquin's lawyer had been told by an immigration official: 'I don't think that illegal aliens have the right to go waltzing around the country making speeches.'

'What's racism'

WHAT YOU WILL not have heard from the so-called Commission for Racial Equality is any criticism of Thatcher's racist outbursts. This may well come as a surprise to its commissioners. Shortly after the Tory leader's initial pronouncement on immigration last month, the commissioners decided at one of their regular meetings that the CRE had to criticise her speech. Merlyn Rees, who happened to be present, nodded in agreement.

But all that has emanated from the Commission is a guarded silence. Its chairperson — appointed by Rees — is David Lane, a former Tory MP and adviser to the chief constable's association. When Pratul Sheth, one of Lane's deputies, insisted on making a critical statement, the Commission circulated it in Sheth's name, without CRE endorsement.

The Commission, needless to say, is proving itself to be utterly irrelevant in the fight against racism. The few radicals who worked for the CRE's forerunner, the Community Relations Commission, have now practically all



would you go? You shake your head. Why not?

Because I live here. It's my country. I've been brought up here.

Exactly. You're very reluctant to leave. Most black people are also like that. They come to find jobs and they leave their countries because the situation is very, very desperate. It's that or their children starving to death. The countries they come from are like that because Britain went and looted them for hundreds of years. They're here because you were there!

But Thatcher's right when she says they have a different culture. They do.

Yes, but so what. Over the centuries many different cultures have existed together and intermingled. They enrich each other. But, by the way, are you sure your culture is exactly the same as Thatcher's? Where will your children be educated?

Do they stand a real chance of going

quit Lane's bureaucratic machine.

In the closing days of the old CRE, they had set up an internal anti-racist group, which donated small sums of money to such bodies as the Campaign Against Racism in the Media. A similar informal group set up at the new Commission has been told it should spend its time discussing 'What is racism?' Doesn't Lane know?

Building the barriers

TWO EAST LONDON branches of the building workers' union, UCATT, have joined up to fight racism and fascism. On 5 March they will be picketing and leafletting against Nazi paper sellers in Brick Lane, part of the Sunday market which is in an area with a large Asian population. The building workers will be meeting up at Shore-ditch church at 10.30am, and invite others to join them.

Anderton's law

The meeting took place in Bolton town hall and the picket, organised by Bolton Trades Council, represented a wide cross-section of political opinion. Even before the fascists had arrived,

we can BOTH agree on!



to university? Even your language, which appears the same, is different. Because you come from a different class. When you were working did you have more in common with Margaret Thatcher or Henry Ford, or with a black worker who worked alongside you? The only thing you had in common with Thatcher was the colour of your skin. Everything else was different.

I'm still not convinced, but we should talk some more.

We will.

mounted detachment of police was driven into the demonstrators to break them in half.

Simultaneously, five snatch squads dragged anti-fascists from the crowd and hurled them into waiting police vans. 19 arrests were made in a demonstration which was disciplined, well organised and almost entirely peaceful.

'Overkill' is the word sections of the ruling class press in the North-west are using to describe Anderton's tactics: those on the receiving end would use stronger words. In all aspects of the demonstration — its planning, control and arrangement — the police misled the trades council stewards.

The police told stewards that those arrested were at police stations in Manchester and Salford. In fact they had been taken to Leigh and Farnworth, where they were detained until 2am without being allowed to see solicitors.

Anderton's tactics produced an angry reaction from wide sections of the labour movement, and people who have never previously taken part in anti-fascist activities are now beginning to turn up on pickets like the one outside Bolton town hall.

Funds to cover the fines of those arrested will be desperately needed. Contributions should be made payable to Bolton Trades Council, and sent to: Neil Duffield, 52 Yewdale Gardens, Bolton.

How Britain bars blacks

WHEN, earlier this month, Merlyn Rees conceded that Britain's immigration controls had a sole aim — to keep out blacks — he was merely acknowledging what the left had been saying for years, writes GEOFFREY SHERIDAN. While more people emigrate from this country than come to live here — over the past five years the net outflow has never fallen below 11,300, and in 1974 was as high as 85,200 — the immigration laws have been designed to severely limit the number of blacks who can enter.

The latest is the 1971 Immigration Act, which came into force at the beginning of 1973 and has been enthusiastically applied by the Labour Government, blithely ignoring the Labour Party conference decision to repeal both the 1968 and 1971 immigration laws.

The 1971 Act created just three categories of people with a statutory right to come to Britain. Under Common Market regulations, all EEC nationals have a free right of entry to Britain. That's the first category.

Then there are the aptly named 'patrials' — all those in Commonwealth countries who were either born in Britain, or have a parent or grandparent born here. In practice this applies almost exclusively at present to Australians and New Zealanders; while leaving the door ajar to white South Africans and Rhodesians should they need to flee.

SCRUTINY

Lastly there are the wives and children of those who were settled in the UK before 1 January 1973 — and they are subject to the administrative scrutiny which has slammed the door in thousands of faces. No one else — including UK passport holders — has a statutory right to come to Britain. All others can enter Britain only as visitors, students, work permit holders or on business trips.

The single exception is the elderly parents and other dependent relatives of those settled here before the beginning of 1973, and they must satisfy a bunch of conditions, showing that adequate accommodation is available, together with sufficient funds to support the relatives without help from public funds.

Before the 1971 Act, these dependants had a statutory right of entry. Now the

Government, embassy and immigration officials can exercise their 'discretion'. Their anxiety to show they are making every effort to keep Britain white, by reducing the number of black immigrants each year, results in the waiting lists in the Indian sub-continent, consisting mainly of wives, young children and other dependants. Virtually the only blacks now admitted to Britain are dependants, and in 1976 the total who came from the Indian sub-continent (India, Bangladesh and Pakistan) was 11,558 —

mainly wives and young children. The 1971 Act tightened the controls in several other respects. Anyone who entered Britain 'illegally' after 1 February 1968 can be deported, giving the green light to the police to harass black people at will. It also prevented students coming to Britain to look for a course. Now they must obtain a place before they come, and prove its 'genuine' — and that's quite apart from the enormous increase in overseas students fees.

The number of work permits,

meanwhile, has been drastically cut. From the whole of the Indian sub-continent the total number of work permit holders admitted in 1976 was 291 — all professionals.

In short, the Labour leaders are right when they assure the Tory Front Bench they have done everything possible to keep out blacks. And that's why anti-racists must oppose all the immigration controls, which prop up the myth that immigrants (i.e. blacks) are a 'problem'.

Grunwick strikers say Fight the immigration laws

The stridently racist bent of Tory policy is naturally being viewed with alarm in the Asian communities. JUDE WOODWARD talked to Kamlesh Gandhi, chairperson of the Grunwick strike committee, who came originally from Uganda, and some of the Asian women involved in the strike, most of whom also came to Britain from East Africa.

Kamlesh Gandhi talks about the fears of Kenyan Asians, who wonder whether their right to enter this country is as secure as they thought it was. If the Ugandan situation were repeated in Kenya, would a Tory Government go back on its responsibilities? Gandhi points out that although unemployment in this country is high, if those people were sent to India, which has been suggested, they wouldn't be able to support their families at all.

Thatcher's speech has roused the Asian community to anger. One Asian woman said: 'She is using the racial feeling in this country, this one weak point, because she is weak. It is the only way she can win votes; she wants the

National Front supporters to go to the Tories. All she is doing is rousing racial feeling and damaging the country.'

However, not all the Asians were surprised at the Tories showing their true colours. Kamlesh Gandhi said: 'My view is that the Tories are definitely racist.' Everyone was quite clear that the Immigration Acts discriminate against black people. They described the rigorous checking of black people's documents, when any small mistake can provide the excuse for harassment.

As an Asian woman said: 'We want equal rights, the right to marry who we please, have our families with us, as white people do.'

CRITICISM

Although most of the Asians I spoke to felt that the Labour Party and the left are genuinely concerned about racism, they criticised the absence of any hard fight against immigration controls. They understood that these controls underpin racism in the country, and one said: 'The two issues must be fought together; they cannot be fought separately. A fight against the immigration laws must be included in the fight against racism. There should be no ban on immigrant people coming to

this country.'

It is against the grim background of the general economic situation that Thatcher's words have roused such anger among the Asian community. An Asian woman said: 'Life is hard for Asian people in this country at the moment — it is not just marriage problems — everything is a problem. We are suffering, our children are suffering. There are no jobs, and they have to buy houses even if they can't afford them, because they can't get flats or council houses.'

As a result, feelings in the community are running high. She went on: 'We are British people. We have British nationality. This is our country. If Thatcher doesn't like Asian people she should go somewhere else. She is a big politician; any country will accept her, they will not accept us. She should go to South Africa, they would be pleased to have her.'

And finally: 'When they gave passports to East African Asians they were pleased to get the workers. Now they don't want workers; they want to get rid of us, even those with British passports. Now they say Asians are robbing this country — they will turn us into a wandering race. We have had enough.'

What's Left

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

LONDON IMG will be organising a series of all-London agitations over the next two months as part of the International Marxist Group's 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 groups, 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 58, London N1.

LONDON Revolutionary Communist Group Public Meeting, 'Better Life for All Campaign or Troops Out Now?' Speakers: Jennifer Tall, Patrick Newman, Tues 21 Feb, 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1. Admission 20p.

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day, Naffion meeting to plan rallies on 8 March in different towns. 16 Feb, London School of Economics 12 noon.

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-recruitment film. Organised by the First of May, 11am-6pm, 22 Feb, Edinburgh Trades Council, Picardy Place, Edinburgh.

DROP the Official Secrets Charge! Demonstrations against the prosecution of Aubrey Berry and Campbell March

o Sunday 19 Feb, the anniversary of the 1968 Assembly Filmers Square NUS (Euston/Warren St tube), 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, 101-278 2377.

SOUTHAMPTON Women's Centre benefit Broadside's The Working Women's Charter Show, plus Sandra Kerr, Sat 18 Feb, 7.30pm. At St Matthews Church Hall, St Marys Road. Tickets 75p. From 19, Harbour Road, Tel: 28725.

FIGHT RACISM badges, 15p each plus 7p postage. Orders of 10 or more 11p each and post free. Send to Badges, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques payable to J. Wilson.

THAMESIDE Trades Union Council one-day 'educational talk-in', Saturday, 18 February from 10.30-4.30 in AJEW offices, Margaret Street 5, Ashton under Lyne. Speakers include Terry Ellis, ex-Head of William Tyndale School, and Margaret Haden. Social with Extension Theatre Company at 8pm at the Pitt and Nelson pub, Old Street, Ashton under Lyne, Sat onwards.

BROADSIDE Mobile Workers' Theatre requires versatile, socialist musician (full-time). Long term commitment. Aiding ability an advantage. Write: 58 Holtain House, Holtain Place, London SW1.

JUSTINE, produced by the Film Work Group, is now showing after successfully fighting a 12 year battle to prevent the British Film Institute taking away all distribution rights. At the Phoenix, East Finchley, Sun 19 Feb at 1.15pm, and 29-28 Feb at 11pm at the Covent Garden Cinema.

NUT EXECUTIVE election, London left-wing meeting. All left candidates have been invited. Eagle and Child, Woodgrange Rd, E7 (Forest Gate Station BR) Wed 22 Feb, 7.30.

TROOPS OUT Movement Forum: Memorial Meeting, The Life and Politics of P O Connor, Irish Socialist Republican and ex-mayor of Camden, Speaker, Ken Livingston, 7.30pm 17

Feb, Roebuck, Tottenham Cr Rd. **SHEFFIELD** Socialist Unity Social, Friday 3 March, 8pm. Upstairs, The Hermitage, London Rd. Songs, disco, poetry reading. Tickets 30p, available at door.

SOCIALIST UNITY Women's Caucus, Sat 25 Feb, Swarthmore Centre, Woodhouse Sq, Leeds 2. For women supporters of Socialist Unity to discuss draft SU pamphlet on women. Phone Leeds (0532) 62526 for details.

CAPITALISM — The Good, The Bad and The Ugly. If you are concerned about the freedom of the individual but reject the monopolistic trends in our society, if you are seeking change without revolution, this book provides an alternative middle way for creating a fairer society within the framework of our current economic system. 'Economic Power' is clearly written and highly readable. Its surprising but sensible solutions for economic

justice for everyone are backed up by sound statistics and reasoned argument. Send £1.80 (payable to Gemini Books) to 5 Russell Rd, Northolt, Middlesex.

ANARCHIST Communist Association meetings: 27 Feb, 'Trade Unionism'; 27 March, 'Sexuality'; 24 April, 'Violence in the revolutionary struggle and our attitude to the British armed forces'; 29 May, 'Left wing organisations — the middle class case — OK'. Venue, Centrepiece, Kingsland High St, Dalston, London E2. 7.30pm. Creche. Further details Bob or Anne, phone 01-602 7824.

N. LONDON Socialist Unity Benefit, Bop, Friday 24 Feb, Caxton House 8pm till late. Band, disco, surprise.

TRADE UNION Action Against Apartheid. Speakers Chris Childs, TU officer of AA movement and local trade unionists. Organised by Southampton AA group, Monday 20 Feb, 7.30 St Matthews Church Hall, St Marys Rd, Southampton.

LONDON Public Expenditure Cuts, Recall Fightback Conference, Sat 18 Feb, 10am-5pm, Central Hall Westminster SW1. Details: Fightback Committee, Hounslow Hospital, Staines Rd, Hounslow Middx. Ph: 01 570 4448.

SCOTTISH conference on the fight against Britain's presence in Ireland, Edinburgh Trades Council, Picardy Place, including speakers from Ireland, Workshop and debates on strategy, anti-recruitment film, Creche. Organised by the First of May, 11am-6pm Sat 18 Feb. Details: First of May Bookshop, 46 Niddry St, Edinburgh. Ph: 021 567 1348.

NUT EXECUTIVE election meeting. All NUT and GMA candidates have been invited to speak. Political groups are welcome. This is the first political debate between left-wing candidates. 25 Feb, 7.30am at the Princess Alice, Hurlingham Rd, Forest Gate. Buses 68 from Walthamstow Central or Plaistow, 25 or 86 from Aldgate, Mid End, Bow or Stamford. Train to Forest Gate from Liverpool St.

SAYD HANAMI memorial meeting, Organised by the NUS and the

General Union of Palestinian Students, 25 Feb, 1.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1. A tribute to the PLD London representative assassinated on 4 Jan. Speakers from PLO, GUPF, Sue Simpson (NUS President). Details Bob Bruce, NUS Int. Dept, Ph: 01 278 3291.

MODERN FASCIST Ideology. Meeting organised by Institute of Race Relations, Tues 21 Feb, 8.30pm. Speaker: David Edgar, playwright and author of pieces on the extreme right. 'Race and Class' pamphlet No 4 'Racism, fascism and the politics of the National Front' was written by David Edgar.

SOCIALIST FEMINIST Educational, 25 Feb: Towards a Marxist Analysis of Women's waged labour: a discussion with Veronica Beechey of her recent article in Capital and Class. 10.30-4.30 at St Anne's Hall, Venn St, SW4 (one minute from Clapham Common Tube). Creche available. For further information ring 01-720 7316.



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.

Britain and Ireland

A reply to Tony Cliff

Socialist Challenge published last week major extracts from a public speech on Ireland made by Tony Cliff, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party. Comrade Cliff made a number of points which warrant further discussion, argues AILEAN O'CALLAGHAN, Irish organiser of the International Marxist Group.

It was excellent that the Socialist Workers Party should be represented at the Bloody Sunday Commemoration rally by Tony Cliff, its most prominent member. It perhaps indicates a sign of intent to more seriously relate to the Irish question by the SWP which can only be welcomed. This hope was reinforced by the determined and non-sectarian manner in which the SWP participated in the united demonstration on Bloody Sunday's anniversary. But the unity achieved on that demonstration does not rule out political differences between those participating in it, and in this context Cliff's speech introduced a number of political conceptions which need questioning.

legislatively speaking, part of the UK and in that sense solidarity with the Dublin lock-out no more challenged the narrow labourist ideology of the English working class than a strike in Glasgow would have done. More importantly, the solidarity was with an industrial struggle in which the national question was not an issue.

ECONOMISM

With the possible exception of the Chartists, there has never been real mass working class action in this country in support of the right of the Irish people to break from Britain and rule themselves. It may have been, as Cliff reported,

One means of struggle which Tony Cliff suggested the Irish working class might take up was a Right to Work march from Dublin to Belfast, a type of initiative the SWP has with some success followed in this country. But throughout his speech comrade Cliff stressed the relevance of Connolly, who will bear quoting on the type of scheme Cliff was suggesting. 'The doctrine that because the workers of Belfast live under the same conditions as do those of Great Britain, they are therefore subject to the same passions and to be influenced by the same methods of propaganda is a doctrine almost screamingly funny in its absurdity.'

the past of the two sections of the Belfast working class unifying for a short time — specifically in 1932 on the issue of unemployment. But that unity was easily broken by the ruling class through a campaign to win jobs for Protestants and through the Unionists themselves raising the national question.

While Cliff is right to assert Connolly who 'was all the time emphasising that there was no difference between the class struggle and the struggle for national independence', we cannot accept Cliff's apparent inversion of this to mean an identification of the political fight with the fight around economic struggles.

It is to the national question that we have to address ourselves in Britain if we are to build a movement that can aid the Irish working class. Today this means building a movement to get the troops out. And we have to do it in today's conditions, where the form of struggle of the nationalist population in the North of Ireland is not primarily in the factories or around the immediate economic issues.

SELF-RULE

The right to work for Loyalists has meant the right of a political state which discriminates in their favour; the right to work for Catholics is translated into a united Ireland. In short, history tells us that unity is impossible while the border remains.

This is why revolutionaries fight the arguments put forward by the trade union bureaucracy and the Communist Party in favour of the 'Better Life for All Campaign', a specific demand of which is for the 'right to work'. This campaign attempts to ignore the major and over-riding feature of politics in Ireland, the national question, which is why it is a creation of a trade union bureaucracy totally ignored by the 'rank and file' of all sides.

Marxists need to decisively reject such tactics and counterpose the absolute right of the Irish people to fight for self-rule. It would of course be easier for us in Britain if the Irish workers were content with waging struggles which avoided Britain's presence, but heaven help the Irish people if they ever do.

Cliff ended by saying we need to build 'a movement that is in the factories, in trade unions, in the locality.' Presumably Tony Cliff does not seek to confine an Irish solidarity movement to these areas. The student movement, for example, is at present one of the most fruitful areas of activity on Ireland. Hopefully as well this commitment Cliff made will now be followed up by the SWP fully participating in the various organisations which are trying to build the movement.

MOBILISE

The key to our task is to mobilise a force on the streets in mass action from whatever sector these forces might come, as we did with Vietnam. This is the best means of challenging the hold of the reformist leaders on this question and winning the labour movement to give its full backing to the Irish people's right to self-determination.

It is to this, and not attempting to change the form of struggle in the North, to which British workers might more easily identify, which we need to address ourselves to. We are the problem, not the Irish people.



Just out is the latest edition of Troops Out, the paper of the United Troops Out Movement. Included are articles on the Better Life for All Campaign, Bloody Sunday, the PTA and recent British press treatment of Ireland. Troops Out is only 10p and is available from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

Long Kesh



Letter

We had a new example here in Long Kesh of British 'black propaganda' recently. It happened after a tunnel was found in Cage 12 and the prisoners in that cage were divided up into five other Republican compounds [cages]. When the men were removed the prison authorities claimed they found a quantity of cannabis in three rolled up cigarettes in a tin allegedly sitting on a locker.

The inference was that Republican prisoners were smoking cannabis while their comrades were 'knee-capping' and 'chastising' those who did the same outside.

The circumstances surrounding the whole affair were strange to say the least, and raise a number of obvious questions:

*If cannabis was being smoked, would it have been left un concealed and lying around to be found?

*It is hard to believe that a prison warden could open a tin containing three roll-ups and immediately identify cannabis.

*Why, when the opportunity was there to destroy the roll-ups, or remove them, did this not happen?

Another factor which makes the whole thing so absurd is that we were in Cage 12 every Sunday prior to the tunnel being found and at no time did we hear of or see the drug being smoked. The whole thing was a ridiculous farce from start to finish, and was clearly an attempt to discredit prisoners

when support for us outside is growing.

Despite this affair, morale is sky high among all Republicans in here. This is due to a number of factors related to successes on the political front, such as the recent anti-imperialist conference which took place at Coalisland. There have also been many successes for the 'armed struggle', which seems to be getting back on the correct lines again.

The only fear is that a recurrence of sectarianism or internecine feuding may begin and railroad or divert energies from the real fight against British imperialism. Unity among all anti-imperialists is essential if the recent successes are to be continued.

On a more parochial level, the leadership of all Republicans in Long Kesh is more politically aware and socialist orientated than ever before. This leadership contains militants who fully realise the necessity for a socialist doctrine to accompany the armed liberation struggle. What's more they are prepared to educate and indoctrinate the men under their control as to this necessity.

The prison authorities and the establishment fully realise this, and it has worried them into looking for ways of stopping it. Only last week the officer commanding, adjutant and public relations officer of the Provos — who still have political status — were put on trial, convicted, and transferred to H Block for alleged incidents which occurred in 1977 while these men were under attack from bigotted and mercenary members of the prison service here.

The CO, Brendan Hughes, who was already serving a very long sentence, got an extra five years; the PRO, Tecnce Clarke, got an additional ten years; his brother Seamus, seven, and adjutant Joe Barnes got four more. All this will mean that men like Clarke, who was due out this June, will not be out until around 1988.

The sinister aspect of it all is that although these prisoners had political status, they have been put in H Block and separated from each other. It is an attempt to lessen their socialist influence among the young militant activists who up until now didn't have the opportunity to become very politically aware.

I doubt if these activities will bear much fruit as the new leadership is just as radical, maybe more so. All in all things are going pretty badly for the Brits at the moment.

The Daily Mirror

THE MORNING JOURNAL WITH THE SECOND LARGEST NET SALE.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1970

WOUNDED IN THE DUBLIN RIOTS: MAN WHO SAYS THE POLICE RAIDED HIS HOUSE AND BROKE UP HIS FURNITURE.



It was not only the 'rank and file' who expressed sympathy with the victims of the 1913 lock-out. Even the Daily Mirror publicised police attacks on members of the TGWU. But such sympathy was not forthcoming, either from the 'rank and file' or the Daily Mirror when one of the leaders of 1913, James Connolly was executed for his part in the 1916 Rising.

First is the issue of British working class solidarity with Irish workers. Tony Cliff used the example of the 1913 Dublin lock-out, which attracted an enthusiastic response from large sections of the British working class. Thus, argued Cliff, 'It is simply not true that workers are not ready to go in solidarity with Irish workers.' In drawing such a conclusion qualifications are needed. It should be remembered that all of Ireland in 1913 was,

the leadership of the British Labour Party who demanded the execution of James Connolly for his part in the 1916 Rising, but what protest was there from the 'rank and file' at that execution or at Britain's part in the war for Irish independence which was to follow?

To Tony Cliff's statement about it not being true that British workers are not prepared to take solidarity with Irish workers, can therefore be added the rider 'as long as Irish workers confine themselves to

Cliff indicated that one reason for advocating a Right to Work march in Ireland was the possibilities it opened up for socialists to establish contact with the Protestant workers. Comrade Cliff was also to give an historical example of such unity — around an industrial dispute — of Protestant and Catholic Irish workers in Liverpool in 1911.

The difference between Liverpool and Belfast is not merely a matter of geography. There have been examples in

Eyewitness in the Gulf

The war that's been forgotten

FRED HALLIDAY reports from Aden on the latest in 'Britain's secret war'.

OFFICIALS of the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman stationed at the Front's offices here in Democratic Yemen are keen to reject the idea fostered by London and

in the country are reputed to be Major Tim Landen, a former intelligence officer and now the Sultan's aide-de-camp, and Tony Ashworth, a black propaganda specialist from the

to tribal leaders to win them over, a talk on the Omani empire in the eighteenth century, a report on coverage of Oman in the Libyan press, a number of poems and songs, and a short talk in Persian, addressed to the Iranian personnel stationed in Oman explaining the aims of the revolutionary movement.

One point on which PFLO is especially insistent is on the continued support which it received from Democratic Yemen. Despite rumours put out by Saudi Arabia after it established diplomatic rela-

tions with Aden in March 1976, that the price of such relations was an end to Yemeni support for the Omani revolutionaries, there has been no let up in this commitment. In speeches such as that of President Salem Robea Ali to the UN General Assembly in October 1977, the Yemenis have underlined their opposition to the Sultan's regime.

Yemeni Foreign Minister Mohammad Saleh Motieh told me that the PDRY would open links to Oman only when all British and Iranian troops had

withdrawn, and when an agreement between the Sultan and the PFLO had been reached. Indeed far from there being a sellout Saudi hostility has recently increased — as a result of Yemen's stand on Oman, and its position on the Horn of Africa dispute. Saudi aid projects to Democratic Yemen have been cancelled, and there have been armed clashes along the Yemeni-Saudi border, the first since 1973.

PFLO is intent on developing its political struggle throughout Oman, rather than just the military activity in Dhofar. It estimates that around 300 political prisoners are held in the Sultan's jails, some of them arrested in June 1977, and it accuses the Sultan of trying to whip up chauvinist opinion inside Oman over a newly concocted border dispute with neighbouring Ras al-Khaimah.

PFLO is opposed to any forceful seizure of the land; it suspects that the Sultan's demand is inspired by Iranian desires to get the land for reasons of military strategy....

The PFLO has maintained close relations with other sections of the opposition in the Gulf, despite the dissolution of a unified Gulf political front in July 1974. It is now working towards a new united front of groups in different Arabian Peninsula countries directed against the monarchs and sheiks of the region.

FRONT

This front would include the two underground groups in Bahrain (the People's Front in Bahrain, and the National Liberation Front), the Kuwaiti Democrats, the Labour Party and the Democratic Party in Saudi Arabia, and the seven North Yemeni groups who last August came together to form a new unified National Democratic Front.

Of these the majority are, like PFLO, former left-wing nationalists who radicalised in the 1960s, although there are communists in the North Yemeni front, and the Bahraini National Liberation Front is also communist. The one significant group not so far included in this movement is the recently formed Saudi Arabian Communist Party.

The PFLO is given diplomatic support by the Soviet Union, and, despite Chinese support for the Shah of Iran's campaign against 'subversion' in the region, PFLO claims it still has some contact with the Chinese.

The Front has also developed a position on the Horn of Africa dispute. In the past, it had close relations with the Eritreans and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party, whilst the Somali region never allowed it to carry out information activities in Somali, even in its most 'anti-imperialist' phase up to 1975 for fear of alienating Saudi Arabia.

PFLO officials have more recently visited Ethiopia and discussed with Derg members. The PFLO supports the general aims of the Ethiopian revolution, but insists on the right of the Eritreans to self-determination, including independence.

UNSTABLE

The prospect which the Front now faces in Oman itself is one of protracted organisational construction. It has lost the military foothold it once had in southern Oman, but this was never, in itself, capable of giving the revolutionaries the base they need in the more important northern part of the country, where 650,000 out of the 750,000 people of Oman live.

The overall position of the regime is an unstable one. Not only has the Sultan failed to make even the most token gestures of democratisation in his seven and a half years of rule, but his oil revenue has already begun to decline from its peak of \$1.3 billion in 1976. Corruption, inequalities and resentment against foreign occupation have increased.

In this perspective, the Front and others hostile to the Sultan and his anglo-iranian protectors, will have definite political opportunities in the years ahead.

Further information: New publications on the region of interest include Fred Halliday *Mercenaries: Counter-Insurgency in the Gulf*, Russell Press Nottingham 95p; Helen Lackner, *A House Built on Sand. A Political Economy of Saudi Arabia* Ithaca Press London, £3.50 [April].



JAMES CALLAGHAN, then British Foreign Secretary visits Sultan Qaboos, the dictator of Oman.

Tehran that British and Iranian forces have withdrawn from Oman, after the military reversals suffered by the Front at the end of 1975.

They point out that in the province of Dhofar, bordering Yemen, where the guerilla war raged between 1965 and 1975, there are Iranian troops at Heiran near the Yemeni border, and Iranian Phantom jets at the desert air base of Thamrit, less than 100 miles from the frontier.

Iranian land and naval forces are also stationed at Khasab, in northern Oman, a position from which they patrol the waters of the Gulf and the 26-mile wide Straits of Hormuz, the strategic waterway through which oil tankers leave the Gulf. 'The Iranians won't leave. The only language they understand is armed struggle', Said Masaoud, Aden representative of the Front told me.

Moreover, in addition to forces present in Oman, (1,000-1,500) the Iranians now have an infrastructure there, ready to receive troops that could be moved in from Iran itself. In a recent *Newsweek* interview the Shah himself confirmed that the Iranian armed forces were now capable of moving six battalions with tanks across the Gulf within a matter of two or three hours.

Nor have the British pulled out, despite their surrender of Masirah, the island air base evacuated in March 1977. 200 men 'seconded' from the British armed forces, and another 425 British mercenaries still run the Sultan's 14,000-strong armed forces.

The two most powerful men

Foreign Office who is working in the Ministry of Information, and who is responsible for briefing foreign journalists who visit the country.

The commander of the army in Dhofar is a Brigadier Charles Huxtable. The head of the civil development programme in the province, the prime aim of which is to extend government control into the mountains, is Martin Robb — a former Special Air Services officer who served in Oman.

The Front was forced onto the defensive by the massive intervention of Iranian troops in 1973-1975 and has had to abandon the positions it once held in the Dhofar mountains. As one official explained it: 'It is now not a war of liberation or even a guerilla war. It is a campaign of resistance. There are sporadic actions from time to time, and this is a form of resistance to the Iranian occupation. But it is not a consistent campaign.'

Between 300 and 500 fighters withdrew across the Yemeni border in 1975, and there are about 800 refugee families living in camps and schools organised by the Front. In the Peoples Primary School and the 9 June Intermediate School there are 500 pupils, and the Front also runs the Fatima Ghanama hospital, a 50-bed installation named after the 18-year old woman guerilla who was killed in a clash with government forces at Sadh, in eastern Dhofar, in 1973.

The Front also has a 45-minute radio programme from Aden every evening. One night I listened there was a talk on how the sultan is giving money

Tunisian general strike

130 dead - more brutal than the French!

A TUNISIAN militant writes on the recent upheaval in a country where the workers have to give the Government three month's notice to go on strike.



TUNISIA has seen nothing like the disturbances of the last few weeks since its independence from France in 1956.

Last week's general strike called by the leaders of Tunisia's labour union was the first of its kind, ending in confrontations between demonstrators and riot police, later reinforced by troops.

Officially 42 people died and 325 were injured, but hospital sources say that not less than 130 lost their lives. Even the French colonisers never managed that!

This was the culmination of a period of unrest which started towards the end of last year. After an agreement between the Government and the UGTT (General Union of Tunisian Workers) on a five-year wage freeze, the union broke off its alliance with the regime when the latter tried to put up prices.

A series of strikes by various sectors (miners, transport, textiles) was followed by demon-

strations in the main cities. The most important strike took place in Ksar Helal, the very town that saw the birth of the present ruling party in 1934.

The textile workers overpowered the heavily-armed security forces which tried to force them back to work. So the troops intervened and left the workers no chance to claim their rights.

These events led to major changes in the Government of Hedi Nouira, first legal heir to the ailing 74-year-old president-for-life, Habib Bourguiba. The relatively moderate Interior Minister, Tahar Belkhouja, was dismissed because he was in favour of dialogue with the workers as opposed to the hard line followed by the Prime Minister, the powerful head of the party, Mohamed Sayah, and the Defence Minister, Abdullah Farhat. Seven other ministers resigned in sympathy.

The decision to follow a hard line against the workers forced the UGTT to become more active. Previously the Government's influence was such that the UGTT leadership would condemn almost any action taken by the workers. Things are a little different now, with a number of UGTT leaders still suffering an unexpected spell in jail.

Women and the French elections Fighting sexism at the polls

IN THE forthcoming French elections women represent 52 per cent of the voters. This explains why all the major parties have been publicly apologising for not standing more women on their elections slates. PAM HURST and RIC SISSONS report.

In an effort to win the 'women's vote' the right is reminding people that Giscard, the President, created a Government secretariat on women's questions and that the Simone Weil law granted women abortion rights and facilities.

The Communist Party (PCF) proclaims itself to be the only feminist party because it has outlined a future law on the women's question. The Socialist Party (PS) recently held a national conference on women where the party's leader, Francois Mitterrand, declared that he was a feminist!

ABORTION

Recent opinion polls reveal that women do not trust the political parties. 37 per cent thought that 'political parties are led by men, who exclude women from the discussions.' The official figures given by the parties themselves on the number of women in their leadership supports that assertion. For example the PCF has only 2 women amongst the 21 members of its leading body, the Political Bureau.

The fact is that none of the major parties put forward solutions adequate to the position of women in society. None deals adequately with issues such as childcare, abortion, contraception and housework which confront women in their everyday life.

For example the 1972

Common Programme signed by both the PS and PCF has nothing more to say on abortion than: 'New legislation, founded on the recognition of individual liberty and the spirit of responsibility, will be elaborated.'

French women are faced with the problem of deciding whether to ignore the elections completely. Many argue that the conditions of women will not be changed by either the right, if they remain in power,

or the left if they come into government.

Radical feminists in the women's movement have already declared that they 'refuse to give votes to the parties which contribute in perpetuating oppression.' This attitude will find an echo among many women disillusioned with party politics.

A very different response has been given by Choisir (to choose). This is a pro-abortion group founded in 1972, led by the well-known lawyer, Gisele Halimi, who defended many doctors when abortion was illegal.

Choisir has decided to form an electoral organisation — 'Choisir la cause des femmes'

(Choose the women's cause) — on the basis of a 'Women's Common Programme'. It intends to stand 100 women candidates on 12 March. The 100 include lawyers, doctors, barristers, nurses and even a manageress.

REFUSED

They state: 'We are not a Party, nor do we want to become one.' For the second round of the election, on 19 March, when inevitably the choice will be between the left and the right they have refused to take a position.

They state: 'We will decide on the basis of the votes and the position of the candidates as far

as the women's question is concerned... We will, however, choose the candidate who will adopt our programme or who comes nearest to it.'

In the first round their programme includes 10 demands and 12 areas on which they would like legislation to be passed. They propose that a Ministry be created to deal with the women's question. In future elections they favour proportional representation, plus a minimum quota of women both as candidates for each party and on its leadership. They denounce the failure of any advance on equal pay.

They suggest that for one generation couples should

cease to live together to establish the independence of women and overcome the division of labour within the family. All sexist stories and pictures should be removed by the Government from school books.

Rape cases should be judged in the most important courts in public, with juries on whom women are in the majority. On abortion they demand an extension to 12 weeks of the time in which an abortion can be performed.

Realising it was very unlikely that they would win any of the legislative elections Choisir sent this request to the major parties: 'We ask all parties, without exception, to withdraw their candidates in those districts where the majority and the opposition are evenly balanced, and to commonly agree to allow Choisir candidates to have the best chance of being elected.'

CONFUSE

The Choisir programme is certainly an advance on the positions of the major political parties, but it cannot claim to represent the women's movement. For example Choisir only calls for abortions within a period of 12 weeks which clearly conflicts with the demand of the women's movement for 'the right to choose'. The call for a Women's Ministry has never been discussed in the women's movement.

The major problem with Choisir is that it takes no position on the important political issue facing the French working class and oppressed sections of society: the removal of Giscard and the right-wing Government. They address their demands to both the right and the left, drawing no distinction between them.

Certainly the record of the Socialist and Communist Parties is not much better than Giscard, but the electoral victory of the PS and PCF would fundamentally change the French political situation giving the women's movement a much more favourable possibility of winning its demands. The formation of a PCF-PS Government would stimulate the class struggle and in that context a strong women's movement would be better positioned to ensure such a government implemented its demands.

INDEPENDENT

The programme of the joint revolutionary slate, made up of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (French section of the Fourth International), the Comités Communistes pour l'Autogestion, and Organisation Communiste des Travailleurs, takes a clear stand on the women's question.

Its demands include an end to all forms of sex discrimination, equal pay for equal work; abortion on demand, paid for by Social Security, for all women including minors and immigrants; against sexist violence and rape; for the establishment of battered women's centres.

It also clearly states that they support 'an independent, united women's movement, because we consider the building of this movement to have decisive weight in the struggle for socialism. Ultimately, we are fighting to get the workers movement as a whole, the working class, to take up the demands and struggle of women against their oppression and for their emancipation.'



DELEGATES at the last congress of the French Communist Party.

Growing financial crisis Francly alarmed

MURRAY SMITH looks at the past week in France.

A LOT OF publicity has been given to the 'fall of the franc'. The franc has fallen by three to four per cent against the other main currencies of the capitalist world, notably the dollar.

Although there are certain purely economic reasons for this development, the main reason is political, and linked to the possibility of a victory of the left in the March elections. This is so much the case that the Government has leapt at the opportunity to predict financial chaos if the left wins.

Indeed, unkind spirits have suggested that Prime Minister Barre and his friends didn't do all that they might have to halt the slide and even encouraged it slightly for the sake of gaining political points.

For the working class movement it was a mild but very clear warning of the economic sabotage of which international capital is capable if political developments in France look like getting out of hand. And a clear demonstration of the need for control over all movements of capital — exercised not just by a Left Government but by the direct action of the workers themselves.

If international and French capital was getting alarmed at the possibility of a Left Government, the leadership of the Socialist and Communist Parties (PS and PCF) were not doing much to bring such a prospect nearer. Despite faltering but definite moves towards unity over the last couple of

weeks, they were once again playing ducks and drakes with the anti-capitalist sentiments and the desire for unity of the working-class.

Last week the PCF had abandoned the worst of its ultra-sectarian line, dropped its 'condition' that it must get at least 21 per cent of the vote and was ready to take part in a Government with the PS. What it then proposed was an agreement between the first and second rounds of the elections on a governmental programme and a mutual policy of PS and PCF candidates standing down for each other in the second round, according to who won most votes in the first round.

YES

The PS's reply was: yes, let's stand down for each other but we'll leave agreement on the governmental programme till after the second round. This is unacceptable to the PCF which wants a definite agreement and the assurance of ministerial places which goes with it before the second round.

This would assure their credibility as a 'Party of Government' and block off any Centre-Left plans Socialist leader Mitterrand might be nursing — plans which could have been encouraged by a speech Prime Minister Barre made about the possibility of some kind of Centre-Left government.

The odds are still on an agreement between the PCF and PS

to form a government but Mitterrand wants to drive the hardest possible bargain. This has produced some rumblings within his own party not only from the CERES (left social-democratic current) but also from influential figures like Pierre Mauroy, Mayor of Lille.

As to the outcome of the elections, the latest opinion polls show a slight (one per cent) regression of the Left. But more and more commentators on all sides of the political spectrum are beginning to see that the outcome of the elections will not necessarily decide much.

If the 'majority' wins it will do so as a minority in the country, owing its victory to an electoral system biased in its favour and to the criminal divisions of the reformist left.

If Mitterrand is tempted by the prospect of some kind of Centre-Left coalition the PCF with its solid hold over the organised working class will be left in potentially dangerous opposition. If the PS and PCF form a government with their rag bag of bourgeois allies the working class will rapidly start to place demands on them.

Any way you look at it, short of a crushing defeat of the workers parties — which is extremely unlikely — the working class, after the elections, will be mobilising for its demands and looking for a way out of the capitalist crisis.



A MEETING of striking postal workers in Paris. Their struggle has focused the attention of the workers' movement over the past week.

Ernest Mandel and Jean Ellenstein debate What strategy for socialism?

Towards the end of last year an important debate on socialist strategy took place at the Free University of Brussels in Belgium. The three speakers were Jean Ellenstein, a historian and theoretician of the French Communist Party, Ernest Mandel, a central leader of the Fourth International and Didier Motchane, a leader of the left socialists inside the French Socialist Party. We print below Mandel's opening remarks and Ellenstein's response. Next week we will publish a passage from Kautsky to demonstrate how far the 'Eurocommunists' have moved to the right.



ERNEST MANDEL

WHAT ARE the most important lessons of the 1917 revolution for the workers' movement and the working class today? What was unique and specific to that experience, and what was — to employ a provocative term — of universal significance?

Our starting point can only be the profound crisis of the international capitalist system ushered in by the First World War. It is impossible to begin to understand the succession of social revolutions over the past sixty years without grasping this essential point. Speaking rather schematically, we can say that the outbreak of the First World War signified the historic bankruptcy of the capitalist system, the end of its historically progressive function and mission. The twenty million who died in the First World War make any controversy on this point somewhat futile.

However, the second question which follows logically from the first is whether the Russian revolution was an historic exception, a thunderbolt in a clear sky, or whether it was only the beginning of a series of crises for the capitalist regime which would threaten more and more seriously the entire cultural, political and economic heritage of the human race?

To this question my reply is unequivocal. There was absolutely nothing exceptional in the Russian revolution from this point of view. Quite the reverse. The crisis of the social structures of capitalism has been a permanent phenomenon since the First World War. The second lesson, and this was grasped by the very first revolutionary socialist critic of the October Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg, lies in the fact that Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades in a period of revolutionary crisis dared to lead the working class towards the seizure of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The necessity of taking them into account and of judging their historic consequences relatively, since, as Trotsky so beautifully put it, 'The skin of history seems to be unwinding itself in reverse', and we have not had a successful socialist revolution in a single capitalist country.

To the present day, the only examples of the revolution in the western world have been the hundred days of the Paris Commune in 1871, and the tens of days of the German Revolution in 1918-19. I agree that at certain times between 1917 and 1920 there existed in Europe a revolutionary situation in the traditional meaning of the words, as a frontal assault against the State. But it is still nonetheless true that for 150 years, since the revolution of 1848, we in the west have been chasing a mirage of revolution. So we must ask ourselves whether the October Revolution does not represent a single experience rather than a model or an example. My answer to this question is of course the opposite of Ernest Mandel's. We must conceive, elaborate and develop the concept of a new type of revolution, of a new way of getting to socialism, in order to create, first and foremost, a different kind of socialism.

This new revolutionary process is of course not a social democratic one. From this point of view, the criticisms Lenin made of social democracy in 1917 and 1921 seem to me still perfectly correct. It is not a question of gaining power through a few reforms and of running the system in the same old way. The point is not to run the system but to destroy it and create socialism. From this point of view my answer is not, and cannot be a social democratic one. It cannot be, I would say above all, the reply which Lenin gave which was rooted in his times and in the world as he knew it.

Today the conditions are radically different from an historic point of view. The key to this new experiment must be an examination of the

This leads us to two other fundamental questions. First, are revolutionary crises something entirely exceptional, characteristic of backward and underdeveloped countries, or are revolutionary crises a periodic result of the structural crisis of capitalism and as such entirely relevant to the countries of western Europe? Secondly, what is to be done when one is faced by just such a revolutionary crisis?

My answer to the first question is that there is nothing specifically Russian about revolutionary crises. There have been revolutionary crises in Russia in 1917, Germany in 1918-9, Hungary in 1919, Austria in 1919, Italy in 1920, again in Germany in 1923, in France in 1936, Spain in 1936 and 1937, in Italy between 1944 and 1948, in Greece between 1944 and 1946; in May 1968 in France, and between 1973 and 1975 in Portugal. There is at present a revolutionary process developing in Spain and I hope that in the coming years we will once again see the development of such a process in France and Italy.

What are the tasks of the workers' movement in such periods? The principal lessons of the Russian revolution is that the central task is the seizure of power and the destruction of the bourgeois state. I don't mean Parliament, but the repressive apparatus, the apparatus of the bourgeois state and the transfer of economic and political power to the working class, not in the sense of workers in the big plants, but to the totality of the wage-earners who today constitute between 75% and 90% of the population of the countries in the West.

The historic balance-sheet is extremely clear. We can have endless discussions on the partially negative consequences of the Russian revolution and what followed. But let us not forget to examine what happened in the countries where the workers' movement could have seized power and did not do so. What is the balance-sheet of the refusal of German Social Democracy to seize power in 1918? Hitler's seizure of power and 60 million corpses! That's something rather different to Stalin, that's the price which the European working class had to pay for that refusal. Once again let us consider the Chilean example. Who can sincerely, honestly and reasonably say that there would have been 30,000 dead if Allende had seized power as he could have done with scarcely a shot being fired at the end of 1972? Allende did not do this and the result is Pinochet, 30,000 dead in a few days and something approaching economic genocide imposed on the Chilean workers, year in and year out with an unemployment rate of 25% etc.

To come to a third question. The fundamental divergences in the heart of the workers' movement do not hinge on whether

or not democratic forms are necessary to install the dictatorship of the proletariat or workers' power. Everybody at this table is agreed on a certain number of principles. We are against the one-party system; for political pluralism; for the right of everyone to be able to form parties, factions or political tendencies; against the idea that trade unions should be transmission belts for a political party; for trade union independence not only today, but also under the dictatorship of the proletariat and we are for the maintenance of all democratic rights including the right to strike.

That is not what the differences hinge on. Our differences are strategic; between two mutually exclusive strategies. There is the strategy, in my opinion the correct one, which led to the October victory, which was supported by the majority of the urban, labouring population in free, secret elections with universal suffrage. Those who supported the transfer of power to the soviets received between 65% and 67% of the votes in all the big towns. This cannot by any stretch of the imagination be conceived of as a minority strategy within the working class.

The question is how to unify the wage earners, increase their combativity, avoid anything which can divide or demobilise the working class. It is a strategy to unify and mobilise the working class which must cater for both the daily and the historic needs of the workers, and which refuses to sacrifice the interests of the working class on the altar of collaboration with the bourgeoisie and bourgeois parties for electoralist reasons. It is a coherent and interlocking strategy. It does not hinge on an absolute parliamentary majority, nor on a permanent hegemonic weight in society, but it unfolds in those situations which periodically arise when this colossal force can transform the relationship of forces.

The other strategy, which opposes itself to the first, under the pretext of giving priority to politics, which it reduces and identifies with electoralism and parliamentarism, accepts more and more compromises with the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois parties, accepts class collaboration, ministerial collaboration and as an inevitable consequence breaks the unity, cohesion and self-confidence of the working class.

It is not therefore a question of counterposing an insurrectional to a peaceful strategy. It is a strategy of unification and extra-parliamentary mobilisation of the toiling masses counterposed to a strategy of class collaboration. One leads to the Red October and the self-organisation of the working class — the other to Weimar-type situations, to Popular Fronts, to Chilean-type Unidad Populares and to terrible and bloody defeats for the working class.



JEAN ELLENSTEIN

new relationship between reform and revolution in the sense that we have understood them until now. The main problem is to transcend the contradiction between them and move towards a new conception of the revolution which will be based on profound reforms of the economic and social structure. These will constitute, on a relatively extended historical time scale, the revolutionary process.

So this process is the opposite of those which have gone before and will be based on

democracy. Let no one tell me that it's only a question of the parliamentary or electoral road. It's a much broader conception of democracy, a thorough going, many sided democracy which must include the economic, social, political and cultural levels and which can only mean the management by the people of their own affairs — self management.

In our countries, in France particularly, the revolution will be democratic, peaceful, legal and gradual or it will not take place.

The October Revolution was the first breach in a world dominated by capitalism. It was a stimulus to revolutionary struggle in both the advanced capitalist countries and in the colonial countries of America, Africa and the East. It still remains an historic event of immense significance, like the French Revolution of 1789, whose traditions it continued, developed and surpassed. Having said this, our duty today in the West, in 1977, is to study critically the general and specific features of the October Revolution and to think seriously about the nature of the revolution and revolutionary process here and now.

If we leave out Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic, we are dealing with economically underdeveloped countries, predominantly rural societies where archaic, medieval forms of life still exist; societies which are culturally backward and which, not unimportantly, have never experienced a bourgeois democratic revolution. To this, we must add the fact that in these countries, the state played a determining role in their economic and cultural development and thus civil society was not fully constituted. It was, as Gramsci would say, 'gelatinous'.

These specific features were responsible for a certain number of characteristics, peculiar to these revolutions and their roads to building socialism. As a result of these historical circumstances, one could say that these countries have taken an essentially dictatorial road to socialism. This can be seen very characteristically in the course and aftermath of the October Revolution itself. I don't say this in a contemptuous way because I can't imagine any other road possible for these countries given what they were and given the conditions in which the revolutionary process evolved.

It's not a criticism of these historic experiences. I am saying this simply to stress

Slur on Welsh

In *Socialist Challenge* (12 January) — which was predominantly and rightly concerned with the racist articles of Muggen McKinnon and the problems of Irish and Scottish nationalism, we were appalled to see in 'News from Nowhere' the sub-heading 'Racial Welches on Sanctions'.

References to Raquel Welsh are all too obvious; nevertheless, the 'joke' contains an objectionable slur against the Welsh who are also engaged in a struggle for self-determination.

We realise that racism of all kinds has become part of the language of imperialism. However, it is the responsibility of all real socialists to challenge and change this language and the deep-rooted prejudice it implies by refusing to employ such racist slurs against any oppressed nationalities. Such jibes are, in essence, no better than the remarks of McKinnon himself and will do nothing to further the causes of internationalism or of revolutionary socialism in Wales.

ALISON WOOD, KEVIN WOOD, Bristol

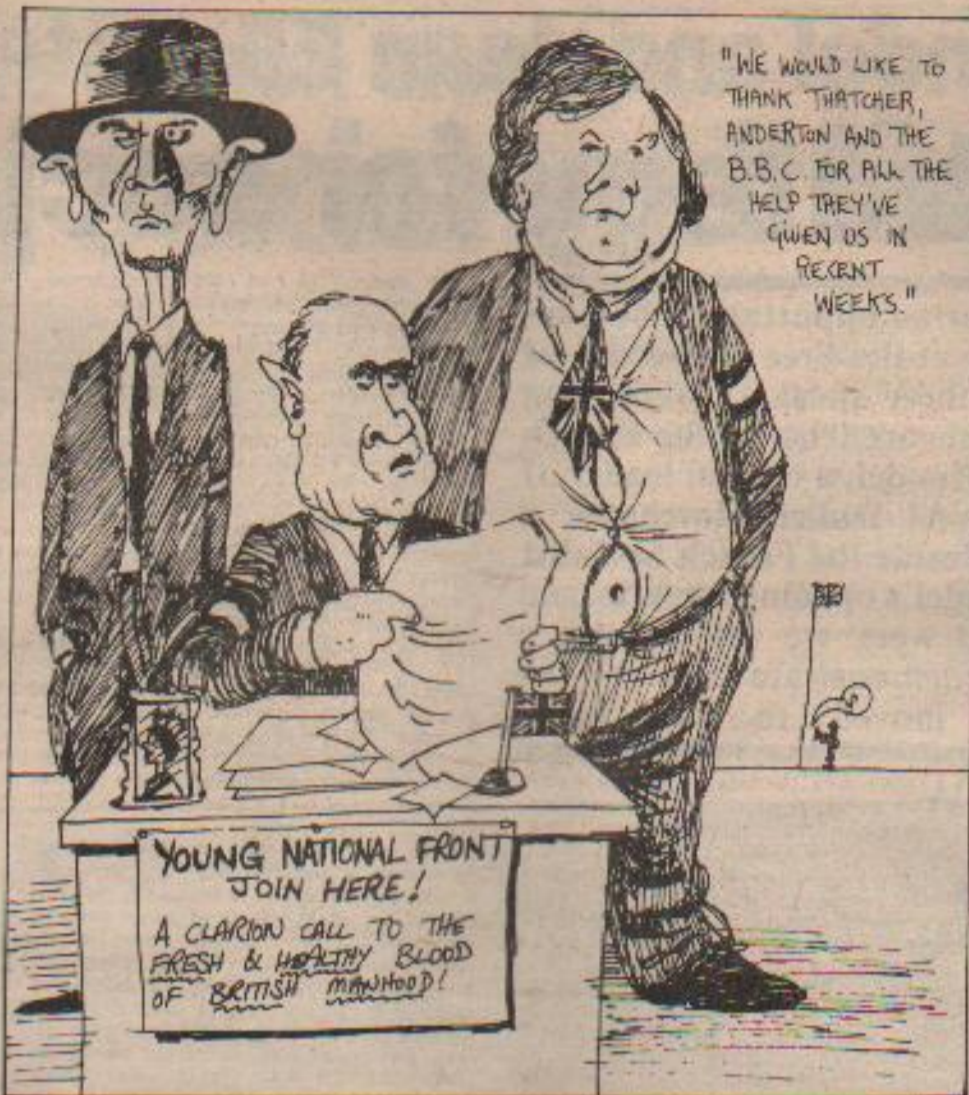
Ideology & technology

IN HIS letter concerning the 'nuclear energy debate' C. Gardner manages to make a totally obvious point and yet to show a very useless understanding of what he terms 'a political question, not simply a technological one'.

For of course it is, and the comments on ecological groups follow from this and are well known. However his original approach to the nature of technology is seriously unhelpful. Yes, obviously, it is the 'social relations' that are to be focused on but he seems to forget that this is not a one-sided question of the mechanical movement of a technology developing (how? by 'evolution', no other suggestion is made) and people then utilising it — either the ruling class or a transformed society.

What of the whole range of ideological pressures around the development itself? This includes the reasons for why money is allocated to certain areas of research as well as the more 'obscure' area connected to this of what stage the ruling class is passing through down to the psyches of male scientists. These conscious and subconscious distortions of human creativity mean there are no technologies 'in themselves' as Gardner talks of.

The whole question of why specifically nuclear energy, as brought up by G. Tann on the same page (warfare) is hence skirted by Gardner. A very relevant example of the effect of social relations on what is available theoretically is the whole issue of contraception — the direction it has been developed in and the methods available show no regard for the health of women, and this fact of the onus being on the woman can hardly be male capitalist science's wish for women to determine their own reproductive role.



As the letter we are criticising was so much dealing with the problem of material development and social relations, and talked so confidently in such terms, we are surprised that the most basic reciprocal interaction was missing from the insistence on the politics of technological control.

Barbara Hill, Cathy Shelley (London NW1)

Thatcher's racism

ASCATHOLIC CHRISTIANS, we have never believed that it is compatible with Christian social teaching to support a party which is committed to the upholding of the unrighteous system of capitalism as the Conservative Party is.

However, in Mrs Thatcher's statement on immigration of 30 January, we see in its most extreme form yet the racism and creeping fascism within that party. It is a phenomenon which is far more dangerous than that of the

National Front, since it is more respectable, has greater financial backing, and assumes a 'liberal' guise.

Mrs Thatcher's position is not new. Since the early '60s, the 'number theory of prejudice' (i.e. the fewer there are, the better race relations there will be) and the belief that black people are undesirable *per se* has increasingly dominated the legislation of the two parties. Racism at the doors of Britain has been seen as a way of avoiding racism inside Britain. But the language used has until now been equivocal and ambiguous: only isolated individuals such as the late Sir Cyril Osborne, Ronald Bell and later Enoch Powell used openly racist language.

Mrs Thatcher's speech represents the culmination of this process. No longer is the racist basis of her programme veiled, although it is 'people' who fear the demise of the British character and of our way of life. Nevertheless, it is clear that Mrs Thatcher explicitly identifies herself with these fears:

"We are a British nation with British characteristics. Every country can take some small minorities and in many ways they add to the richness and variety of this country. The moment the minority threatens to become a big one, people get frightened."

Mrs Thatcher then significantly notes the growing support for the National Front: her solution is not to fight but to surrender, to concede the basic ideology of the NF at every point.

For it is clear that what Mrs Thatcher is offering is pure racial nationalism. She may seem more genteel than Hitler: that perhaps is part of the 'British character'. But she and her advisors are no less sinister. The Jewish population of Germany was 1 per cent when Hitler decided that zero per cent should be the largest permissible figure.

The Revd KENNETH LEECH, Rector of Bethnal Green; The Revd DAVID ADLINGTON, Assistant Priest, St Matthew, Bethnal Green; Captain TERRY DRUMMOND, Church Army, St Botolph's Rehabilitation Centre, Aldgate; The Revd CHRIS IRVINE, Assistant Priest, St Mary, Stoke Newington; The Revd R.G. KIRKBY, Vicar of St Paul, Bow Common; The Revd DAVID RANDALL, Priest-in-Charge, St Clement, Notting Hill; The Revd BILL ROBINSON, Assistant Priest, Bow Team Ministry; The Revd MALCOLM ROSS, Chaplain for Mission to the Bishop of Stepney; The Revd CHRIS THORNBURN, Assistant Priest, St Peter, Clapham.

Socialist Challenge - it's OK

I HAVE noticed within the paper various arguments which assert that an 'intellectual bias' exists in its articles. If by this term it is meant the *Socialist Challenge* is developing eclectic analyses and debates then the assertion should be made explicitly and substantiated by showing that the paper is separated from issues raised by the class struggle. In the main

however, this does not appear to be the nature of the argument which is being levelled.

Rather it appears that the label 'intellectual' is applied with a vulgar and narrow connotation. This is unfortunate for a number of reasons. First, we are all in a sense 'intellectuals' within our own spheres of work and other activities. As Gramsci put it, 'each man (sic) carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is... he participates in a particular conception of the world... and therefore contributes to sustain or to modify it.'

Second, the accusation of 'intellectual bias' begs the question of the content of a socialist newspaper in relation to its readers. Specifically, under what conditions and in what forms can such a newspaper mediate struggles and activate/aid progressive class fractions around political and ideological issues? This question can only be resolved after asking another. The arrival of *Socialist Challenge*/*Socialist Unity* on the political scene was a product of a hybrid disaffection with traditional, inflexible adherence to what was presented as a strict Leninist political organisation.

The new political formations which have grown from this disaffection offer the potential of political advances precisely because they recognise that a political vanguard must acknowledge that socialist consciousness has its conditions of germination within a diverse and often relatively autonomous ideological and cultural terrain. It has not been in the past, and must not be in the future, the function of *Socialist Challenge*/*Socialist Unity* to indulge in political chauvinism at the expense of the self-activity of those groups within such a terrain. Such a policy can only result in political opportunism of the sort which is currently being implemented by the Communist Party.

ANDY CULLEN (London)

The Spongers - a hopeless experience

I WOULD like to differ with the general enthusiasm for Jim Allen's TV play *The Spongers* in your 'Under Review' column. I found it a pessimistic, demoralising and literally hopeless experience. And that is the way I think it would be 'read' by most working class audiences, despite a degree of self-recognition in the characters, dialogue and location, unusual for TV drama.

But that effect is, I believe, intimately linked to Jim Allen's chosen mode of dramatic expression — bourgeois naturalism. Within this tradition — progressive in its time and taken over uncritically by socialist writers — is the job of art to depict reality, in minute and honest detail. Such a practice is based on the bourgeois view that art 'reflects' reality and should attempt to passively demonstrate 'what is'. Any suggestion of what is possible — 'what could be' — is impermissible, for that would be to betray 'reality'.

But for Marx 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, the job is to change it'. Surely then the same responsibility rests equally heavily on dramatists and all creative artists? And that means that within their art there must be some process of extension and deconstruction of present reality — its rearrangement and internal juxtaposition, demanding new forms. We cannot be content with the slavish copying of reality, the 'revelation' of a supposed 'objective truth'.

Within the framework of a naturalistic production like *The Spongers*, opposition or resistance to capitalist oppression can only take the shape of a depiction of political intervention — orthodox political struggle. When 'in reality' such resistance is not present (though Allen ignores the campaigns against the cuts and the Claimants' Union which do exist, even in the North West) the artist or dramatist remains locked within the thankless task of simply revealing oppressive 'truth' in ever more faithful and 'authentic' detail. Thus the prevailing mood becomes despair — and for socialists the seeds of reaction are rooted in despair. True the forces which oppress Pauline in *The Spongers* are identifiable economic and political ones. But the narrative depicts her abject surrender to those ruthless, barbaric and seemingly inevitable forces. In the absence of any resistance, the vision of an all-powerful historical fate re-enters, as in the tragedies of Shakespeare or the novels of Thomas Hardy.

In the last analysis, despite Jim Allen's sympathy for the working class, *The Spongers* ends up re-constructing and reinforcing a bourgeois 'reality' and a bourgeois world-view. The closing remark of the play is, 'She shouldn't have done it (killed herself and her four children). She should have stuck it out with the rest of us.'

Those are words of passive acceptance and a despairing fatalism. OK, the argument will be put that this is how oppressed people think. But socialist artists are not obliged to simply picture the world as it is. It is their job, like all revolutionary activists, to transform it, to point to the future. And that task demands a clear break with naturalism in all its forms.

Carl Gardner (London NW6)

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. 061-236 2562. Open Tuesday 8-9pm, Thursday 5-6pm, Saturday 10-11pm. Room available for meetings. Duplicating facilities available.

BURY Socialist Challenge group meets every Wednesday, 8pm at the Whitehall 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 2362.

SOUTH MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge group meets every other Thursday at the Albert Inn off Wilmslow Rd. Help all Socialist Challenge between 11-30pm and 1pm at Moss Side shopping centre or Longsight Market, Duckenson Rd. Further information from 061-236 2362.

NORTH EAST

DARLINGTON Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Northern Rocks 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 next on 2 March at 7.30pm 'British Imperialism in Ireland' The Big Jug Pub, Claypath, Durham City. Further details from J. Fox, 41 The Avenue, Durham.

YORKSHIRE

HULL: For details of Socialist Challenge events ring David, Hull 482850.

YORK Socialist Challenge meeting 'Housing Crisis: the solution' with David Jenkins of the York Community Project. Friday, 17 February, 8pm, Castle Market Pub, Barbican Road, York.

HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge group meets next at 8pm on 23 February — and fortnightly thereafter — at the Friendly and Trades Club, Northumberland Street, (opposite station).

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 8pm. Wide range of Fourth International publications.

DUNDEE: Information about Socialist Challenge, activities from 64 Queen St, Glasgow. Join in 30 sales outside Boots (corner of Reform Street) each Saturday, 11am-2pm.

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge meetings every second Wednesday. Contact George Keravan, 12 Marchmont Grove, Edinburgh. Tel. 031-346 0465.

ABERDEEN: Information about Socialist Challenge activities, ring Jim on 43096 (after 8pm).

GLASGOW Socialist Challenge school. 'The fight against women's oppression and the history of the socialist movement'. Saturday, 18 Feb, 12.30-5.30, 64 Queen Street, Glasgow. Further details from 041-221 7481.

SOUTH WEST

BRIGHTON Socialist Challenge forum Tuesday, 28 February, Eastern Europe, 8pm, Resources Centre, North Street, Brighton.

SOUTHAMPTON Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday from 10am-1pm

outside Ubbow Bar Post Office, Bargaie.

SWANSEA Socialist Challenge group meets every other Wednesday starting 22 February at 7.30pm in St Helen's Inn, Vincent Street, Swansea. All supporters welcome.

MIDLANDS

For details of activities of local supporters contact the Socialist Challenge Centre, 76b Digbeth High Street, Birmingham. (021-643 9209)

LONDON

SOUTHALL Supporters group meets fortnightly. For details ring 01-873 2080.

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

HARROW Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. Anytime interested please contact 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, at 35, 37, 88, 157 bus). Bob Pennington on the socialist challenge to Labour's attacks.

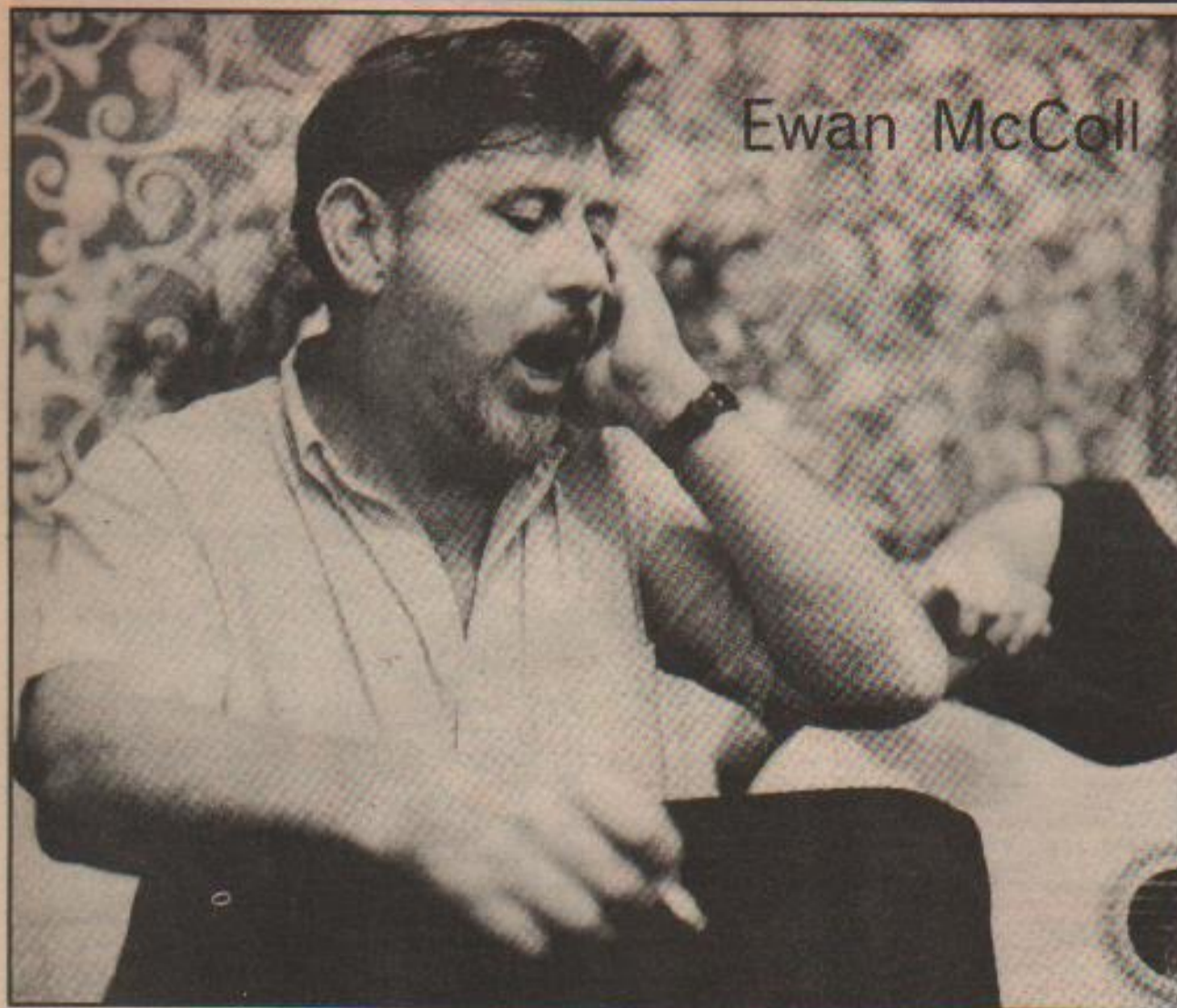
HAMMERSMITH Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly — details from London IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

HARINGEY Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly. Next meeting, Monday 20 February, West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road, off West Green Road, Turnpike Lane tube. Discussion on the prospects for wages struggle after the defeat of the FBU strike and the miners' settlement. Introduced by Rich Fisher.

NEWHAM Socialist Challenge Forum, Tuesday, 21 February, 'Racism and how to fight it', Greengate House (NE London Poly), Greengate Street, Plaistow E 13, 7.30pm prompt.

GREENWICH/LEWISHAM Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly. For details ring Ray 01-658 1187.

SOUTHWEST LONDON Socialist Challenge supporters meet every week in Battersea. Further information from 26 Latchmere Road, London SW11.



Ewan McColl

Songs that hit back But are they tuned to hungry ears?

Two main problems beset the compilers of Pluto's Big Red Songbook and A Songbook by Red Notes. The first is that because the collections are devoted to songs which are consciously political, they have had to include material of vastly different styles, quality and functions.

Songs that have captured the popular imagination because for some reason they are very good are placed next to those whose sentiments are similar, but which have little musical or lyrical value, and will soon be forgotten, writes SALLY FELDMAN.

The second problem is that they concentrate on music which, for the most part, does not have mass appeal. Traditional music — music created by the people — by its very existence is political. It accompanies working people into the fields, onto the railways, through death and love and, by the same token, onto the picket lines, into the factories, on strikes, in mine disasters.

So it's not surprising that a large proportion of both collections is made up of folk songs.

The trouble is that — in England at least — it's been a while since most working class people listened to this kind of music.

MODEST

It's a matter of the difference between what people approve of and what they enjoy, and this is a distinction which neither of the books seems to acknowledge.

The Red Notes pamphlet, simply entitled A Songbook, has a modest and straightforward aim: 'Singing is part of our revolution... But the only trouble is that nobody can ever remember all the words! So here's a Songbook with some of the words written down.'

Some 70 works have been

collected here, some of them traditional, some written to commemorate particular events. There are songs that have been adapted from well-known tunes, and a section of singalong numbers which have their place in the collection not because they are about the struggle, but because they are loved and sung by working class people.

CREDIT

Only the words are given, which I found irritating, because it means you can only sing the ones you've heard before. And the songs are not credited because, say the editors: 'If a song is revolutionary, it becomes at once the property of the people.' Well I would argue with that. There are a lot of hungry musicians who could do with a few royalties, and no one has any business robbing them of their wages. Secondly, the identity of many of the writers of these songs is of intrinsic interest.

They are often people whose lives are an inspiration for revolutionaries. It is a denial of the contribution of Joe Hill, Sarah Ogden Gunning, or Woody Guthrie to omit their names. And careful documentation of songs, or of anything, is vital if we are to understand historical development.

In Pluto's Big Red Songbook, words of 40 songs are accompanied by names of the authors, information about the events that gave rise to each one, and details of where to find recordings of it. Standard music notation and chords are provided. I did wonder why each song was printed twice. The space could better have been used for more material.

BLUES

Traditional songs make up a good part of the Big Red Songbook, but there are also contributions from modern political songsters — Peggy Seeger, Leon Rosselson, Ewan MacColl. However, there is a difference between songs written for or about the working class, and those written by the working class, which the book offers no opportunity to explore.

I felt, too, that some of the inclusions in both books didn't justify some of the exclusions. There is one jazz song in the Pluto book, and a blues song in the Red Notes collection. Even though it's true that few blues singers made any reference to politics, and even more true that blues relies on improvisation and can't really be written down, I'm surprised that these books, whose admirable aim is to remake the connection between music and politics, have omitted the music of black America.

REVOLUTIONARY

These anthologies have set themselves a difficult task, not because there isn't a lot of revolutionary music around, but because of the nature of the songs chosen.

A lot of political music is being made right now that is

more accessible to modern tastes — reggae, punk, women's bands, political rock groups. Much as I welcome these two collections and hope they will be widely used, I've a feeling it will be Tom Robinson and the Clash, Big Youth and Jam Today, who will be making the revolutionary music of 1978.

Big Red Songbook is published by Pluto at £1. A Songbook is published by Red Notes at 80p. They are available from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1. If ordering by mail, add 15p p&p.



A spinner on strike in the '20s.

Defying Destiny An actor's view

David Edgar's play *Destiny* — televised on BBC-1 at the end of last month — sharply depicted the nature of fascism, with the growth of the 'Nation Forward' party. But in the absence of any powerful anti-racist arguments, did the play risk making recruits for fascism?

JOSEPH BLATCHLEY, who played Maxwell in the TV production — the character expelled from 'Nation Forward' for having 'left wing leanings' — takes up the criticism.

As an ordinary 'unpoliticalised' person I learned much from *Destiny*. So much so that I felt it important for all those who are 'unpoliticalised' to become aware of the very real dangers that I began to learn about; to know what the origins and theories of fascism are; to know how it thrives in a period of crisis — such as the present time; to see how it creates a bogey (some convenient and easily identifiable minority) and puts the whole responsibility for the crisis on them; to realise that it exists in Britain in 1978 and that its leaders are manipulating and exploiting the fears and confusions of ordinary people in order to gain power. For me it was a hard awakening!

A two hour play cannot possibly show all the intricacies involved, but it can — and hopefully *Destiny* did — draw

are three reasons that justify the play's presentation.

First, the major parties are only now beginning to wake up to the threat of fascism — though they do not seem intent on meeting it with the only possible effective solution: to stamp it out — the course Adolf Hitler himself recognised as being the only way to prevent the Nazis' rise to power.

EMOTION

Secondly, it is a sad fact that there is no party outside Conservative, Liberal and Labour — other than the NF — that can boast over three hundred candidates for the next General Election.

And thirdly, by virtue of its very nature, fascism has one distinct advantage over socialism: one of its fundamental weapons is the use of emotion. It is all too easy to stir up the fears, hatreds and prejudices of confused and desperate people and then to lead them on and manipulate them once these dark forebodings have begun to surface.

Socialism on the other hand, although possessing an emotive energy of its own, basically appeals to thought. It encourages people to think logically, coolly and analytically about all the inequities of our system — a difficult and complicated process that needs patience and hard work. How much easier it is just to feel!

ALERT

In isolating to a certain extent the fascist ideology, in showing it up against less organised resistance than actually exists, David Edgar is trying to alert



JOSEPH BLATCHLEY in *Destiny*: expelled from 'Nation Forward' in the equivalent of the Night of the Long Knives.

our attention to the realities and dangers that such a party represents. Ten years ago the idea of a fascist MP was unthinkable; laughable even. Today it is a possibility we must all fear and eventually do something about.

REPRESENTATIVE

It has been said that the picture painted by David Edgar is not fully representative of the political situation today; that none of the three major parties, nor even the socialist camp, was shown as a real and effective opposition to 'Nation Forward' — although in fact, the true message of the play was given by a socialist worker: 'We want you on that picket line!' Furthermore, it has been said that it is not entirely fair to show the 'Nation Forward' characters as being the only people in the play to have any energy and drive. I believe there

and shock us. By making the 'Nation Forward' characters the only ones to have any drive, he is on the one hand showing us that this emotion which they use with such ease, gives them and the people they manipulate an ever increasing energy. And on the other hand he is emphasising in a dramatic way the terrible danger that is before us all, thus hoping to create a desire in us — the politically uneducated — to act and to act now.

It may be a slightly false representation, but it is done in order to make us see clearly that the writing is on the wall. After all, it is when we feel safe and secure that we sit back and let things take care of themselves. It is only when we feel uneasy, worried or downright scared that we might hopefully begin to become aware of the day-to-day reality — as opposed to the political reality — and get up from our backsides and begin to fight.

Socialist Challenge

Fascists force by-election SOCIALIST UNITY PREPARES TO FIGHT BACK

by DAVE CARTER

FOR THE FIRST time the people of Middlesbrough will be able to show their disgust with the present policies of their Labour Councillors by supporting the socialist alternative being put forward by Socialist Unity.

At a public meeting last week called by local supporters of Socialist Unity it was decided to stand a candidate in the coming council by-election in the Ayresome ward in Middlesbrough.

This by-election has been caused by the fact that the present representative of the working people of Ayresome, one William Purvis (Labour) has not shown up at a single council meeting for the last six months! As a result the Cleveland National Front has forced a by-election.

This is the second time in three months that the Cleveland NF have successfully demanded a by-election in the Middlesbrough district. It is part of their offensive against the black community on Teeside.

It is to counter this racist

campaign by the fascists of the National Front and encourage a fightback against the miserable record of the Labour group who have fearlessly followed every reactionary twist and turn of Callaghan and Healey that Socialist Unity have decided to stand in this election.

MILITANT

Last Monday's meeting elected Alan Theasby as the Socialist Unity candidate. Alan is a long-time anti-fascist militant in the Teeside area, active in the Cleveland Anti-

Fascist Committee. He was a former member of the Labour Party and an active member of the T&GWU for several years working on the buses. He has also worked in the shipbuilding and steel industries in the area, and knows what it is like to be on the dole. Presently he is doing temporary clerical work.

CONTRAST

The aim of Socialist Unity's campaign will not only be to put forward a programme of socialist measures to deal with the present crisis in the interests of working people, but also to show what this means in practice. The campaign will be giving a platform and building support for local struggles, particularly against racism and fascism. The campaign will be democratically run, with meetings open to all who actively support the candidature.

If elected, Alan Theasby will make himself directly respon-

sible to the organisations of the local workers movement and black community, and will reveal all the workings and deliberations of the council.

This is in marked contrast to the campaigns likely to be run by both the Labour Party and the local Communist candidate Jenny Gilmore.

The Labour Party has already shown its 'devotion' to the interests and democratic rights of the people of Ayresome by covering up for Purvis' inactivity. Their response to the growing activity of the NF has been to give the racist mire of the fascists a stir themselves.

The goal of the Communist Party will simply be 'votes in the box' and will not be aimed at encouraging and actively building the local struggles, nor will they make themselves directly accountable to meetings of the working people of the Ayresome ward.

Socialist Unity has also decided to approach the Labour and Communist Par-



Tom Robinson speaking at the 5,000-strong Gay News Defence demo last Saturday just before he sang his top hit 'Glad to be gay!'

ties to have discussions with a view to avoid splitting the left and anti-fascist vote.

Socialist Challenge urges all its supporters in the Middlesbrough and Teeside area to actively participate in Socialist Unity's campaign leading up to 9 March.

If you are for a fightback against Labour's policies; if you are for alternative socialist

measures to those of the Labour Government; if you want to help defeat Malcolm Evans and his fascist friends in Teeside, then you can help by sending donations, however small, to: Alan Theasby, 41 Conway Drive, Thorntree, Middlesbrough, Cleveland. For more information and offers of help, ring Dave Carter on 0642 87699.

Photo: GM COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

OUR FUND DRIVE

SATURDAY, May 27. All Socialist Challenge supporters should keep this date clear. After one year of Socialist Challenge, we will be holding our first national conference. This will be open to all supporters of the paper and will discuss the success, or failure, of the paper since its launch last June.

Full details of the agenda and arrangements will be announced in the next weeks. On Sunday 28 May the paper will be organising a major political and social event in London. This will include political discussions, on themes such as 10 years after May 68, and social events — music, theatre, food, and stalls. So this weekend at

the end of May is one not to be missed.

At this rally we will be announcing the results of the emergency appeal for £3,000. This money is urgently needed to both keep our creditors at bay, and to allow us to improve the quality of the paper. We desperately need another journalist and more technical equipment. So far our Sponsor a Journalist campaign has

brought monthly bankers orders totalling £32. Our target is £120. We would urge all our readers to dig deep into their pockets and for local Socialist Challenge Groups to begin organising fund raising events.

Our thanks this week to the following supporters for their donations to the emergency appeal:

N. Doggett	5.00
O. Elliot	3.00
R. Gimpel	5.00
R. Purdie	5.00
A. Nahum	10.00
P. Sikorski	10.00
T. Snow	1.00
F. Sheppard	5.00
F.R.C.	10.00
M. Sellers	10.00
K. Kohler	5.00
Anon	2.00
F. London	13.30

S. Field	3.00
Total	£83.70

That makes us £83.70 nearer our £3,000 goal. In two weeks over £180 has come in to bolster the emergency appeal. At the same time our normal fund drive is still going strong.

If we are to paint the Tatlin tower red at least £138 per week must arrive in the post. Thanks to three large donations we kept our head above water. The largest of these was for £75.

A person came into The Other Bookshop with whom we share premises and left a sealed envelope for the paper. That we later discovered contained £75 in cash. To that supporter and all the following our thanks:

G. Youldon	1.00
B. Armstrong	40.00
F. Van Xilef	4.50
D. Herman	20.00
S. Kennedy	1.00
J. Wilson	2.00
Anon	6.00
P. Colbeck	2.00
Anon	75.00
Total	151.50

WH SMITH IN WE GO

AFTER stumbling at the first fence Socialist Challenge has made it into W.H. Smith. This followed Smith's agreement to take socialist Challenge for a two month trial period in 10 of its London branches.

At the last moment we were informed that the paper would have to be libel read. The first issue due to be taken by Smiths failed to get the go ahead from the libel lawyers. However last week's paper cleared the libel hurdle and duly found its way into the following Smith's branches: Basildon, Brent Cross Shopping Centre, Charing Cross Railway Station, Station Road, Edgware, Finchley Road, Golders Green, Kings Cross Railway Station, St. Pan-

cras Railway Station, Finchley Road, South Hampstead, Victoria Railway Station, Waterloo Railway Station.

For the next seven weeks Socialist Challenge will be available from these shops, libel lawyers willing.



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.

Name

Address

I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of

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

Complete and return to:
Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.