

# Socialist Challenge

Thursday, January 18, 1979 15p

## IT'S THEIR CRISIS

● THIS week's issue of your paper defends workers on strike against the attacks of the gutter press and Tory and Labour politicians. We argue that it is capitalism's crisis and capitalists must pay for it. We defend the use of flying pickets on Page 2.

● THE Shah of Iran has fled the country. We celebrate with the Iranian people and explain why a Constituent Assembly is vital. Pages 4 & 5.

● 60 years ago two great revolutionaries, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl

Liebknecht, were shot dead on the order of German social-democrats. We commemorate their anniversary. Page 13.

● WE greet the public sector workers who will be coming to London on 22 January to lobby parliament. We explain why they are right. Pages 8 & 9.

● We talk to the American film director Robert Altman on his new film, *The Wedding*. Page 15.

ALL THIS AND MORE IN YOUR SOCIALIST PAPER

As Tories, CBI, Media, and Labour ministers feed anti-union hysteria

# SOLIDARITY!

● With lorry drivers

-£65 now

● With train drivers

-£3.40 bonus now

● With public sector

workers-£60 now

● With all of them

for a 35 hour week

**MEANWHILE LABOUR LEFT STAY PARALYSED**



Any time, any place — Labour leaders prepare for action

The dogs of war are howling. Howling for the blood, money and democratic rights of trade unionists. The war the dogs are waging is the war against trade unionists and the dogs themselves come in a variety of breeds and sizes.

There is the Labour Government breed. Ministers Bill Rodgers and Shirley Williams are said to want an immediate freeze in all wage rises — a freeze backed by the courts.

Merlyn Rees and Attorney General Sam Silken are looking at ways to prevent effective picketing. Callaghan and Foot shout from the roof tops that the 5 per cent 'guideline' must stay. Benn keeps his head down. There is the Tory breed, led by Thatcher who threatens compulsory secret ballots and the withdrawal of social security for strikers' families. There is the CBI, led by Sir John Methven, which is unleashing a witch-hunt against the Transport workers union.

There is the media breed. They slander strikers, distort what their struggles are about and lie, lie and lie again.

But just what are the dogs howling about? At the 'scandalous' lorry drivers who are just asking for a basic wage of £65 a week. At the 'disgraceful' workers in the

## BENN STAYS SILENT

\* The Labour movement is under attack by the bosses and Government policies. But Tony Benn stays silent. \* Benn believes that his job in the Cabinet is more

important than opposing Labour's reactionary policies

\* Whenever a real fight is needed Benn is nowhere to be seen



public sector, and all they want is £60 a week. At train drivers whose one day strikes are in pursuit of an extra £3.40 a week.

None of them is asking for very much. All would settle for five per cent of Callaghan's

wages, or Thatcher's wages or the media moguls' wages. It is the duty of every trade unionist in the country to come to the aid of their brothers and sisters in struggle. The battle they are waging is the battle of the low paid. Solidarity.

**MORE PAGES THAN THE SUN!**

**SHAH FLEES IRAN —See Pages 4 and 5**

## FLIGHT OF THE SHAH

THE Shah of Iran has finally left. After a year of mass demonstrations, strikes and clashes with the troops he had no other option. His powerful advisers and allies in the State Department had no choice but reluctantly to authorise his transfer to exile.

The joy in Iran is understandable. The fraternisation between workers and soldiers on the streets of Tehran demonstrates the tensions which existed within the army. There can be little doubt that the masses of Iran have by continued struggle brought down a hated despot.

Ayatollah Khomeini has said that he will fight for elected institutions and a popular government which will demand the Shah's extradition to be tried as a criminal. The current government is not likely to last for too long. Bakhtiar himself has stated that he does not see himself in office beyond the spring.

The tasks now confronting socialists are very clear. Agitation should concentrate on the need for a Constituent Assembly (see page 5), institutionalisation of democratic rights, the total disbandment of SAVAK, and public trials of the torturers and executioners of the Pahlavi dictatorship. The slightest display of sectarianism could be fatal.

Iranian revolutionaries should prepare not just to fight for democratic rights, but to take full advantage of them in terms of developing a socialist press, trade unions, and preparing a powerful electoral intervention. In this regard the experience of Peru and FOCEP is extremely important.

The Shah's fall must be utilised to create a permanent base for proletarian politics in Iran — a base for the socialist revolution.

## THEY DON'T LIKE FLYING DO THEY?

THE ONLY strikes the Tory press approves of are strikes that fail. The Tories are exactly the same. Whenever a strike becomes effective they denounce the tactics which could lead to its success.

All this makes their talk of democracy increasingly hollow. One of the democratic rights won by the trade unions was the right to strike. It was only achieved after decades of struggle. The right of workers to withdraw their labour is an elementary political and human right.

In reality the Tories don't like strikes. Full stop. Heath tried to outlaw unofficial strikes — and failed. Margaret Thatcher is now talking about legislation to ban strikes which threaten essential services.

On a smaller scale, the hysteria whipped up by the Tories and Labour Cabinet ministers against the lorry drivers amounts to the same. Merlyn Rees has asked the Attorney General to determine whether 'secondary picketing' is illegal. The idea is to differentiate the Labour government from the Tories, who tend to oppose all effective pickets.

Labour is different. They oppose 'secondary picketing' but are presumably in favour of primary, legal pickets. And who decides what is primary and legal or secondary and illegal? Why, the law, of course!

The use of flying pickets by the lorry drivers has proved to be an excellent tactic. It breaks the isolation of the drivers. It enables them to determine what is primary or secondary and to decide what goods are essential, such as supplies for hospitals. It forces other workers to confront the real issues posed by the strike. The solidarity of the dockers has been exemplary and should ensure the future support of lorry drivers in any struggle waged by dockers. Furthermore, the use of flying pickets develops an inter-union solidarity which does not rely on union officials to establish contact with each other.

Shirley Williams, a member of the Labour Cabinet, was recently bemoaning the fact that in modern societies it is possible for small groups of workers to paralyse the entire economy. This is absolutely true. What it reveals is the growing contradiction between the technological developments which have taken place and the way in which society is still organised — with the increasing intervention of the state to shore up the capitalist ownership of the means of production.

In these circumstances workers must use all the resources at their disposal to maintain their living standards and their democratic rights. The flying picket is one such tactic. In months to come there will no doubt be numerous others.

# 'Manifesto needs political argument'

AN APPEAL for revolutionary unity and joint work, drawn up by the International Socialists Alliance and the International Marxist Group, was published in our 4 January issue.

This has renewed the debate on the need for a

regroupment of revolutionaries. After two contributions last week, we now print a further response to the appeal as well as a second list of signatories who have already shown their support for it (all in a personal capacity).

By Raphael Samuel (Ruskin College, Oxford)

I HAVE supported Socialist Unity in the local elections, and would continue to do so (if offered the choice) in a general election, because I believe it is important to register the need for a socialist alternative to the Labour Party.

I also believe, most fervently, in socialist and communist reunification, and welcome the initiatives, albeit sometimes faltering, which Socialist Challenge has taken in this direction.

On trade union issues, in particular, it seems to me that your paper has shown a realistic appreciation of the fact that the left in Britain is made up of a wide spectrum of groupings, and that it is possible for them to come together on a principled if limited platform, as seems to have happened in the struggle in the CPSA; in the Ford and Garners strikes; and in the support given by all sections of the left to Bob Wright in the AUEW elections.

Another welcome feature has been the discriminating attitude which Socialist Challenge has taken to the complex and contradictory forces at work in world Communism, as in your championing of Rudolf Bahro, your coverage of the debates in the French Communist Party, and, latterly, of the new situation in China.

From this point of view your 'New Year resolution on revolutionary unity' marks a certain retreat, and in place of discriminating analysis substitutes a (to me) very unsatisfactory species of labelling, in which Communists become quite simply 'reformist' and therefore, by definition, enemies.

A manifesto, however brief, needs to contain a political argument; it needs to demonstrate, however schematically, the necessity of the course it proposes (i.e., in the case of your 'New Year resolution', the functions of a Marxist party); and it needs to identify the potential constituencies of support it is appealing to. It



also needs to be very carefully timed.

I am not sure that your 'New Year resolution' succeeds on any of these counts. There is no economic analysis of world capitalism (though your editorial of 4 January interestingly indicates some of the lines this might have taken), nor of the specific threats to jobs, trade unionism and working conditions which it poses in Britain.

Barely a line is given to the Labour government, though its record, over the last four years, is surely one of the elementary bases for any socialist regroupment.

Lip service is paid to the ANL, but nothing is said either about the unsuspected sources of strength that movement has disclosed, nor about the particular difficulties of a struggle which is, in some sort, carried on within the working class.

Serious attention is given to the women's movement, but the manifesto fails, I think, to voice or to connect with the ways in which socialist feminists — a major constituency in any socialist grouping — regard their own work.

The sectarianism or fissionary character of the left is referred to, as a regrettable reality, but there is no attempt to situate it in a wider national or international context.

In sum, the 'resolution' lacks that realistic appreciation of the situation in which revolutionary socialists find

themselves which, in other contexts, Socialist Challenge has shown itself well able to address. It seems arbitrary.

At the moment there are some eighteen revolutionary socialist parties, groupings and leagues in this country, quite apart from the major Marxist organisation in Britain, the Communist Party, the quite large number of Marxists and near-Marxists working (however mistakenly) in the Labour

Party, and the probably still larger number working in no political party at all, but active in the women's movement, cultural groups, the trade unions, law centres, polytechnics, schools and universities, etc.

Together these represent a huge resource of talent and socialist commitment; it could clearly become a much more considerable force if ways could be found of bringing them together, pooling experience, and bringing that dedication to bear upon a wider political cause.

But to do so requires a much more generous appreciation of the potential boundaries of support than a political universe in which the ISA — a group of disillusioned ex-SWPs — appear as a major constellation; and a more imaginative kind of political analysis than a rather diplomatic choice of words which evades both the strengths and the difficulties which a socialist regroupment has to encounter.

## More supporters

Bob Woods, vice-chairperson, Ealing NALGO  
Marianne Korn, ISA  
Rowena Wood, president, Ealing NUT Association  
Julian Gree, NALGO shop steward  
Gillian Simms, NATFHE member, ISA  
Steven Marks, ISA

Tony Collins, NUSS national committee, Hull Revolution group  
Carl Brecker, Ealing, Hammersmith, Hounslow area executive committee of NALGO, chairperson of Hounslow Health Joint Shop Stewards Committee  
Richard Kuper, ISA

### SIGN HERE

If you agree with this joint appeal and wish to aid the process of revolutionary unity, please sign and return this form. We will be publishing the names of signatories in forthcoming issues.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

TRADE UNION OR OTHER ORGANISATION .....

POSITION HELD .....

Send to: Joint Appeal, PO Box 50, 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 the 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 decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

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

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

If you agree with these principles and want to be involved in activities by Socialist Challenge supporters in your area, fill in the form below and send it to us.

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

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

[Delete if not applicable]

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Send to Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.

# A learner's guide to the lorry drivers' strike

1. This sign is to be found outside all large docks and many depots and factories. It means lorries prohibited. It was made official by the Transport and General Workers Union last week.



2. The appearance of this sign has greatly disheartened the Employers and the Government. Issued by strike committees, it informs flying pickets where they are needed and the numbers required.

A 46	
Lincoln	12
Newark	28
(Nottingham 48)	
Leicester	63

3. Unfortunately for the Pay Policy, this sign — freely available from the Employers and Government to all those who challenge the Policy — has had no discernible effect on the lorry drivers.



The TUC has not commented on this sign. In fact, it has scarcely commented on anything since the strike began.

4. This sign is a familiar recourse of the Mass Media when number 3 doesn't work.



It represents the burial of the economy and is accompanied by remarks about 'holding us to

ransom' and 'starving us out'. It is a sure sign of an effective strike.

5. This kind of symbol has become necessary because of the effectiveness of the lorry drivers' pickets.

It indicates goods and services allowed to pass unhindered in order to maintain essential aspects of working people's lives.

The significance of this sign is that it is issued by the strike committees.



6. The other article on this page explains why this sign cannot be seen on certain days of the week. This disappearance, which is expected to be accompanied by that of the sign representing public sector workers, adds to the damage being inflicted on Pay Policy.



7. The arrow indicates one of the turns from the Pay roundabout. The best way of ensuring this turn, and thereby demolishing Pay Policy, is by building support for those taking action to defend their living standards.



## THE CASE FOR THE TRAIN DRIVERS

PETE GRANT is a member of the train drivers' union, ASLEF. Based at Old Oak Common Diesel Depot in London, he is a member of the union's Paddington No 1 branch.

In an interview with Oliver New he explained the background to the ASLEF strike and why the drivers are angry. He began by spelling out the background to the dispute.

'The present claim for a 10 per cent responsibility payment originated from a productivity deal negotiated by the NUR for some train guards.'

'The argument that this should apply to drivers as well has been going on for over a year.'

'An inquiry recommended refusal of the ASLEF claim, but said that drivers of high speed trains (HSTs) should get £3.63 per long distance trip.'

'It was the unofficial rank and file organisation of drivers on the Southern Region which forced the executive of the union into taking action on the claim.'

At present the basic rate for drivers is £62 for a 40-hour week.

As well, said Pete, 'we get a few quid extra for having to do shifts, nightwork or weekends. We have to come in all times of the day and night, there's no fixed time.'

With such wages and conditions the militancy of the drivers is understandable, so how did Pete see the present mood of the ASLEF members?

'It varies a lot from one depot to another, on whether they've got HST mileage jobs and the extra money.'

'Most drivers are angry that they've suffered from government pay policy more than other workers. Some are fighting mad.'

'But at Old Oak Common, for example, where there is a high proportion of work in main line HST, some are even threatening to scab on the dispute.'

'The main thing that will deter any sell-out is the militancy of the Southern Region.'

Although the ASLEF dispute is mainly about money, Pete explained that there was more at stake than just the extra 10 per cent:

'Management is trying to



A commuter sleeps in peace just before the strike.

remove double manning, especially the two drivers on the HST increased workloads. They are also trying to force ASLEF into the NUR, where they think its militancy will be controlled.

'But if ASLEF get the 10 per cent the NUR will go for it too. It's important to emphasise

that because of the traditional hostility between the two unions.

'In the long run we have to fight for proper rank and file control of the rail unions with a shop steward system in place of the present system of participation.'

## News from nowhere

### Ustashi in action

GRANADA TV's *World in Action* was once known as a serious documentary outfit. What remains of this reputation disappears when the true story behind its recent film of Croatian nationalism is known.

The programme was straight PR for the Croatians. Military raids into Yugoslavia, kidnappings, murders, hijackings — all these were forgivable lapses on the part of these lovable emigrés.

What *World in Action* did not mention — indeed was at pains to deny — is that the main Croatian organisations are fronts for the Ustashi, which ran a fascist government in Croatia under the Nazi occupation.

A number of emigré groups exist, but at a congress several years ago they agreed to accept the Ustashi-backed Croatian Liberation Movement as the central co-ordinator of the movement.

The programme claimed to expose Yugoslav secret police attacks on the Croatians. They interviewed a man called Franjo Goretta who said that a Yugoslav diplomat had told him to kill three Croatian emigrés. (In fact he killed the diplomat.) What *World in Action* forgot to mention was that, on the evidence of files taken by the Australian Attorney General's department from Australian intelligence, Goretta was a double agent for the Croatian Revolutionary Brotherhood, another organisation set up by the Ustashi.

Who backs the Ustashi remains a mystery. Is it

Washington, who have a history of using right-wing East European emigrés?

Or Bonn? Last year the Yugoslavs captured four top Red Army Fraction members. In return for their extradition the Yugoslavs demanded that West Germany hand over a number of Croatian exiles, including the head of another Ustasha front. Despite its enthusiasm for nailing the RAF the Bonn government refused. Why?

\*The full story appears in the 9 January issue of People's News Service, from which this information is taken.

### Cold war and charity

RUMOURS have reached NfN that the National Association for Freedom is applying to the Charities Commission for charitable status. This would mean tax exemption for lots of cold warriors. Letters of protest should be sent to: Mr Weston, 14 Ryder Street, St James, SW1.

### Women's Lib in Moscow

'SELECTING a hero is like choosing a bride. First you have to be attracted to her. Then she has to measure up to your ideal.'

'It was with this measurement in mind that we set foot in the office of the Trade Union Committee of the First State Ball-Bearing Plant, one of Moscow's largest industrial enterprises.'

—S. Berkin and V. Fenov, *Meet the Mishakins*, Novosti Press Agency, Moscow, 1977.

### Dreams and nightmares

THE Glasgow Sunday Mail recently ran a feature on nightmares. It asked a dozen well-known people to describe their nightmares. The Italian actor Claudia Cardinale revealed her left-wing sympathies (she is a Communist Party sympathiser), but Empress Farah of Iran's nightmare and Mail comment deserve to be printed in full:

#### EMPRESS FARAH



MY recurring nightmare is about the deaths of my loved ones.

I see the palace filled with men armed with knives, hatchets and guns. I see them rushing through the long corridors of the palace in search of the Shah. I see the blood flowing through the marble halls.

I see myself running through the corridors clutching my child to my bosom. I realise there is no way I can leave the palace. All the exits are guarded looking for me and my son.

They corner me and take their time to savour their triumphs. They part to allow another to pass between them.

#### Terrible

A vision so horrible, because this man approaches with a pike in his hands. At the end of this pike is the head of my husband, dripping with blood.

They seize my son and I have to stand there, held back by their cruel hands, and watch while they slit open his throat.

This terrible dream

#### 'KILLERS SLIT MY SON'S THROAT'

always leaves me in a state close to unconsciousness. When it happens, and sad to say this is quite often, I cannot get up for the whole day. I am completely washed out and all I can do is lie there crying bitter tears.

● The Mail's psychologist says: To have an obsessive nightmare about the death of her husband and children means Empress Farah could be suffering from a deeply buried unconscious wish that she could herself destroy them—as a punishment for her gaining so much pleasure. In a certain way she feels guilty about this. The intensity of the conflict reduces her to incapacity for a whole day.

'...In a man's life women only count if they are beautiful and graceful, and know how to be feminine...This women's lib business, for instance! What do these feminists want? What do you want? Equality, you say, indeed...I do not want to sound rude, but you may be equal in the eyes of the law, but not — I beg your pardon for saying so — in ability...  
'You have never produced a Michelangelo, or a Bach. You have never even produced a great cook. And don't talk of opportunities. You must be joking. Have you lacked the opportunity to give history a great cook? You have produced nothing great, nothing.'

— Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi

## Demo-3 February

# US, GB plump for Bakhtiar

By Richard Carver

THE Bakhtiar government in Iran looks no more stable, even though there is now a regency council and the Shah is finally on his way.

Right-wing opposition in the armed forces rumbles on and mass demonstrations against the regime continue.

General Roberty Huyser, the deputy US commander in Europe, has been in Iran for a week to try to dissuade the army from precipitate action. State Department announcements have played on the same themes: Bakhtiar must be given a chance; a coup would only exacerbate imperialism's problems.

Even the Shah has added his voice to the chorus of caution. He realises that as long as Bakhtiar is in power there is a chance of returning.

But neither the government nor the US State Department is calling the shots. The continuous mobilisation of the

masses rules out the immediate success of a repressive solution.

That is the only reason why imperialism does not favour a coup. It also explains why there is a sudden enthusiasm for integrating Ayatollah Khomeini, the only recognised mass leader, into the government.

This does not, of course, guarantee that the Iranian generals will display the same tactical flexibility as their paymasters. And if there were a coup the Americans would undoubtedly support it as soon as possible.

All is not going smoothly for imperialism. Under pressure from the masses Bakhtiar has cut off oil supplies to Israel and South Africa. Israel is outwardly calm and has negotiated replacement supplies from Mexico, but privately Washington is furious.

Events in Iran threaten the whole network of alliances in the Middle East. Already Turkey has been affected by the

upsurge of militancy.

For all their traditional rivalry with the Shah, the Saudi Arabian rulers are terrified at his departure. 'If Iran goes, God help us' was Crown Prince Fahd's verdict last week.

The US presence in Saudi Arabia has been beefed up by the arrival of a squadron of F-15s, complete with American personnel to fly and maintain the planes.

The clutch of small oil states on the south side of the Gulf is nestling up to Saudi Arabia for protection, no doubt reassured by the presence of a task force from the US Seventh Fleet at the mouth of the Gulf.

There has been a large influx of CIA agents into Iran to give a much-needed boost to US political intelligence, but secret tracking equipment, used to monitor Soviet weapons, has had to be removed for security reasons.

The military chiefs in the Pentagon are taking no such precautions. 77 Navy F-14s

remain in Iran as a military back-up to US diplomacy despite the intelligence risk surrounding this high-technology plane.

Britain, which is the Iranian regime's main arms supplier and which once played a relatively independent diplomatic role, has fallen right in line behind Washington policy.

Despite Foreign Secretary Owen's crude apologies on the Shah's behalf, imperialism will be infinitely more resourceful in the coming weeks and months.

Its chief weapon will be the indigenous pro-capitalist leaders. Bakhtiar will probably be blown away by events but the remains the more substantial National Front. And the religious leaders will not be reliable buttress against imperialism.

The question of a constituent assembly capable of determining the new form of government therefore becomes uppermost.



# Women's misery under Shah

By Richard Carver

DESPITE appearances, British Foreign Secretary David Owen is not completely stupid. In his celebrated apology for the Shah on *Weekend World* last year one of his main criticisms of the religious opposition was directed at the harsh, male-dominated regime it would introduce.

A future article will deal with the problems of women's liberation and the opposition. But implicit in Owen's argument is the assumption that the Shah's regime has already 'liberated' Iranian women.

The Shah's own attitude to women is shown by the box accompanying this article. But even this piece of misogyny is misleading since it implies that Iranian women have equality 'in the eyes of the law'.

But the 'gains' of Iranian women under the Shah are only two: the right to vote, which they share with men and which is utterly useless in a dictatorship; and legal moves against the wearing of the veil, a superficially progressive move which actually infringes women's right to wear the veil if they choose.

That is why in the present upsurge many 'Westernised' women, whose usual garb would probably be blue jeans, have taken to wearing the chador or veil. This will continue until there is what one woman described as 'an atmosphere of freedom where human and democratic values count.'

The legal rights guaranteed to Iranian women are pitiful. A husband can legally stop a woman taking a job which he

thinks damages the 'dignity and prestige of the family'.

She needs the permission of her husband or father to travel abroad and of her father to marry.

A daughter only receives half the inheritance of a son. In court two women's testimony is held to be equal to that of one man.

The system of polygamy under which a man can have up to four wives is still legal. The formality which requires the woman's written permission is easily avoided in a country where half of town women and 90 per cent of rural women are illiterate.

If, on the other hand, a woman were to have a sexual relationship with a man other than her husband, the latter might kill her 'in defence of his honour'.

Under the penal code he would get off almost scot free. In contrast a pregnant unmarried woman is regarded as a criminal.

But oppression extends far beyond the legal sphere. Poverty and the need for children mean that nearly three quarters of women in the countryside have their first child before the age of 19 and continue to bear them as long as they are able.

The attitude to female employment is typically ambivalent. In agriculture women constitute the majority of seasonal labourers (at half a man's wage). In the towns only 7.5 per cent are employed outside the home.

Equal pay laws, like those guaranteeing maternity leave, are systematically ignored. Equality for Iranian women is more of the type advocated in



recent labour legislation, which abolishes the category of work 'harmful for women and young workers'.

Many of the most oppressive attitudes and institutions in Iran are Islamic in origin. Yet women have seized on the opposition movement, including some of its more Moslem aspects, as an opportunity to demonstrate their own self-activity.

Hence there have been separate women's contingents and even separate women's protests, as well as such contradictory gestures as wearing the veil.

The entry of women into political life has inevitably

provoked a backlash, whose most horrible aspect is the treatment of women in the Shah's jails.

As usual rape and other sexual tortures predominate in the treatment of women prisoners and women are often used as bargaining counters to get their husbands to give information.

The mass movement has forced the release of many of the estimated 4,000 women political prisoners. Others remain in prison because the regime does not dare face the bad international publicity which would be created if some of the women's treatment were exposed.

EVERY January Time magazine devotes an entire issue to its 'Man of the Year'. This year the gentleman so honoured was Deng Xiaoping. Readers looking for a more sober appraisal of Deng could do worse than read the latest issue of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.

They will also find an alternative nomination for 'Man of the Year': Hugo Blanco, the Peruvian Trotsky-

ist, chosen by the *Lim magazine Amauta*. Also in this issue: Iran, Turkey, Indochina, Horn of Africa.

Single copies 30p plus p&h. Subscriptions are £9 for one year, £5 for six months or £2.50 for an introductory offer of 12 issues. Write now to *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, PO Box 50, London N1 2XJ. Cheques payable to *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.

# Why Iran needs a



# constituent assembly

By David Frankel

THE proposal for a constituent assembly is directed first of all against the continuation of the Shah's rule. It gives a specific alternative to the dictatorship — the election by free and universal suffrage of a representative body that could debate the alternatives before the country and decide on them.

Just the call for such a reasonable and democratic alternative puts tremendous pressure on the Shah's regime and helps to undercut the manoeuvres behind the backs of the masses aimed at perpetuating the monarchy.

The demand is also aimed at defending the interests of the working class, the poor peasants, the small shopkeepers, and the rest of Iran's toiling people who are exploited by world imperialism and the capitalist class.

## CAPITALISTS

Election of a constituent assembly would counter attempts by the capitalists to impose a government of their own on the Iranian people once the Shah falls.

Leaders of the National Front have announced that they are ready to form such a government if the Shah goes. According to their scenario, the Iranian people would be presented with an accomplished fact, which they would be called upon to ratify in some type of plebiscite or referendum.

Even Ayatollah Khomeini, the nationalist Muslim religious leader who had previously been the most intransigent in his opposition to the Shah, has announced that he has 'selections in mind' for the leaders of a future government.

Historically, the demand for a

constituent assembly was first raised during the anti-feudal revolutions that gave rise to modern capitalism.

During the French Revolution of 1789-94, for example, the constituent assembly passed the famous Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. It abolished the old feudal rights and privileges and gave the peasants title to the land.

## DEBATE

Today the demand for a constituent assembly is a demand for the most complete freedom of expression. It calls for the broadest possible debate. It insists that the masses should decide for themselves the basis of a new order.

It is no accident that the Shah, his imperialist backers and the bourgeois opposition figures in Iran are all opposed to the demand for a constituent assembly. They are well aware that the whole point of a capitalist government is to keep the fundamental decisions out of the hands of the masses.

The masses need the fullest democratic rights so that they can organise and fight for their class interests most effectively against their exploiters.

## TASKS

Revolutionists raise side by side with the demand for a constituent assembly the social tasks that such a body must deal with. These include dismantling the monarchy and all its institutions, uprooting imperialist domination, emancipation of the peasantry, establishment of the right of oppressed nationalities to self-determination, and the liberation of women.

No capitalist government can

accomplish these tasks, because they require the systematic mobilisation of the toilers and the abolition of the class privilege and stratification that bourgeois society rests on.

Only a workers and farmers government, based on the organised power of the oppressed and exploited, is capable of fulfilling the needs of the Iranian people through the socialist reorganisation of society.

Of course, it is possible that if a constituent assembly were formed, it would have a reformist majority who would seek to ally with the capitalists and oppose the establishment of a workers and farmers government. But that is not a problem arising from the form of a democratic constituent assembly.

## SOVIETS

This becomes clear if we recall that in February 1917, workers councils (soviets) existed in Russia and held power there. But the reformist majority in these soviets turned the power over to a capitalist provisional government. The revolutionists were able to lead the soviets to power in November 1917 only after they had successfully won the masses politically.

The fight for a constituent assembly and the debate within such a body is one of the most important ways in which revolutionary socialists can win the majority of the Iranian people to the idea that a workers and farmers government is necessary.

In his writings on China, Leon Trotsky singled out the importance of the constituent assembly especially in regard to the peasantry. Trotsky explained:

'The essence of the question lies in the fact that the peasant mass, aroused to historical life, is not at all inclined to place confidence in advance in a leadership coming from the cities, even if it is proletarian;... this mass seeks a simple political formula that would express directly its own political strength, that is, the predominance of numbers.'

## INADEQUATE

It is by seeing in practice the workings of a constituent assembly that the masses can best be convinced that under capitalism even the most complete formal democracy is inadequate.

The workers and poor peasants need a government that represents their class interests. They need a truly democratic government based on mass workers, peasants, and soldiers councils — a government that excludes the capitalists.

The complementary character of the demand for a constituent assembly and the development of soviets was thoroughly explained by Trotsky in his article 'The Slogan of a National Assembly in China', written in 1930.

'Even if there were soviets in China — which is not the case — this in itself would not be a reason to abandon the slogan of a national assembly,' Trotsky noted.

'The majority in the soviets might be — and in the beginning would certainly be — in the hands of conciliatory and centrist parties and organisations. We would be interested in exposing them in the open forum of the national assembly. In this way, the majority would be won over to our side more quickly and more certainly.'

Recalling the experience of the Russian revolution of 1917, Trotsky says that after the fall of the Czar, 'the Cadets (the main capitalist party) used every legal trick to drag out the convening of the Constituent Assembly in the hope that the revolutionary wave would subside. The Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries took their cue from the Cadets.'

'If the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries had had a little more revolutionary drive, they could have convened the Constituent Assembly in a few weeks.'

## BOLSHEVIKS

'Would we Bolsheviks have participated in the elections and the assembly itself? Undoubtedly, for it was we who demanded all this time the speediest convening of the Constituent Assembly...'

'If the Constituent Assembly had been convened let us say in April 1917, then all the social questions would have confronted it. The propertied classes would have been compelled to show their cards; the treacherous role of the conciliators would have become apparent.'

'The Bolshevik faction in the Constituent Assembly would have won the greatest popularity and this would have helped to elect a Bolshevik majority in the soviets.'

'Under these circumstances the Constituent Assembly would have lasted not one day but possibly several months. This would have enriched the political experience of the working masses and, rather than retard the proletarian revolution, would have accelerated it.'

As things actually turned out, it was the Bolsheviks who convened the constituent assembly after the workers and peasants soviets had

already taken power.

Since the assembly had been elected during an earlier period of the revolution, its majority no longer reflected the attitudes or ideas of the masses. It opposed the revolution.

When the constituent assembly refused to support the democratic will of the masses as organised in the soviets, the revolutionary government dispersed it.

## CONFIDENCE

The Bolsheviks were able to do this precisely because they had won the confidence of the masses during their earlier fight for the convocation of the assembly.

Of course, what is important in the experience of the Bolsheviks is not that it may be repeated in the same form in Iran.

For instance, it is possible in Iran that a constituent assembly could be convoked before any soviets exist and that soviets could grow up later in the fight over what policies the assembly should implement.

What is important is that the Bolsheviks understood that the demand for the freest and most thoroughgoing democracy was part and parcel of the socialist revolution and that such demands would help propel the revolution forward.



Masses in Iran want to determine their own government.



# WHAT'S LEFT

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**SOCIALIST** Challenge designer urgently needs accommodation. Anything anywhere in London considered — long or short term. Please phone Bill; 359 8288 in office hours, 267 9419 evenings/weekends.

**PUBLIC** meeting to launch an Islington branch of Anti-Apartheid — Wed 24 Jan. 8pm. Islington Central Library, Holloway Rd. Speakers, discussion etc. All welcome.

**WOMEN** in the NUT disco/social. Sat 20 Jan, 8pm, Stevenson Room, Euston Station Colonnade (near cafeteria).

**MEMORIAL** meeting for Malcolm Caldwell. Tues 23 Jan, 7.30pm at Holborn Assembly Hall, Johns Mews, London WC1. (off Northampton St at NW corner of Gray's Inn and Theobalds Rd).

**PICKET GARNERS:** Main pickets every day, noon to 3pm and 5.30 to 11 pm at 399 Oxford St., London W1 (opp. Selfridges); 243 Oxford St. (Oxford Circus); 40-41 Haymarket; 56 Whitcombe St. (Leicester Sq.). Mass picket every Saturday at noon, 399 Oxford St. Donations urgently needed as strike pay is only £6. All donations to Garners Strike Fund, c/o TGWU, Rm 84, 12-13 Henrietta St., London WC2. 01-240 1056.

**CHILE** Day Conference organised by NUS and Chile Solidarity Campaign at Polytechnic of Central London, 35 Marylebone Rd, London NW1. Speakers include: Joan Jara, Hermann Schember and Alan Christie. Workshops: Education; Economic Planning under Popular Unity; Women; Popular Art and Culture. Discussion on current situation and solidarity campaign: 10am to 5pm. Evening social. Contact Cathy Moss, NUS International Dept, 01-278 3291 or register on day.

**MANCHESTER:** The Crisis of British Imperialism. A series of public forums organised by the Revolutionary Communist Group. Forum No. 1: Capitalism in Crisis. Speaker: David Yaffe. Wed 24 Jan, 7.30pm, Longsight Town Hall, Stockport Rd, Longsight.

**REMEMBER Bloody Sunday:** POW status now. Revolutionary Communist Group rally for Provisional Sinn Fein Bloody Sunday march. Speakers from Provisional Sinn Fein, Prisoners Aid Committee and Revolutionary Communist Group. 7.30pm at Friends House, Euston Rd, London NW1 on Thurs 25 Jan. Support Bloody Sunday march! POW status now! Hands Off Ireland!

**EDINBURGH** Revolutionary Communist Group public meeting. 'Remember Bloody Sunday — POW status for Irish prisoners'. Thurs 25 Jan at 7.30pm. Edinburgh Trades Council, Picardy Place.

**NATIONAL Abortion Campaign** film benefit. Shirin's Wedding — a Turkish woman leaves her village to avoid an arranged marriage. She travels to West Germany seeking her lover — a migrant labourer. Shows her double oppression as a woman and migrant worker. Sun 4 Feb, 1pm at Scala Cinema, Tottenham St, London W1. Adm: £1.60 (£1.10 unwaged).

**NEW From RCG publications**  
**Hands Off Ireland! No 6.** Now out. Main article is a full length interview with Gerry Adams, Vice-President of Provisional Sinn Fein. Gerry Adams explains the struggle of the Provisional Republican Movement and its opposition to British rule in Ireland. Other articles include: interview with Mary MacLaughlin, wife of Irish political prisoner Ray MacLaughlin; full report of the PAC 26 November march and the campaign for POW status; the Irish Revolution and the Loyalist worker; British terror and the use of the law in the North. Once again extended to 24 pages for 25p plus 10p p&p.

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# HOMENEWS

## Some questions answered

# Vote 'yes' for Scottish Assembly

### The referendums on the setting up of Scottish and Welsh Assemblies will take place on 1 March.

Before his death last October, NEIL WILLIAMSON compiled this question-and-answer explanation of why socialists should vote 'yes' for an Assembly.

**Why will there be a referendum?**

Quite simply because it is the only way that the government can guarantee that its legislation will be passed in Westminster. The failure of this legislation would literally decimate the Labour Party electorally in Scotland, projecting among Labour supporters a vote for the SNP as the only method of securing an Assembly.

Opponents of the Assembly (over 70 Labour MPs) demanded a referendum as the condition of supporting even an amended Devolution Bill. They hoped (and still hope) to use the referendum to sabotage or delay the legislation, but are also increasingly conscious of being held electorally responsible as individuals for the defeat of the proposed Assembly, by their votes at Westminster.

**Where does the support for the Assembly come from?**

The legislation arises from massive pressure from working people in Scotland (lower middle class as well as proletarian) for some form of self-government.

The demand for an Assembly, both inside and outside the labour movement, is the immediate focus for the disillusionment and distrust of decades of failure by both major parties.

This demand for radical change is articulated in terms of bourgeois democracy, in its extension and its innovation, not, however, in terms of reactionary self-active nationalism.

The ruling class in Britain has reluctantly acquiesced in this demand, although it is acutely aware of the dangers of an uncontrollable executive in Edinburgh.

**What about the forces opposing devolution?**

First there is a confused and heterogeneous bloc in Parliament, with an essentially petty-bourgeois centre of gravity.

At this stage it is weak and divided. Despite its considerable size and scope of representation (Powell to Kinnoch), it lacks any central line or perspective apart from a commitment to Westminster sovereignty at all costs. Thatcher's party is incapable



SCOTTISH steelworkers demand jobs

of organising this current. It is both split and politically paralysed, vacillating between its petty-bourgeois base and its bourgeois backers.

Secondly, there is the split in the ruling class in Scotland, with those tied both politically and economically to the central state opposed to devolution. Despite the impressive range of support for the 'Scotland is British' campaign, these bourgeois elements have little or no support among their traditional political base, the Scottish petty bourgeoisie.

**Will the referendum be democratic?**

No bourgeois-democratic system is really 'democratic'. Restrictions, manoeuvres and advantages are built into the very system. This referendum is no exception.

But despite this, it is only under very unusual situations that socialists would turn their backs on the mass of the population when, in the absence of any other form of self-expression, they participate in bourgeois democracy.

Boycotting a referendum could be justified if, for instance: (a) the questions were rigged to give only the answers the government wanted, e.g. De Gaulle's referendums in the 1960s; (b) open agitation

around the referendum was banned, e.g. 1976 referendum in Spain; (c) its results were going to be ignored by the government anyway, e.g. Russian elections, 1905.

None of this is true for the proposed referendum.

**Maybe we shouldn't boycott the referendum, but should we support the government White Paper?**

Abstaining or voting against the White Paper (or the final Bill) is very different from boycotting a rigged referendum. However, the Bill should be supported, for despite its provisions, its vetoes and prohibitions, which have to be constantly denounced, it does contain the essential feature of democratic rights for the Scottish people — that of a directly elected Assembly.

For that reason, and that reason alone, we support — no matter how critically — the government's Bill. Faced with a choice between voting against, abstaining, or supporting the setting up of an Assembly, we say vote yes, vote for an Assembly.

**But won't the questions in the referendum, purely for or against the government's Bill, interfere with Scotland's right to self-determination?**

By far the best method of exercising Scotland's right to self-determination would be by immediate elections to an Assembly, with no restrictions on its powers.

Socialists are not in a position to determine the questions in the referendum, but we are still forced to explain how the Scottish people will arrive at such an Assembly.

One (though not the only) essential way to fight for such an Assembly is by the largest possible majority for the setting up of the government's version. Large abstentions of passivity can only weaken the fight.

**Will the referendum strengthen the power of Westminster in relation to the Scottish masses?**

No, in fact it makes the setting up of the Assembly an act of the masses themselves, even though it is through the framework of bourgeois democracy. This action, no matter how atomised or electoral, will make it very difficult to interfere with the Assembly once it's set up.

Of course the government will claim a mandate for its vetoes and limitation, but the powers of the Assembly in the

future will not be settled by legal niceties.

The crucial lesson will be learned through a victory against Westminster delay and opposition, through the vehicle of a referendum, a vehicle which can be used by the Assembly itself in the future.

**Are we in favour of including a question on independence?**

Yes, for the more detailed and open the choices given, the more democratic the result. Also we think it is necessary that the questions should include the immediate setting up of an Assembly with no restriction on its powers.

**Then why are you against independence?**

At this stage the working class will gain nothing from the dismemberment of the British state into various independent sub-units. Unlike Ireland there are no concrete forms of national oppression which separation would smash.

The greatest strength of the Scottish working people still lies in a united labour movement with workers in England and Wales, which a socialist federal system of government would maintain.

**How should socialists orient to the referendum campaign?**

We should argue for the widest possible bodies of the labour movement to organise an independent campaign in the factories, offices and housing schemes. This campaign should argue for a clear vote in favour of a directly elected Assembly, which means support, no matter how critical, of the government's Bill.

We should argue for the greatest possible choice in the questions, and a vote against independence. Most importantly, we should seize the opportunity open during the campaign to explain that only an executive formed by the workers parties, accountable to the organisations of the labour movement, is capable of realising any of the hopes that Scottish people have in the Assembly.

Such an executive, if it was to carry out any policies in the interests of the working class, would find it necessary to assume powers to confront the power of private capital and commercial secrecy and the anarchy of production for private profit.

Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)



De Valera: didn't trust Britain

by Geoff Bell

IN June 1940 British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain made an offer to Irish Premier Eamon de Valera.

Britain, said Chamberlain, would make an immediate declaration in favour of Irish unity if de Valera's government would allow British troops and ships to have access to Irish ports in return.

The offer was made with the full knowledge and approval of the British Cabinet. It was made because Britain was facing military defeat by Hitler's Germany.

The Cabinet felt that the occupation by Britain of Irish ports would help to check any German invasion of Britain's west coast. British intelligence, de Valera was told, was also suggesting that Germany was about to invade Ireland.

The British proposals were accompanied by a promise that a working party would be set up immediately to work out a new constitution for the 'united Ireland'.

De Valera turned down the offer. At the time a German victory in the war seemed imminent, and perhaps the Irish Premier felt that Britain was in no position to make promises.

But apparently the most influential factor in de Valera's rejection was his assumption that Britain couldn't be trusted.

It was an understandable assumption. When negotiating the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, the British Cabinet had offered the Irish side a Boundary Commission to settle the border between the North and South.

## ASSURANCE

Britain had promised that the Commission would assure that the boundary between the two states would 'conform as closely as possible to the wishes of the population'.

It was this assurance which finally persuaded the Irish side to sign the treaty, for only two counties at the most of the six northern counties had a

Unionist majority.

But once the treaty was signed the Boundary Commission was delayed, and when it finally did report four years later it confirmed the existing six county frontier.

The British promises had been nothing more than a manoeuvre; the wishes of the population of four and a half of the six counties were ignored.

The Irish negotiators who signed the 1921 treaty should have known better than to take promises from the British government seriously.

After all, in 1912 the House of Commons had passed the Home Rule Bill which gave a limited independence to all of Ireland and promised one parliament for the 32 counties.

The Bill was delayed by its rejection in the House of Lords, but was nevertheless due to come into force in 1914. But in 1914 Britain used the excuse of the war with Germany to delay it again.

Even without the outbreak of

war, the signs were that an amendment to the Bill would have allowed the six north-eastern counties of Ireland to opt out of the arrangement.

The period from 1912-14 is not just an example that a British promise to withdraw from Ireland is not worth the paper it is written on: it also indicated what happens in Ireland itself when such a time scale is designated.

Once the Bill promising Home Rule had been passed in 1912, the Ulster Loyalists began immediate preparations to defeat the measure by any means they could.

Arms were openly imported and paraded by the Loyalists, they promised civil war, and the leader of the revolt, Edward Carson, even threatened to appeal to Germany for help if Home Rule went through.

It was such threats which by 1914 were persuading a not unwilling British government to partition Ireland.

The obvious conclusion of

## The dangers of 'phased withdrawal'

RECENT calls by members of the Liberal Party for Britain to 'name a date' for the withdrawal of troops from Ireland reflect a growing wave of opinion both in Ireland and England.

In Ireland the three main parties in the South hold this position, as does the Social Democratic and Labour Party in the North.

But the experience of history suggests that such calls — as opposed to those for immediate withdrawal — reflect a dangerous naivety.

# Britain Out -Now!



Chamberlain: offered Irish unity declaration

the period 1912-14 is that the longer the promise to withdraw by Britain was delayed, the surer it became that the promise would never be kept.

It is not difficult to imagine a similar situation arising if a Westminster government were today to make a 'declaration of intent' to withdraw from the North in, say, two years time.

The Loyalists would immediately begin to re-arm. The present disunity in their camp would in all probability be quickly healed and, as happened in 1912, elements in the British Army would threaten mutiny.

The opponents of withdrawal would have two years in which to ensure that such a withdrawal never happened. And, if past experience is anything to go by, they would probably succeed.

By contrast an immediate withdrawal by Britain from Ireland would leave the Loyalists in disarray.

Even if some 'military campaign' was launched by the Loyalists its chances of success

would be minimal, for clearly it would be much more difficult to force Britain to return than it is to persuade Britain to stay.

From a socialist point of view the demand for an immediate British withdrawal is the only political attitude which can be adopted.

Quite simply, if Britain has no right to be in Ireland 50 years from now, it has no right to be there two years, one year, or two weeks from now.

But besides this principle, the practical arguments in favour of immediate withdrawal are obvious.

## OUT NOW!

Not only would an immediate withdrawal mean that the promise to quit would be fulfilled. It would also mean that in all probability the promise would be fulfilled with less violent consequences than would be entailed in any long protracted disengagement.

Three words say it all: troops out now!

# Mason's troops smash tanker drivers' strike

By Tomas Marlowe

ROY Mason and the British Army last week took on a new role for themselves in the North of Ireland — strike-breakers.

On Thursday, after declaring a state of emergency, Mason ordered the troops to start a massive scabbing operation in an attempt to destroy the petrol drivers' strike. The previous day the 900 drivers had voted to reject the employers' offer.

Mason invoked the Emergency Powers Act, first used during the 1926 General Strike, and in explaining his action the Northern Ireland Secretary used words similar to the strike-breaking government of 1926.

'The action of the tanker drivers is an exercise in cutting our own throats', Mason said. 'But it is my duty to ensure that

as far as possible the essential services of this province be maintained.'

Although the government argued 'that only people and services absolutely essential to the community will receive fuel', it soon became clear that Mason's orders were not just to maintain 'essential services' but represented a comprehensive strike-breaking operation.

## SUPPLIED

Thus, those who were to be supplied with petrol included not just the fire service and hospitals, but all government employees — no matter what their job was — as well as all bus and airport workers, 'those on consular duties' and even 'broadcasters and journalists'.

These wide-ranging meas-

ures proved enough to force the tanker drivers back to work and at the weekend they voted by a two to one majority to call off the strike.

But if the defeat of the drivers is one of the few successes Roy Mason has had, it has further discredited him among all but the most 'loyalist' minded people.

Not surprisingly the Official Unionists 'welcomed' the declaration of emergency but reaction from other quarters was angry.

Seamus Mallon of the reformist Social Democratic and Labour Party summed up the feeling of many when he said, 'a Labour government which allowed a strike by right-wing Loyalists in 1974 to topple the power-sharing administration is now using the Army to break a genuine

industrial stoppage'.

Mallon added, 'Mr Mason has extended his colonial attitudes into the field of industrial relations'.

The emergency declaration was also attacked by Terry Carlin of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, and even by Bill Rodgers of the employers' side of the dispute, the Petrol Retailers Association. Both agreed that Mason 'acted precipitately'.

## ALLIES

But the attempt to break the strike did find some allies. The TGWU refused to make the dispute official and it was the intervention of union official John Freeman at the drivers' weekend meeting which was crucial in persuading them to return to work.



British troops engaged in scabbing operation

# For you, 60p — before tax

WHAT does the government's offer of 5 per cent really mean to public sector manual workers? The answer is a pittance. To some local authority workers it will mean a measly 60p before tax each week.

The offer to all sections of public employees falls within the 5 per cent guidelines. In fact a large number of workers will not even get 5 per cent on their basic pay.

Take the example of health service ancillary workers. Of their 5 per cent a substantial proportion is devoted to the restoration of differentials — 20 per cent of the overall offer in fact.

This particularly affects the low paid workers in the bottom grades, the domestics and porters, who will get increases of £2.10 to £2.78 — scarcely 4 per cent.

Women make up a huge proportion of the lower grade workers, so it discriminates against them too. And women have even more ground to make up if they are ever to approach the average private sector wage.

The offer does nothing to solve the huge problem of poverty and low pay among the low grades of public sector

manual workers.

Groups 1 to 4, which include 84 per cent of all health ancillary workers, will earn between £44.50 and £46.86 after the government's proposed increase — if they work a 40 hour week.

But many of these workers, particularly female domestics, do not work a 40 hour week on average, so their increase will be even less and their pay will hardly come up to subsistence levels.

Women workers in Group 1 — 60.9 per cent of all women employed as health service ancillaries — work an average of 27.5 hours. Their average increase will be £1.44 before tax.

The public sector unions have demanded a £60 minimum wage, two-thirds of the average industrial wage of £90. Such a minimum would begin to lift public sector manual workers out of the poverty trap that they have been caught in for so long.

The government's offer is derisory. It simply keeps the poor poverty stricken and the reasonably well off won't be as well off as they were before.

# ALL OUT THE FULL

IT WAS the annual conference of the Public Employee's union last May which formulated the present claim for a minimum public sector wage of £60 and a 35-hour week.

CAN, the Campaign for Action in NUPE, was surprised to find that 22 delegates attended its caucus meeting at the conference. The year before the campaign had just four supporters at the annual conference.

Yet now — although CAN is still a very small oppositional group within the union — campaign activists are playing a leading role in organising action on the pay claim.

RAY VARNES, secretary of NUPE's Inner London Education Authority district, told Geoffrey Sheridan about CAN and the policies it is helping to establish.

An odd thing happened at the meeting of NUPE's London divisional council earlier this month.

The pay claim and the impending action to fight for it were at the top of the agenda. The members of the national executive attending the meeting were questioned about the leadership's plans.

With nearly a sixth of NUPE's 650,000 members represented by the London divisional council, the delegates naturally expected some answers. After all, the national leadership had postponed action on the claim last November in order that it could be properly prepared.

But the executive members could offer few clues as to what was planned.

The union's entire membership is to be levied at 1p per hour worked, yet the executive members had no idea how this was to be organised. Nor did they know how much strike pay would be or, come to that, which sections the union leaders were preparing to call out.

To cap it all, says Ray Varnes, who is a delegate to the divisional council, the executive has no plans to meet before the second week of February, which will be a lot of use to the public sector workers brought out on strike immediately after the day of action next Monday.

In other words, Ray explains, the leadership of the union and the strike would be firmly in the hands of general secretary Alan Fisher and the NUPE full-time officers, whose conception of winning the claim centres on pleading with the Labour Government to be sensible and recognise the plight of the low paid.

That's the aim of the day of action, which as far as the leaders of the public sector unions are concerned will consist simply of a large march and lobby of Parliament.

Large it could well prove to be. The trains and coaches already booked to bring public sector workers to London on 22 January suggest the turnout may not fall too far short of the massive



RAY VARNES was among the speakers at the 300-strong rally held by NUPE's London divisional council last Thursday who called for an all-out strike as the way to break the pay policy in the public sector.

anti-cuts march held two years ago.

And the plans laid by the London divisional council, in line with the policy of the delegates on the council who support the Campaign for Action in NUPE, threaten to take the action well beyond the expectations and

### AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS

Average gross weekly earnings: 1975-1978

	All industries and services	Local authority manual workers		NHS ancillary staff
	£	[England and Wales] £	[Scotland] £	£
<b>Male</b>				
1975	60.80	47.50	47.50	50.80
1976	71.80	55.10	54.70	57.60
1977	78.60	58.80	59.10	61.40
1978	89.10	66.70	66.30	67.70
<b>Female</b>				
1975	37.40	32.80**		38.60
1976	46.20	39.10**		44.70
1977	51.00	41.50		48.10
1978	56.40	46.30		51.90

\*A full run of figures for female local authority manual workers in Scotland is not published.

\*\*These figures combine local authority manual workers and the same basis as others in the table.

## 'RUBBISH!' a guide to what to say on the picket line

Question: So you're out on strike as well. What a mess the country's in. Well, what are you lot striking about? Answer: The usual — pay. You see, since 1974 the public sector workers have suffered cuts in real wages of up to 30 per cent.

We're fighting to stop all that but compared to some — like company directors and judges — we're not asking for very much: just £60 a week and 35 hours.

But yes, the country is in a mess — especially for working people. We should know, we work in jobs which have borne the brunt of the government's cut-backs.

Last year alone there were £3.5 billion worth of cuts in public expenditure. So it's not surprising that of the one and a half million on the dole today there are 24,000 teachers, 8,000 nurses and 250,000 building workers.

So you see we don't think much of the Social Contract or the government's pleas for 'restraint'.

That's all very well, but the country can't afford to pay what you're asking. That's not true. Do you know that because of the cash limit system central and local government have spent £3.25 billion less than even the amount planned under the cuts. That's why it's a lie when the government says that

settlements in the public sector would mean a deficit of £2 billion on public spending. They can afford to pay us, even without restoring the cuts.

You keep quoting figures at me. All I know is that normal life will be impossible because you're on strike.

Not because of us. It's the Labour government which is responsible. It has ignored every decision of the rank and file of the trade union movement — even of the TUC — protesting against bad pay and cuts in public spending.

They have even gone against Labour Party policy which, as decided at last year's conference, came out in favour of free collective bargaining. They insist that ordinary working people have to pay for a crisis which is not our fault.

We've been reasonable and compromising for too long as it is, and what have we got for it? Cuts in wages, cuts in public services. They have forced us to hit back, to defend our living standards.

But what will happen if you stay out on strike? What about the sick, old people, disabled? They're the ones that will suffer, even die.

Nobody has ever died as a result of strikes by hospital and social service workers. But every year thousands of old age pensioners die because of

starvation and hypothermia; every year thousands remain homeless and thousands rot in overcrowded psychiatric hospitals.

It is not us who have caused this — it's Labour cuts, just as it's Labour's cuts which have closed 130 hospitals, and undoubtedly because of that people have died.

Yes alright, but your striking isn't going to help things, is it?

Actually it is. You see once public sector workers start being paid a decent wage, then we can begin to rebuild our social services, our hospitals, our schools.

A decent wage would bring back the thousands of workers we have lost to private industry and private health services.

Of course, by itself a wage rise wouldn't do the trick, but combined with a determination to restore the billions of pounds worth of cuts, then we would be able to do our jobs a lot better than we have been able to. And that job is providing essential services and helping the elderly, handicapped and sick.

We want decent health, social and education services. It's the Labour government which is attacking them.

Excuse me, but the simple fact is that if

**CAMPAIGN FOR ACTION IN NUPE**  
Public Meeting  
'Fighting for the full claim'  
Speakers: Bill Geddes and Ray Varnes,  
London divisional council delegates  
At North London Poly, Holloway Road, London N7  
Wednesday, 24 January, 7.30pm.

your strike closes down hospitals people will die.

We're quite willing to discuss the provision of emergency cover. We want to work out an emergency plan with other trade unionists as to what is and is not essential.

Or we could do what some of the striking social workers are doing: give those concerned the name and address of local councillors so that they can go and visit those responsible for administering the cuts and ask them to provide the services lost through our strike.

But whatever we do it is up to us to decide. We don't need a hospital administrator to tell us that supplies of insulin for diabetics are vital or that the new carpet for the main committee room is not.

We will decide what is the proper level of emergency cover, just as we will

decide how we will conduct our struggle.

Well, you seem to have it all worked out, but even if you win, inflation might make a settlement not worth the paper it's written on.

That's a possibility, which is why a lot of us think that once our claim is won it will be necessary to launch a campaign to have our wages rise automatically as prices go up.

We think the same could be applied to public spending — as prices rise, so should public spending, so should wages.

Do you really think you will win?

If we have the support of every trade unionist, if we have the active backing of the TUC, if the Labour Party adheres to its conference decision and backs us, then we'll walk it — we'll walk it.



# FOR CLAIM

**£60 for  
35 hours**

designs of the national leaders.

The divisional council has called for:  
\*Flying pickets to bring out as many public sector workers as possible next Monday, and if possible to involve private sector workers in the day of action. Every NUPE shop steward in the capital has been told to bring their members out on Monday.

\*Support for all NUPE members who wish to go on strike after the day of action.

\*An intensification of the struggle against the cuts in order to show the opposition of public sector workers to cash limits, which the Government has said would be used to ensure that a pay settlement over 5 per cent will automatically lead to redundancies in local government, education, and the health service.

\*To call the rally held last Thursday. Although it is still a very small force within NUPE, CAN has been instrumental in helping to forge this kind of militant response, and for developing a socialist alternative to Alan Fisher's left social democratic policies which offer the low paid no answers to Callaghan and Healey.

Without any tradition of organised opposition within the union, and with Communist Party members backing the official leadership, CAN's beginnings were understandably modest.

The campaign first raised its voice at the 1976 annual conference, had just four supporters at the 1977 conference, and was taken by surprise when 22 delegates attended its caucus meeting at last year's conference.

It was this conference, where the present claim was determined, which proved to be a turning point for CAN, over the issue of how the pay struggle was to be conducted. The campaign fought for a proposal to hold a recall conference in the event of the claim being turned down, which was supported by a third of the delegates.

CAN now has a foothold in eight cities, and holds caucus meetings on several of the main union bodies in London, with members of the Socialist Workers Party, the International Marxist Group, and independents working together.

The campaign has taken up: total opposition to the government's economic policies; opposition to all cuts and cash limits; opposition to racism and fascism; and full democracy within NUPE; including the election and accountability of full-time officials.

It has formulated alternative policies to the Government's aim of sustaining profit levels by cutting public services and living standards; policies which include the demand for a crash programme of building hospitals, schools, and homes — financed through widescale nationalisation, without compensating the present owners.

As Ray Varnes points out: 'How is it that a poor country like Cuba has an expanding health programme and can provide far more adequate education and nursery facilities than exist here? Not by capitalist so-called planning...'

With so little preparation made by

the official leadership for the present action, it is clear that if it were left to the full-time officials chaos would rapidly ensue, with very little rank and file involvement in the organisation of the struggle.

An important part of CAN's activity is to encourage the self-organisation of the union members, particularly among women, who make up over 70 per cent of NUPE membership.

## JUST

'We support the right of women to organise independently', Ray explains, 'by electing their own shop stewards and setting up their own joint shop stewards committees so that they can discuss their own affairs and gain the confidence to raise these in the union.'

How such policies are beginning to shape up in practice, and a good example of how the action proposed by the London divisional council is being prepared, is shown in the decisions of NUPE's district committee representing the 12,000 school keepers, cleaners, and canteen staff working in the Inner London Education Authority.

This committee, of which Ray is secretary, has voted to:

\*Set up a permanently staffed strike HQ to co-ordinate action throughout the ILEA.

\*Hold weekly meetings open to all members in the district.

\*Put out regular strike bulletins, not least to counter the propaganda of the bourgeoisie.

\*To set up joint shop steward committees with the other half dozen

unions involved in the ILEA, in order to keep them informed of action being taken and seek to gain their support.

## NOT SERIOUS

'There are two main factors holding back public sector workers,' Ray considers. 'The lack of any apparent alternative to the Government's austerity measures, and acute awareness of their own lack of strength compared to workers such as those at Ford.'

To confront the latter problem, CAN argues for pay action committees to be set up in the localities to bring together all those taking action against the pay policy.

It was Ray's explanation of this idea at a public meeting held by Hackney Trades Council during the Ford strike which eventually led to the trades council agreeing to initiate such a committee in its area, although this has yet to materialise.

'There is no point in pleading with the Government over pay as the public sector union leaders are essentially doing,' says Ray. 'They will only concede on the 5 per cent where they are absolutely forced to.'

A national CAN tour will include meetings in Birmingham, Nottingham, Leicester, Southampton, Cardiff, Swansea, Newcastle, and Glasgow.

To be put in touch with CAN activities, write to: Ray Varnes, 47 Leyland House, Poplar High Street, London E14.

# Exposed how they decide on public spending

By Stephen Marks

WHILE public sector workers demonstrate against the five per cent policy and cash limits, top civil servants will be deciding in secret what the level of their wages will be in two years time.

And any attempt to tell parliament or the public what they are discussing would be an offence against the Official Secrets Act.

Ten public sector unions make this clear in a pamphlet published this week, highlighting the secret and undemocratic way that the state draws up its public spending plans.

In particular they look in detail at how the civil service draws up the annual public expenditure white paper — a subject that sounds dry and boring, but which shows how bureaucracy and secrecy are used to make key decisions on cuts in jobs and services.

This week should see the publication of the white paper on public spending for 1979-80, with forecasts for the following four years. This, we are told, was decided on by the cabinet last autumn, and will be discussed and voted on by parliament.

In fact the process started at the end of 1977, when top Treasury officials sent round guidelines to government departments on what they should be planning to spend in the 12 months from April this year.

Then, from January to early March last year, the government departments drew up their plans. From April to May, the departments negotiated their plans with the Treasury.

All this time, the negotiations and figures were secret. There was no discussion in public, or even in the cabinet.

And no chance for trade unions or public opinion to have any say on the level of spending on housing, roads, hospitals, or schools.

Even when the civil servants gave their report in for cabinet discussion last summer, and ministers discussed it in secret over the autumn, there was no room for pressure outside the civil service.

All the estimates were drawn up on the Treasury's own figures for how fast public spending should grow and at what rate public sector workers' wages should rise — all deeply political decisions, made in effect by top civil servants.

The system works to make ministers compete with each other for a slice of the existing cake, rather than challenge the assumptions behind the documents the permanent secretaries give them.

The unions' answer is to abolish all secrecy in the process, and have all the key decisions voted on in parliament; they also call for more union decision-making in all stages of the process.

Having more union officials sitting on joint committees with civil servants is not going to do much to offset the pressures for cuts from the city and the International Monetary Fund.

But the greater the publicity at every stage, the better the chances of mobilising mass opposition to any further cuts in services and jobs.

The unions make the valid point that existing spending programmes and targets are drawn up only in terms of cost, not of the impact on the services and the quality of our lives. Instead they call for the impact on the public to be made clear whenever cuts are proposed.

'If increased infant mortality is to be the price for keeping within the forecast public sector borrowing requirement, it is preferable that the implication be openly recognised', they say.

True. But what action is proposed by the leaders of the ten unions involved [ASTMS, COHSE, CPSA, NALGO, NAPO, NATFHE, NUPE, NUS, NUT, and SCPS]? None, it seems, apart from forwarding the report to the economic committee of the TUC.

The union leaders would deal a mighty blow against state secrecy and the cuts if they announced that their unions, with all their strength in central and local government, would use all their power to defend any of their members who 'blew the whistle' on the secret plans by making them public.



THE offer includes an increase in the 'dirty linen' bonus — for those working with soiled laundry — from 0.02 per cent to 0.04 per cent. A 100 per cent rise. Big deal!

## Depo Provera—wonder contraceptive?

A NEW women's campaign was launched at a very successful meeting held in London last Sunday.

The meeting, attended by 40 women and two men, discussed the implications of various long term contraceptive drugs that are in use in this country and in the Third World.

One drug in particular caused concern — Depo Provera. Why the use and effects of this drug are causing such concern is explained here.

# Population control or women's control?

By Valerie Coultas

UPJOHN International Inc, a drug company, is marketing a long term contraceptive drug that has dire implications for women's health.

The drug, Depo Provera, is injected and is effective for up to six months at a time.

Among its recorded side effects are:

\*Disruption of the menstrual cycle resulting in heavy bleeding and spotting;

\*Nausea, dizziness, head-

aches, chills, change in skin pigmentation, weight loss, acne, lessening of libido and diminished orgasm. Some doctors have dismissed all these as 'subjective symptoms';

\*DP has been shown to lead to cervical cancer and to cause breast tumours in beagles;

\*One British doctor has expressed fears that DP use may cause deformed babies. The return of fertility to women taking this drug is known to be 'unpredictable', taking as long

as two years.

Despite all this the drug has been approved for use in 76 countries — almost all of them in the Third World.

It is also being used in this country and the USA, but more selectively.

Here and in the US the women it is given to are described as those who are 'irresponsible' and 'unmotivated', for whom other contraceptive methods are inadequate. In the US, at a



Charity Clinic in Florida where DP is prescribed, the women clients were described as 'irresponsible, uneducated and often poverty-stricken'.

In Britain, in Rochdale, DP is automatically given to Asian women when they are given rubella vaccinations — to stop them becoming pregnant. The language barrier makes informed consent a mockery.

In East London, a senior lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology thought that only 20 per cent of Asian women were properly informed in their own language about the possible side effects of the drug.

Women in Glasgow 'who lived in deprived conditions and were bad contraceptive risks' have also been used in trials of the drug.

Depo Provera has not received the general approval of the Committee for Safety of Medicines in this country, but it is still widely used by many GPs. The women for whom it is considered suitable are usually black or working class.

Keith Joseph's ideas that the 'lower classes' are breeding too much and ought to be stopped don't seem so way out in the light of this drug's use.

There's only one word that clearly describes how it is used — racism.

The details of its application in the Third World make this even clearer.

The joy of the drug as far as the imperialist population control programmes are concerned is that once a woman is injected she will not become pregnant for up to six months.

The pill was a failure from their point of view because it depended on women caring enough about birth control to take it each day.

Clearly women in the Third World do want birth control. The thousands of women in

Latin America who have dangerous illegal abortions are testimony to this. The fact that women in the Indian subcontinent are prepared to be injected with DP at all shows this too.

But economic necessity may demand a high birth rate from the individual point of view. Subsistence farming needs as many hands as possible to work the land.

The lack of welfare facilities may mean that children are the only safeguard for old age. And the high infant mortality in neo-colonial countries means a high birth rate is needed to ensure that the economic considerations are met.

This situation has led some people to argue, particularly those from national liberation movements in the Third World, that any form of birth control is either detrimental or just irrelevant to women in the Third World.

But like European women they do want the right and ability to control their fertility — they want the right to decide for themselves when to have children. They do not want imperialism or multinational drug companies to decide for them.

Upjohn International Inc is clearly not selling the drug to help women to decide on childbirth. It is in it for the money — and to help the programme to reduce 'undesirable' reproduction and solve the problems of the population explosion.

Upjohn markets DP on the basis that whole villages can be 'processed' in a day. And that the second injection is even quicker than the first — taking only 60 to 90 seconds!

The 'processing' of entire villages has nothing to do with helping women to decide for themselves about their fertility.

And there can be little

discussion about whether the drug has met a woman's needs satisfactorily in one and a half minutes!

The use of Depo Provera illustrates the crucial relevance of imperialism and racism to women's lives. We must ensure that feminists in Britain confront them head on.

The meeting last Sunday, attended by women from Brixton Black Women's group, Third World women's groups, Women Against Racism and Fascism, East London Women's Health Group, Spare Rib and many individual women, agreed on various campaigning demands to take up this fight.

After considerable discussion it was agreed to campaign for the withdrawal of the drug because of its serious side effects.

The other demands of the campaign include calling for further research into the effects of such long term chemical contraceptives; that women should be given full information before being given contraceptive drugs; and to stop the discriminatory use of DP on black women, poor white women and Third World women.

A co-ordinating committee was set up. The campaign can be contacted at; Campaign Against Depo Provera, c/o ICAR, 374 Gray's Inn Rd, London N1. The next general meeting will be on Monday 18 February at St Matthews Church, Brixton.

\*The details of the effects and use of Depo Provera are largely taken from a paper by Janet Hadley produced for a workshop on 'Imperialism, Racism and Immigration' in October last year. The workshops were organised by a group of London women active around various questions of racism and imperialism.

## Women in the NUT

By Carole Regan, Organising Committee for Women in the NUT

THE National Union of Teachers is the largest teaching union. 74 per cent of the membership is female — not surprisingly as the huge majority of teachers are women.

One would therefore expect the NUT to be in the forefront of campaigns for equal opportunities, better nurseries and maternity benefits, against sexism in the content of education and for a woman's right to choose on abortion.

But this is far from the case.

The NUT is particularly fanatical in its opposition to making support for abortion part of union policy. Some local teachers associations [the equivalent of branches in other unions] have attempted to affiliate to the National Abortion Campaign or send delegations on pro-abortion demonstrations.

But the union bureaucracy has quickly ruled such resolutions 'against the aims and objects of the union'.

Women in the NUT were not

even allowed to send full delegates to the Trade Union Conference on Abortion in November last year, when even the Miners' Union, with a tiny minority of women members, sent a delegate.

At National Conference each year we are told that support for a woman's right to choose would split the union — because the Catholic membership wouldn't like it.

Over the last few years the education cuts have meant fewer jobs. Part-time posts, which are mainly occupied by women with family commitments, have been especially hit.

### PRESSURE

True to form, the NUT has done little to fight this, despite pressure for action from many areas.

The union makes great play of the fact that teachers were among the first to get equal pay.

But although women may receive equal pay for equal jobs, not so many women get the higher paid jobs.

But at last the demands of women in the NUT are

beginning to have some effect. The union's Equal Opportunities Committee [dominated by men!] has asked members to send in examples of sexism in initial reading schemes, though they have not said what they intend to do with this information.

And it probably doesn't mean that they plan to take up the whole sexist basis of education throughout the curriculum.

If the NUT is going to be forced to do anything then the pressure has got to be kept up. Exactly how to do this, as well as planning campaigns on abortion, nursery education, nursery and maternity provisions, and fighting sexism will be discussed at the Women in the NUT Conference on Saturday 20 January in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC2.

The conference is an important opportunity for women in the NUT to begin to organise together independently and to bring forward plans and ideas for campaigns to carry on the fight against women's oppression in teaching.

# Women unite against rape

ON SATURDAY 20 January women are marching through the West End of London to demand the right to be on the streets at night without escort.

The march is being partly organised by the National Union of Students, which overwhelmingly supported the women's movement campaign against violence at its last conference.

Pamela Holmes asked ALISON DOWNIE, a member of the Socialist Students Alliance and NUS executive vice-president with responsibility for the women's campaign, what this means for NUS.

## Why is the NUS supporting the national 'Reclaim the Night' march on 20 January?

Attacks against women are widespread on the campuses and women's groups began to organise last term as at Sussex where there was an occupation. This brought women together and the strength of the campaign was demonstrated in the overwhelming support at NUS conference for the march and launching a campaign through the colleges.

This was important as there

was a real tendency to lump together racist and other attacks on students together with attacks on women students as part of a general problem of violence.

The last conference, and this demonstration, establish that violence against women is a particular issue that we need to take up in the student movement.

You've been attending the planning meetings, and NUS has circulated posters and leaflets throughout the colleges explaining why the march is for

women only. Remembering that women's self-organisation has been a bone of contention within the union in the past, what kind of impact do you think the support for this women only march will have?

It's already had a big impact. For the first time, people are beginning to understand why it's necessary for women to organise independently. Nobody could argue with the need for the march to be for women only when its purpose is precisely to assert women's right to walk the streets without the protection of men.

This has begun to chip away at the resistance of many students to the idea of women's self-organisation and opens a path for the NUS women's campaign to succeed in our demands for a restructuring of NUS to enable women to play a full part in all the activities of the union.

Do you see this kind of involvement of the NUS with the women's movement con-

tinuing?

I think it will. We've supported the National Abortion Campaign and other campaigns before and now we're beginning to help in organising.

We may be students but as women we face all the problems women face in society today. So our campaign, while taking up the discrimination against women in education, is about fighting our oppression as women in all spheres of life.

In this sense, we see ourselves contributing to the women's movement.

We are able to put this into practice now because the women's campaign is stronger than it's ever been.

The left in NUS has seen it as one of the most important campaigns and, through fighting to build a strong campaign, are now in the leadership.

If we're serious about building a strong political women's movement in this country then we must continue to develop links between NUS and the women's movement.

# Social workers call day of action

From Sara Burn Liverpool social workers strike committee.

SOCIAL workers on strike for pay re-grading and the right to negotiate salary scales locally are calling for the rejection of a national offer that will be put to a special local government group meeting on 26 January.

The union leaders argue in a report which will be put to the vote that the offer of a revised national salary scale is the best they can achieve.

Never mind that the willingness of these leaders to participate in a joint working

party, the object of which is to formulate a revised national scale, has frustrated attempts by the strikers to force their employers to negotiate locally.

The NALGO leadership has failed to campaign among the union membership as a whole to gain support for the 2,600 social workers on strike, leaving us to go it alone. And it now seems to be trying to isolate us from the rest of the union.

This month's issue of NALGO's journal, for example, includes several articles accusing social workers of using up the strike fund on a

'lost cause'.

It so happens that when strikers approached the national strike operations committee with the proposal that a levy be imposed to sustain the strike fund we were told that finance is no problem.

Social workers from the boroughs on strike are now contacting all delegates to the special group meeting explaining how local negotiations will benefit other sections of NALGO, and how the credibility of NALGO as a trade union will be determined by the outcome of this dispute.

A day of action in the form

of one day strikes, a rally and lobby of the group meeting has been called by the All-London Social Workers Action Group and the Residential Workers Charter Group. This call is supported by the Standing Conference of Strike Committees.

At the lobby we will be calling for: a rejection of the leadership's report; an escalation of industrial action; representation of the strikers on NALGO's strike operations committee; and for a levy of the entire membership to sustain and spread the strike.

## Journalists vote on new offer

IF THE provincial journalists vote this week to reject the 14.5 per cent pay offer from their employers, it will be in spite of the lack of a strategy from the leadership of the NUJ to bring the six-week strike to a successful conclusion.

The union's provincial newspapers industrial council has called for the offer to be rejected.

Worth £9.40 to senior journalists, and considerably less to the even lower-paid juniors, the offer falls far short of the £20 across-the-board that the union is demanding.

While the NUJ negotiators at first refused to put the offer to the strikers, because the employers failed to give an unconditional 'no victimisation' pledge to reinstate the 200 journalists and 100 printers sacked during the strike, the union has now backed down on this position.

The Newspaper Society, representing the employers, has promised to use its 'best endeavours' to secure re-

instatement, which is intended to mean that it cannot make any promises about the treatment of journalists and printers on the viciously anti-union Nottingham Evening Post.

At the same time, the NUJ has agreed to prevent any local action against strike breakers.

If the journalists are to fight on, the strike will require firm leadership. With increasing numbers of workers now taking action against the 5 per cent, opportunities certainly exist to make the links that can end the relative isolation of the journalists' pickets.

In particular, with over a dozen chapels now producing alternative newspapers, these bulletins could be used to unite struggles in the localities.

Mass march and rally against the Times closures. Called jointly by the unions at the Times. Thursday 25 January, 11.30am, assemble in Arundel Street, WC1 (just off Temple Place).

## Who foots the bill for public sector claim?

By Jon Duveen (Hackney Central CLP)

HOW can socialists in the Labour Party relate to the upsurge in workers' struggles and group together militants to intervene in the general election?

This was the question which faced the steering committee of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory at its meeting on 7 January. It came up with three proposals:

\*Local SCLV groups should hold public meetings to discuss what manifesto Labour should stand on.

\*The SCLV would sponsor a conference on democracy in the labour movement, with the idea of drawing together all those fighting to democratise the mass organisations (Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, rank and file trade union bodies, Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement, etc.).

\*The SCLV would hold a meeting at the London region Labour Party conference in March on how to fight rent and rate increases.

While these steps are to be welcomed, they don't give a

real lead to militants seeking to involve their Constituency Labour Parties in the struggles now going on.

For instance, we should clearly fight for local councils to pay the public sector workers' claim in full. Against the argument that such action would bankrupt them we must firmly pin the responsibility for such a situation on the Labour government.

The alternative often put forward is rent and rate increases — that is, making workers pay for the crisis. Rate increases of up to 70 per cent are being sanctioned; Ted Knight, 'left' leader of Lambeth council, has accepted a 30 per cent rate rise.

It is urgent to clarify the complex issues involved in fighting these rises if we are to mount an effective campaign in support of the public sector workers inside the Labour Party.

\*Copies of the latest issue of the SCLV paper, Socialist Organiser, can be obtained from left bookshops or from SCLV, c/o Box 127, Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N1.

# THE LEFT AND ELECTIONS

## socialist unity

National conference, Saturday 3 February  
Speakers include: Hugo Blanco, leader of mass peasant struggles in Peru and deputy for FOCEP united left slate; Harry McShane, active in the CPGB's election work in the 1920s; Pat Arrowsmith, campaigner against nuclear weapons, for gay rights, for troops out of Ireland, and Independent Socialist candidate for Cardiff South-East.  
Conference begins 11am, Holborn Assembly Rooms, London WC1. Registration fee £1. Credentials from Bob Pennington, SU, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

GARNERS STEAK HOUSES STRIKE COMMITTEE.

# Garners' ANNIVERSARY PICKETS

## SATURDAY 27 JAN.

ASSEMBLY POINTS:  
LUNCHTIME: 11.30 onwards 399 OXFORD ST.  
EVENING: 6.00 " 56 WHITCOMB ST.

# Debate on Peking's Democratic Wall

AT THE beginning of December the Chinese leadership tried to put a brake on further discussion about 'democracy'. It called for an end to mass rallies and strongly suggested that criticisms of Mao Tse-tung should be toned down.

But a lively discussion has continued as new posters appear each day on Peking's 'Democracy Wall' — and increasingly in other cities as well.

By Martin Meteyard

The present wall-poster campaign in China has two aspects.

Many posters do little more than petition for the correction of individual wrongs — though this in itself could not have been imagined even a year ago.

But others continue to take up the general debate about democracy and human rights begun last November. One of the most outspoken appeared shortly after the leadership's attempt to clamp down:

**'Do the people have democracy today? No. Do they really want to be their own masters? Of course they do. That was the reason the Communists defeated the Nationalists...**

**'We must realise that if it were not for Mao's own despotism, China would not be in the state it is today... Obviously the Chinese people should not continue along the road they have been travelling.**

**'Why did they go along this road. Wasn't it because that bragging despot forced them to go along it?'**

Another poster put up in mid-December warned of the appearance of a privileged class of bureaucrats as in Russia and argued that people should be able to dismiss even Deng Xiaoping or premier Hua Guofeng. It said:

**'Deng thinks stability and unity are in the public interest and in the interests of modernisation, but I think differently. I work hard, even exceeding my quotas, but after my shift I just like to ponder what I have been working for.'**

## MAUSOLEUM

A comment written on the poster added: **'Deng should come here and read these wall posters instead of apologising for Chairman Mao's mistakes.'**

The removal of Mao's body from its mausoleum has even been called for recently: **'The people demand that we root out superstition and idol worship.'**

This poster was signed by a new group calling itself the Human Rights Alliance, and set out a wide-ranging list of 19 demands including free elections with the right of

non-Communist political parties to stand, open sessions of the National People's Congress, the release of all prisoners of conscience, complete autonomy for national minorities, and the right of foreign travel.

Most interestingly, the poster challenged the leadership's line on the Soviet Union by calling for friendship with the Russian people: **'These citizens demand that the government of our country start talks with the Russian government or accept suggestions which the Soviet Union has already made.'**

A sign of how the debate is broadening in scope was the recent appearance of a poster attacking the present harsh

restrictions on sexual freedom.

Quoting Marx in criticising the family, it argued that people should be free to choose lovers whenever they pleased until one day, when China achieved perfect communism, the traditional forms of monogamy and family ties could be allowed to die out completely.

Sometimes pictures are displayed along with written posters. On 19 December, for instance, a man who put up a poster claiming that police had beaten his son to death in 1977 attached nine photographs showing his son's body covered in welts and bruises.

The most daring display was put on by two young men who

hung 16 photographs on a string between two trees by 'Democracy Wall' early on New Year's Day.

One, captioned 'Inspection', showed a line of official vehicles parked in a vegetable field. The photographers explained to **Daily Telegraph** correspondent Nigel Wade that this was to be understood as criticism of local officials helping themselves to peasants' produce under the guise of official visits.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

The photographers said that ordinary people laughed at official propaganda pictures because they knew they were 'fictional'. So they had formed their own 'photographic society'.

'We take pictures when no one is looking. If we functioned openly we would certainly face difficulties from the authorities.'

But the increasing boldness and variety of such wall-poster displays shows that the authorities feel forced to tolerate them because of the

depth of mass anger they express.

This is already boiling over into mass demonstrations and strikes. One group of young people who marched with a banner through Peking's main square at the end of last month said that they had come to press the demands of fifty thousand workers on state farms in Yunnan province who had been on strike since 9 December.

And another report from Shanghai says that on 29 December police fired on workers demonstrating against high workrates and low pay.

Clearly more and more people in China are taking the advice of one recent wall-poster:

**'Is this the road to socialism as envisaged by Marx? Of course not...'**

**'I call on you, comrades, to unite under the banner of democracy. Do not believe in the unity and stability of the despot.'**

**'Democracy is our only hope. Let us trust in our own strength. We created human history. Let all self-appointed leaders and teachers get lost.'**



PEASANTS demonstrating to demand democracy and human rights in Peking.



MOZAMBICAN soldiers — soon to meet full-scale war with Rhodesian troops?

## Mozambique faces 'total war'

From AIM/IPS, Maputo

MILITARY attacks on Mozambique from Rhodesia have intensified in recent weeks.

According to the Standing Political Committee of Frelimo, the country's ruling party, 'the massive employment of jet planes and helicopters, the systematic use of napalm and extremely powerful bombs reveal a programmed escalation in the aggression against our people, an escalation planned to lead to total war.'

The statement continues: 'We cannot say that these are attacks of the Rhodesian racists alone. Mirage planes are appearing in attacks against us. American helicopters of recent manufacture have just been delivered to Rhodesia.'

The attacks have taken place in four of the country's ten provinces and have even reached the areas around the provincial capitals.

A Defence Ministry communiqué documents 18 differ-

ent cases of foreign incursions into Mozambique in the last couple of months.

The most costly came on 28 December when 14 people were killed in an attack on a civilian bus at Inchope.

Ten days earlier four people had died when a grenade exploded in the Oceana restaurant in Beira.

On 17 December a group of eight English-speaking mercenaries wrecked the railway bridge between Mutarara and Moatize, near the Malawi border. The locomotive and four wagons plunged into the river M'Combezi, killing three members of the crew and injuring two.

If these outrages had occurred almost anywhere else and if those responsible had not been white Rhodesians, they would have been front page news in Britain. Yet not one national newspaper has mentioned them, even though the Mozambican government thinks that the attacks could signal the beginning of

full-scale war.

**\*Media distortion of events in Africa is hardly likely to surprise our readers. But a new pamphlet from the Zimbabwe African People's Union, 'Mass media and the struggle for liberation in Zimbabwe', is a useful weapon for explaining how these distortions take place.**

It reveals how the Rhodesian regime's atrocity stories are regurgitated whole and uncovers the racist attitudes

behind reporting of statements from the liberation movements.

Lies — such as 'the Rhodesian security forces are three quarters black' — are repeated, not because the truth is hard to ascertain but because it is politically unacceptable.

You can get the pamphlet, price 20p, from either the Anti-Apartheid Movement, 89 Charlotte Street, London W1, or from ZAPU, 39 Goodge Street, London W1.

## Peruvian general strike halted

By Our Foreign Staff

LEADERS of Peru's main trade union confederation called a halt to last week's three day general strike before it was half way through.

The Communist Party-led General Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP) gave lack of popular support and government repression as the reasons for calling the action off.

Repression has certainly hit the strike movement hard, with the suspension of constitutional guarantees, the banning of a number of left-wing publications and the arrest of about 100 leaders of the unions and the left.

The government ruled the strike illegal because it had political rather than economic aims. The CGTP's decision to restrict its strike to economic demands, while considerably limiting the workers' room for manoeuvre, was of course not binding on the government.

The decision to limit the strike to three days because conditions were not judged right for a general strike must also have had a demoralising effect. Indeed many workers

will have been left with the feeling that, however real the repression was, the CGTP leadership was glad of the early opportunity to stop the strike.

The strike was originally called under pressure from the rank and file. A mass rally of 12,000 in Lima on 7 December brought together workers from all major sectors to demand that the CGTP name the day for a general strike.

The immediate cause of the strike is the continued austerity measures introduced by the government as the price demanded by the International Monetary Fund for 'restructuring' the country's foreign debt.

But it is doubtful that the present leadership of the CGTP was best qualified to lead such a struggle. A couple of months ago the union president and Communist Party general secretary both attended the Annual Conference of Executives.

They told 300 businesspeople and 100 generals and government officials how they supported efforts to 'restructure' the debt and rejected any idea of stopping or freezing payments to foreign creditors.

# Murdered by social democracy



## Rosa and Karl



The illustrations are contemporary woodcuts of Luxemburg and Liebknecht.

By Raimund Loew

ON THE evening of 15 January 1919, a detachment of 'free corps' from the cavalry-riflemen division commanded by Captain Pabst arrested two people in the Berlin district of Wilmersdorf who gave false names.

Their cover did not last very long: the soldiers knew only too well whom they had found. They were Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the legendary leaders of the Spartacus League and founders of the German Communist Party (KPD) — only a fortnight earlier. Wilhelm Pieck, another leading member of the KPD, was arrested with them.

Seldom had so much hatred been concentrated on two people as on Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in 1918-19. For the nobility, the 'Junkers', war-profiteers and captains of industry, they were the embodiment of the 'Bolshevist danger' that threatened 'their' Germany.

Friedrich Ebert, Gustav Noske, and Philipp Scheidemann, the leaders of the SPD social-democrats, hated Luxemburg and Liebknecht because they had opposed their war policy of 1914-18 and because from November 1918 onwards they were the spokespersons for the growing revolt of workers and soldiers.

### REPRESSION

The detainees were immediately taken to the Hotel Eden in the centre of the city where Pabst and his troops had set up their headquarters. The arrest of the revolutionary leaders was part of a large wave of repression, launched by the social-democratic government under Ebert, which was worse than anything witnessed even in the time of the Emperor.

At the time of the November Revolution there were three parties within the labour movement in Germany. The 'majority socialists' (SPD) had supported the war policy of the imperial government and had been represented in the government of Prinz Max von Baden since the beginning of October 1918.

Since 1917 the inner-party opposition had been constituted as an independent party — calling itself the Independent Socialist Party of Germany (USPD). The USPD opposed the policy of truce

('Burgfriedenspolitik') advocated by the 'majority socialists', but could come to no decision on a consequent revolutionary alternative to the SPD.

Its leadership consisted mainly of representatives from the pre-war 'centre' such as Karl Kautsky, Hugo Haase, Rudolf Hilferding, and Georg Ledebour.

But the USPD could count on the support of the main sections of the class-conscious German proletariat — this was why the third major current, the revolutionary Spartacus League, had joined it as a tendency.

Against the will of most of its leaders, the activities of the German working class had already shaken up the Empire in 1917 and 1918. In November 1918 the Kaiser had been forced to abdicate.

### DUAL POWER

In all important cities, councils were set up; and from the first week of November there was a situation of dual power. But most workers' and soldiers' councils were under the influence of the 'majority socialists' or moderate USPD members — at the first all-German congress of councils nearly two-thirds of the delegates supported the policies of the government.

Many councils, however, particularly in industrial areas, started to go far beyond the framework established by the majority. The old administration was dissolved and workers' militias established.

The opposition between the radicalised workers and Ebert's government proved most explosive in Berlin. The fighting in January 1919 was to be the first serious clash between the revolutionary proletarian masses and the state apparatus of the new republic.

The starting point of the movement was the government's removal of the chief of police in Berlin, Eichhorn, at the beginning of January. Eichhorn, a member of the USPD, refused to obey, declaring: 'I have received my mandate from the hands of the revolution and I will only give it back to the revolution.'

He was supported by the organisations of the left and the working masses of Berlin. The USPD, KPD, and the revolutionary shop stewards, who had a strong base in the factories, announced a general strike and called for a mass demonstration

in the capital to take place on 5 January.

The demands of the KPD were: reinstatement of Eichhorn, disarming of all the counter-revolutionary troops, arming of the proletariat. Rosa Luxemburg explicitly rejected the idea that the movement should aim to overthrow Ebert's government — she thought the majority of the working class would not be ready to participate in such a step.

The demonstrations on 5 January exceeded all expectations: some hundred thousand workers and soldiers, many of them armed, filled the centre of the city. Strategically important buildings, particularly that of *Vorwärts*, the daily paper of the 'majority socialists', were occupied.

Under pressure from this movement a revolutionary committee was formed by the three currents that had called for this demonstration. Earlier decisions were reversed, and in a declaration signed by Karl Liebknecht (KPD), Georg Ledebour (USPD), and Paul Scholze (revolutionary shop stewards), Ebert's government was declared to be overthrown and council power established.

### REVENGE

Against the insistent advice of Karl Radek, who was in Germany as representative of the Bolsheviks, and of Leo Jogiches, the organiser of the Spartacus League, the central leadership of the KPD could not make up its mind to criticise publicly the steps taken by Liebknecht (which had been against party policy) and to stop the movement as the Bolsheviks had done in July 1917.

On 6 January the revolutionary committee commenced negotiations with the government.

The counter-revolution used this breathing space to prepare its revenge. The 'majority socialists' called for resistance against the 'armed bandits of the Spartacus League'. The revolutionary leaders were denounced as 'madmen, criminals and murderers'. Gustav Noske began to concentrate his free corps around Berlin.

The free corps had been formed in December 1918 from reactionary officers of the imperial army together with elite units from the old 'Reichswehr' at a time when the disintegration of most military units threatened to leave the government

without any effective armed forces. Its explicit political aim was to 'fight against Bolshevism'.

On 8 January the government directed the population to fight violently against 'oppression and anarchy', and the free corps started to march. The KPD, the revolutionary shop stewards, and a part of the USPD executive answered with a similar call to arms and another general strike.

The unequal contest lasted into the middle of the month. When Noske had entered the government he is said to have declared: 'Someone has to be the hangman.' He proved satisfactorily that he was this person as hundreds of proletarians and revolutionaries were massacred by the soldiers.

The passivity of large sections of the working masses, who kept asking for an end to the 'war between brothers', confirmed Radek's analysis. Unsuccessful but untiring, he called for a retreat and proposed a campaign for new elections in the councils in place of armed resistance.

The arrest of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht was a big event for Captain Pabst's men; for several days there had been talk within free corps circles of killing the two leaders.

Although there is no proof that such an order was given by Noske, it can be safely assumed that he knew of these intentions and did not discourage them. On the contrary: on 13 January an inflammatory 'poem' appeared in *Vorwärts* which included the following famous lines:

'Many hundred corpses in a row,  
Proletarians,  
Karl, Rosa, Radek and Co.,  
Not one is there,  
Proletarians'

### GO-AHEAD

The free corps were at least justified in expecting the go-ahead from Noske to use violence against the revolution, since not one of their previous massacres had been criticised by the government.

The plan to murder Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht was probably already established when they were arrested. To keep up appearances they were 'interrogated' for some hours.

Then Liebknecht was carried away in a military car while still being beaten by the soldiers. In the

Tiergarten the car stopped, the prisoner was pushed out, and Lieutenant Horst von Pflugk-Hartung shot him.

Half an hour later it was Rosa Luxemburg's turn. She had been beaten so much by a soldier called Otto Runge that she was already half dead when she was pushed in the car. She was murdered under the orders of Lieutenant Vogel in the vehicle and her corpse thrown in the Landwehr Canal.

The next day the press stated that Liebknecht had been shot during an attempted escape and that Rosa Luxemburg had been killed by an enraged mob. But in a relatively short time the truth started to come out.

This didn't stop the bourgeois press from expressing its open relief. The *Tägliche Rundschau* wrote that Rosa Luxemburg had been the victim of the bloodbath she herself had started: 'The day of judgement (!) for Luxemburg and Liebknecht is over. Germany has peace (!), it can breathe again.'

### TRIBUNAL

The government let the murderers go almost without punishment: in May 1919 a military tribunal acquitted Pflugk-Hartung, and Vogel and Runge were sentenced to two years in prison — in reality neither served their full sentence. Captain Pabst was never held responsible and later played a leading role in building the fascist 'Heimwehren' in the Tyrol, Austria.

An official press bulletin of the German Federal Republic stated in 1962 that the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had been 'executions in accordance with martial law'....

The murders in January 1919 were to be followed by countless others: communist leaders like Leo Jogiches and Eugene Léviné, USPD leaders like Kurt Eisner and Hugo Haase, and thousands of unknown communists and proletarians in Berlin, the Ruhr, Munich, and Saxony were killed. This was the price the ruling class made the proletariat pay for the normalisation of bourgeois conditions in Germany.

And not only did the alliance of the social-democratic government and the reactionary officers bathe the German proletarian revolution in blood, but it also prepared the way for the catastrophe of 1933.

# LETTERS

## SC covers

I MUST protest against the cover of the 4 January issue (although not from a political standpoint). How do you expect supporters of Socialist Challenge to sell a paper on the streets with a cover that resembles a calendar more than a socialist newspaper?

In my opinion most of the recent covers have been poor. This is a pity, because otherwise the content has been reasonable. The international coverage, the 'At Work' article, and the attack on sexism in teenage mags and comics, etc. — surely these deserve a better cover than '1979 Death to the Shah'.

I appreciate the importance of the Fund Drive to the paper's existence, but if Socialist Challenge is to survive there must be an increase in sales. This will not be achieved unless more forethought is put into the design of the covers. However, I don't believe that it is just a lack of forethought. It is probably related to whom the paper is directed — 'the advanced militant'.

A socialist paper in a country like Britain cannot afford the luxury of preaching to the converted. How can a paper be directed in the main at advanced militants when one of the major problems is the absence or shortage of such people?

And then again, if an advanced militant is someone who consistently takes the side of the working class, then I know many such people who find Socialist Challenge unattractive, to say the least.

STEVE ROSE (Preston)

## Pol Pot's nightmare

YOUR lengthy and somewhat uncritical obituary of Malcolm Caldwell (4 January) was charitable even for a paper which has been trying successfully to plot a non-sectarian course on many issues.

Who was Malcolm Caldwell? When all is said and done, there is no denying that he was the most prominent individual overseas supporter of a regime which would have made short work of any Socialist Challenge readers if it had ever got hold of them.

During their three years in power, Pol Pot and his colleagues endeavoured to create a nightmarish society that out-stalined anything Stalin himself did, at least in relative terms. Having looked at findings and research on Cambodia carried out by French left-wingers who by no stretch of the imagination can be described as pro-American, I am prepared to believe that in the last four years the Red Khmers have been responsible for the deaths of more Cambodians



than were the Americans when they conducted their own reign of terror from the skies in their B-52s.

The Americans cannot and should not be allowed to derive any posthumous credit from the murderous retribution wreaked by their Cambodian foes. The main victim (besides the 5? million Cambodians left alive) is undoubtedly the concept of socialism, which cannot be unaffected by the terrible Cambodian episode.

If papers like Socialist Challenge and spokespeople like Tariq Ali had given more time and space to Cambodia then the damage might have been less. Instead the chief apologist of the Cambodian regime is given a posthumous valedictory. Shame!

TOMMY GALLAGHER (Manchester)

## Iran — be concrete!

YOUR introduction to Dave Bailey's article 'Iran: A Classical Revolution' (7 December) states, correctly, 'Situations like these always demand considerable precision from revolutionaries in the way they pose the question of power'. Yet in a whole page article any 'precision' — at least about Iran in 1978 — was scrupulously avoided.

Dave Bailey claims Iran is in a 'classical revolutionary situation' with not one bit of evidence or analysis, after the first two trivial paragraphs, to show that this is the case. In fact Iran is hardly mentioned. Instead we have the tired repetition of timeless formulae which could have been written at any time in the fifty or more years since the events to which they refer occurred.

Whatever happened to Lenin's 'concrete analysis of a concrete situation' as the only useful guide to action? What about a specific analysis of the class forces involved: the nature of the resurgence of oppositional Islamic political forces, the state of the workers movement, the institutions of the Iranian state, the composition of capital, etc.?

How is it possible to arrive at a prescription for action in the absence of all this? The whole article is an example of orthodox Trotskyism at its most idealist; first find a situation which vaguely resembles some pre-ordained model from 'Every Cadre's Guide to Making the Revolution'. Then, by issuing demands, try to cram events into that schema of things.

Meanwhile reality passes by and more humble things we could do here and now in Britain to influence events get neglected.

CARL GARDNER (London NW6)

## Hypocrisy of 'support'

IN HIS article 'How socialists see the fight for black liberation' (16 November) Colin Talbot argues that 'an explicitly anti-capitalist programme would hinder rather than help a united black movement embracing all political currents within the black masses', and that the political basis of the black movement should be simply an anti-racist one. He goes on to say that revolutionaries must give 'full support' to black organisations like BASH.

Comparing these statements about the black movement with Socialist Challenge's attitude to the liberation movement in Ireland, I am struck by the hypocrisy involved. For while Socialist Challenge says it supports self-determination for the Irish people, it does not give full support to the movement leading the Irish struggle, the Provisional Republican movement, arguing that it is not

**THE LENGTH of letters printed will usually be kept down to 400 words in order to encourage as wide a range of contributions as possible. All letters may be cut at the Editor's discretion. Unsigned letters will not normally be published, although we will withhold real names from publication on request.**

socialist enough, is too nationalist, etc.

This apparent contradiction can only be explained by the fact that the Provisional Republican movement is engaged in a war against the British imperialist state. Now, when that movement needs the complete support of all socialists in this country, Socialist Challenge constantly attacks it.

And experience has already shown that its attitude to the emerging black movement will take the same form. When the ANL refused to divert its forces from Carnival 2 to defend Brick Lane, Socialist Challenge defended the ANL and made disgusting attacks on the Hackney & Tower Hamlets Defence Committee.

Socialist Challenge shows in its attitude to the black movement and the Provisional Republican move-

ment that it will not support the movements of the oppressed when they engage in a fight against the British imperialist state.

MARY GORMAN [Manchester]

## What crisis?

YOUR last front page ended with the slogan: 'The crisis is a crisis of inequality'. Surely this is somewhat incomplete. I had thought that the crisis was one of capitalist social relations, which cannot be subsumed by the word 'inequality'.

PAUL SPOTTER (South London)  
\* Yes. The crisis is one of the capitalist system as a whole. We thought that this was fairly obvious. (Editorial Board)

## bookmarx

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# SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

THE DEADLINE for this column is midday on the Saturday before publication.

## NORTH WEST

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

**GREATER MANCHESTER** Socialist Challenge. School students who support the paper and would like to get involved in anti-fascist activity, please contact Chris (273 5947, day) or Steve (226 4287), evening, or write to Manchester SC Centre, 14 Piccadilly.

**SALFORD** Socialist Challenge supporters can be contacted at the Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre c/o 14 Piccadilly, Manchester with a view to forming a Salford SC group.

**MOSS SIDE** Socialist Challenge supporters sell the paper at Moss Side Centre, Saturday, 11-1.

## NORTH EAST

**NEWCASTLE** Socialist Challenge local supporters are active! If you want

to join them, phone Pete on (0632) 29057.

**DURHAM** Socialist Challenge Supporters Group. For details contact: Dave Brown, 2 Pioneer Cottages, Low Pitlington, Durham.

**MIDDLESBROUGH** Socialist Challenge sales, Saturday lunchtime near the lottery stand at Cleveland Centre. Also available from Newsfare in Linthorpe Road.

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES** readers can buy Socialist Challenge from Green Books, upstairs in the Spencer Hall shopping centre.

## SCOTLAND

For information about the paper or its supporters' activities throughout Scotland please contact Socialist Challenge Books, 64 Queen St, Glasgow. Open Wed, Thurs, Fri and Sat afternoons. Phone for alternative arrangement (221 7481). Wide range of Fourth International publications.

**EDINBURGH** Socialist Challenge supporters group meets regularly. Phone George at 031-346 0466 for details.

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

## YORKSHIRE

**HUDDERSFIELD** SC group meets fortnightly on Thursdays at the Friendly & Trades Club, Northumberland St.

**DEWSBURY** Socialist Challenge sales regularly on Saturday mornings in Westgate at the Nat. Westminster Bank, 12.30-2.00pm.

**HUDDERSFIELD** Socialist Challenge sales regularly Saturdays 11am-1pm in the Piazza.

**YORK** Socialist Challenge is on sale at the York Community Bookshop, 73 Walmgate or from sellers on Thursdays (12.30-1.45) at York University, Vanbrugh College; Saturdays (11.30-3.30) at Coney Street.

## MIDLANDS

For details of activities of local supporters throughout the Midlands contact the Socialist Challenge

Centre, 76b Digbeth High Street, Birmingham (021) 643 9209.

## SOUTH WEST

**ISLE OF WIGHT** readers can buy Socialist Challenge from the Oz Shop, 44 Union St, Ryde.

**BATH** Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday, 2-3.30pm, outside Macfisheries. Ring Bath 20298 for further details.

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

**PORTSMOUTH** Socialist Challenge sales, Saturdays, 11.30pm-1pm, Commercial Road Precinct.

**SWINDON** supporters sell Socialist Challenge 11am-1pm Saturdays, Regent St (Brunel Centre).

**FOR INFORMATION** on activities in the South-West, write to Box 002, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Bristol 6.

**BRISTOL** Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday, 11am-1pm in the 'Hole in the Ground', Haymarket.

## SOUTH EAST

**BRIGHTON** SC forums fortnightly on Tuesdays. Contact Micky on 605052 for details.

**NORWICH** Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday in Davey Place (opp. market) and bookstall Thursdays at University of East Anglia.

**COLCHESTER** Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. For details phone Steve on Wivenhoe 2949.

## LONDON

**LEYTON** readers can buy Socialist Challenge from Patel's Newsagents, 326 Lea Bridge Road, E10.

**TOWER HAMLETS** Socialist Challenge supporters sell every weekend: Saturdays meet 10.30am, Whitechapel tube; Sundays meet 10am, Brick Lane (corner of Buxton St).

**WALTHAM FOREST** paper sales every Saturday, 11am-noon outside the post office, Hoe St, Walthamstow, London E17.

**HARROW** Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly, details from Box 50, London N1 2XP.

**TOWER HAMLETS** Socialist Challenge Group meets every fortnight (phone 247 2717 for details). **BRENT** supporters sell every Saturday, 2.30pm, at Kilburn Sq., Kilburn High

Rd, London NW6.

**SW LONDON** sales every Saturday, 11am-1pm, at Clapham Junction (Northcote Rd), Brixton tube, Clapham Common tube, Balham tube. Also on bookstalls outside Oval tube, Herne Hill BR, and at Shepherd's newsagents, Braganza St.

**HACKNEY** supporters sell every Saturday, 12-2pm, in Kingsland High St, Dalston — meet outside Sainsbury's.

**WALTHAMSTOW** readers can buy Socialist Challenge regularly from Sheridan's Newsagents, 86 Hoe St, E17.

**PADDINGTON/N KENSINGTON** Socialist Challenge group meeting on 'The Uprising in Iran', with speaker Tariq Ali, Wed 24 Jan, 8pm, in meeting room of the 'Tabernacle', Talbot Road (Powis Square), W11.

**HACKNEY** Socialist Challenge supporters group now meets fortnightly on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the Britannia Pub, Mare St, E8. 18 Jan: 'Socialists and nuclear power', introduced by John Boran (SERA).

**HARINGEY** Socialist Challenge group discussion: 'What's happening in China', Thursday 18 January, 7.30pm, at West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road, N15 (Turnpike Lane tube).

**Wedge hits back**

**The cultural field has no fences**



THE MINDS behind 'Wedge' boggled at Geoffrey Sheridan's critique of this left-wing cultural magazine, published in Socialist Challenge on 26 October.

Deploing the 'dismissive attitude' of the article, the WEDGE COLLECTIVE replies.

WITH BRISK resort to the latest fashionable journalistic catchword, Geoffrey Sheridan alleged that **Wedge** has not so far considered explicitly 'the relationship and interface between culture and politics'.

It seems he hasn't been reading the same magazine as the one we've been producing.

We don't intend to reply to this by pointing out that all three issues contain such discussions (although they do) because to reply this way would merely hide the misconceptions in the original remark.

The point is that **Wedge** does not contain discussions of this kind, this is what the magazine is explicitly about all the time.

But why can't Geoff see that? His review was headed 'Does **Wedge** know where to draw the line?' His blindness about **Wedge's** politics stems from the lines which he himself draws, lines around what constitutes culture, what politics.

But our answer to his rhetorical question is emphati-

cally, Yes, lines must be drawn in different places from where they are habitually drawn.

We are not alone in believing this. People involved in studying the political economy of culture have come to the same conclusion.

They have begun to engage in a debate against the defenders of the dominant forms of bourgeois ideology who curiously draw lines between culture and politics in roughly the same places as Geoff does.

Unfortunately, as in so many other areas of development of Marxist studies, the professional journalists of the revolutionary press are becoming increasingly misinformed (or should one say dis-informed?).

They sorely need to take a busperson's holiday and inform themselves of these developments.

We don't expect Geoff to agree with this, since he dismisses Kevin McDonnell's piece on the left press so dismissally.

Kevin's analysis is concerned with the problems of producing a revolutionary newspaper in a situation where, to put it bluntly, professional journalists tend to have a counter-productive effect.

Geoff says the article is distorted by Kevin's 'preference for a political project which does not correspond to that of either of the newspapers he examines'.

But that's like saying 'You don't agree with us, so we don't want to talk to you'.

Similarly Geoff totally ignores all the substantive problems about cultural-political practice raised by other articles such as Martin Thom's on left anti-fascist language and the demonstration piece.

**CONFUSED**

He simply comes to a confused conclusion, saying that we think 'cultural productions with radical content cannot succeed if they use a conventional "bourgeois" form of presentation'.

He then adds: 'This highly contentious view appears to be unanimously held by the

collective and **Wedge 3** effectively extends it to political activity'. Our minds boggled on reading this.

It appears to suggest that Geoff thinks political activity (leaving aside the question of 'cultural production') is alright if it has a radical content but bourgeois forms.

We wonder if Geoff is advocating this, or admitting that this is the kind of political practice **Socialist Challenge** approves of.

Kevin McDonnell's article raises but doesn't develop the question of why produce a newspaper at all; that is, why a newspaper in preference to other possible forms of disseminating information and stimulating debate.

**Wedge** has constantly concerned itself with the gamut of all such forms. Obviously in only three issues we haven't tried to analyse them all, but it cannot have escaped anyone's attention that we totally reject any limiting definition of what constitutes the cultural field.

So of course we haven't spent much time explicitly addressing the relationships between politics and cultural fields as they've been classically defined.

This isn't to say we don't believe this somewhat narrower area of investigation to be important. But nowadays, to isolate it in any way would be academic, in the pernicious sense of the word.

For example, we are concerned with the way the traditional domains of 'Culture' have been swallowed up by an extension, and by new forms, of industrialisation in the fields of cultural production, and with the consequences of this process.

The break-up of traditional bourgeois definitions of culture had begun even before Marx and Engels were dead, though they were hardly aware of it.

Now the process has become commanding, with the massive entry of electronics-based transnational companies into all fields of culture, information, entertainment and education on all levels.

Since the leading corporations in this sector now constitute the fastest growing

group of companies in the present era of capitalism, we believe it is high time that the approach we are committed to explore be given the highest priority, however many toes must be trodden on, however many political myths enscenced in the revolutionary left turn out to need exploding.

We deplore Geoff Sheridan's dismissive attitude which, however, seems to be in common with other recent **Socialist Challenge** articles, such as Tariq Ali on cultural movements and John Ross on the far left in Europe since the war.

But since **Socialist Challenge** has now grudgingly conceded that a few non-Trotskyists might just be capable of brief, sporadic, desultory periods of revolutionary activity, we make so bold as to suggest that the next step might be to debate things with these non-Trotskyists, rather than generously giving them a retrospective pat on the back.

**Robert Altman on the women in his films**

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ROBERT ALTMAN has worked in the cinema for over 30 years, but it's only since the success of 'Mash' that he has been able to do more or less what he likes.

With his latest film, 'A Wedding', on general release, he was interviewed by P APARANAGUA.

Your film 'A Wedding' is about the marriage of two young people from different social backgrounds which seems a failure from the start. Hasn't American society also failed in its attempts to integrate the different races, cultures, and civilisations?

No, I think the opposite is the case. The two families are simply from different social backgrounds.

The film is only concerned to show one thing: that the importance of marriage and the ceremony is directly proportional to how nonsensical these are.

I think that the United States has assimilated its Jews, blacks and others more effectively than any other nation has done.

Assimilation always involves a struggle, because people want to preserve their identity in order to feel more secure. But this isn't important in the film, at least not consciously.

At least three of your films — 'Three Women', 'Nashville', and 'A Wedding' — suggest the failure of the traditional family...

I don't think the family as

such is failing, but that it is in the process of changing course. It's like when feudalism began to disappear...

I don't know what will come after the family. My next film Quinter, will tell you.

From 'That Cold Day in the Park' to 'A Wedding', your films have been centrally about women. Your portrayal of them does not exclude tenderness, particularly in 'Images' and 'Three Women'.

But most of the time your female characters are completely alienated and entirely accept the 'American way of life', while America is experiencing the women's movement and the reactionary campaign against gays.

I don't treat women differently from men in my films. I tend to be more interested in them.

Perhaps this is because I was brought up in an all-woman household. I probably learned as I was growing up about manipulating women; about manoeuvring in a world of women.

I've a lot of respect for women. I donated \$2m from the profits from this film to the Equal Rights Amendment campaign as I find it ridiculous that women are considered second class citizens.

It's in women's nature to be more 'underground'. Women can't be the menace of the neighbourhood; they don't have the strength. To become powerful they have to adopt other means.



FROM 'Photography and Art — Art as Photography' at the ICA. As exhibitor Didier Bay observes: 'I am both a long user of photo and text in autodidacts ways altogether with the specific autonomous and conjugated connotations of these two medias, and in spite of these connotations.' Pardon me?

It's this that makes them more interesting. Women are guerillas; more closed in than men are open.

At the moment I am writing a story in which there are no women. When I looked it over I found it quite powerful: to use women in the same way I used men in **Three Women**.

Women speak more and more in their own name. Doesn't this have an inhibiting effect when you write your characters?

I haven't written any novels or books about women. I've made films to which the actors

contribute not only their talent, but also a good part of the content.

Susannah York and I had a great deal of discussion about the role she was playing in **Images**, and whenever there was a disagreement she won because she had an important advantage over me, being a woman.

Shelley Duvall wrote her own monologues for **Three Women**; I only made suggestions or alterations. In the character, one finds her female sensibility or her stupidity. It's this which makes all comedies.

# Socialist Challenge

## Hackney funeral march, 20 January

# BLACK DEFENCE IS NO OFFENCE

By Rich Palser

BLACK PEOPLE in East London have declared this Saturday a day of mourning and a day of defiance.

It will be a day of mourning for the funeral of Michael Ferreira, murdered by three white racists on 10 December.

It will also be a day of defiance as black people march through Hackney to Stoke Newington police station to show that they will not bow to racist violence and are joining together to act in their own defence.

The demonstration has been organised by a coalition of black and anti-racist organisations, in particular the Hackney

and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee and the newly formed Hackney Black People's Defence Organisation.

Michael's death was the fourth known racist murder in East London in eight months. The conclusion being drawn by black people in Hackney is spelt out in the leaflet calling for the march: 'The black people must be in the forefront of their own defence.'

The labour movement as a whole has the responsibility to show its support and solidarity by marching alongside them.

Assemble 9.30am at 125 Rushmore Road, London E5. There will be no banners or placards carried, and no papers or literature are to be sold.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

BLACK people are also finding themselves victims of the courts because they dare to defend themselves. One such case is that of the four Virk brothers.

They have been given jail terms ranging from seven years to three months following an affray in which they defended themselves against an attack by five white youths.

At a conference of Asian, West Indian and anti-racist organisations in Newham last weekend it was decided to organise a demonstration outside the court when one of



Black people's protest meeting in Ridley Road market, Hackney, over death of Michael Ferreira.

the brother's appeals is heard.

This is perhaps the most glaring example of situations where black people who defend themselves find they are the ones in the dock. But it is certainly not the only one.

After a similar incident of white racist assault in Wolverhampton, four Asian youths recently found themselves facing charges of making an affray, possessing an offensive weapon, motoring and theft offences.

Although the prosecution admitted that they were attacked 'plainly for no other reason than the colour of their skins', Harvinder Bhogal found himself in Borstal and two of the others received £75 fines.

Their position was perhaps made easier by the work of the Wolverhampton Anti-Racist

Committee. Apart from paying the fines and protesting the imprisonment, the committee has campaigned to make the issue of racist violence and police harassment against black people an issue within the labour movement.

Last February an independent labour movement enquiry into racist attacks and police harassment was held in Wolverhampton, and a full report detailing incidents was submitted by the anti-racist committee.

Now it is the turn of a white anti-racist, the committee's treasurer Dave Stevens, to be in the dock. He was arrested last March on a demonstration called by the committee to protest against racist attacks and police harassment.

The march was attacked by a

single man and Dave was arrested in the scuffle. Several black youths were then arrested.

Three of the latter's cases have since come up in court.

\* Michael Rowbottom was acquitted of police assault when no evidence was brought in court, though he was fined £50 for breach of the peace.

\* Wesley Thompson received a conditional discharge for breach of the peace.

\* David Hines, facing a charge of malicious wounding of a policeman, clearly had little faith in getting justice in the court and failed to turn up.

Now Dave Stevens, facing three charges of assault on policemen and one of actual

bodily harm, is expected to come up at Stafford Crown Court between 7 and 14 February.

As with the other cases, the defence campaign organised by the anti-racist committee is calling for a mass lobby outside the court on the first day of the trial.

Already N.S. Noor, President of the Wolverhampton Indian Workers Association, has pledged to ask his executive to mobilise a coach for the picket, and circulate a statement to all black and Asian organisations to support it.

These are just examples of what is going on. Clearly both the black movement, and the anti-racist movement as a whole, must resolve in mourning Michael Ferreira to defend from the police and courts all those who stand out against racist violence.

\* Drop the charges against Dave Stevens. Picket the first day of the hearings at Stafford Crown Court. Details from Wolverhampton Defence Campaign, c/o Wolverhampton Poly Students Union.

\* Release the Virk brothers, drop the charges. Demonstrate against the victimisation of black people who defend themselves. Full details from Newham Defence Committee c/o Box 4550, Stratford Express, Stratford Broadway, London E15.

Photo: ERNIE GREENWOOD (Hackney People's Press)

'Racism — What it is and how to fight it'  
CRAWLEY Socialist Challenge public meeting  
Speakers include: Tariq Ali; Dave Ward (pres., Trades Council — personal capacity); Omar Vawda (Community Relations Officer — personal capacity); Patrick Newman (Labour parliamentary candidate); CP representative.

Monday 22 January, 8pm, AUEW Hall, Robinson Road, Crawley.

## BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATION

Demonstration  
28 January

LONDON — organised by  
Provisional Sinn Fein

## WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

FOR THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION



## HEAR HUGO BLANCO

MIKE FARRELL, IRAMAN TROTSKYIST, TARIQ ALI

7.30pm FRIDAY 2 FEBRUARY

GAMDEN TOWN HALL, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON NW1

5.30pm FILMS, MUSIC, DISPLAYS/ADMISSION £1

Admission £1. Two tickets for £1.30, three for £1.60. The reduced rates apply only to tickets bought before 31 January. Tickets from IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques to 'The Week'. GLASGOW Socialist Unity rally with Hugo Blanco, Thursday 1 February, 7.30pm, Highlanders Institute, Berkeley Street, Charing Cross. Also Latin American seminar in Glasgow University plus lunch and reception — phone 041-221 7481 for details.

## OUR FUND DRIVE

IN THE LAST quarter we fell £1,000 short of our fund drive target and the effects of this are beginning to tell on us.

We work on about a month's credit, but this shortfall will have to be made up by the end of January if we are to avoid problems paying our bills.

Our printers will give us a few weeks grace before they refuse to print us. But British Rail will not be so understanding and nor will the Post Office — in fact they won't give us credit at all. Either we pay or they won't take our letters.

And I doubt if all our

subscribers would like being told they had to pay for postage on delivery.

Over the next week we urgently need all IMG branches and all our other supporters to take emergency collections to help make up the shortfall. This is the only way we can avoid a major crisis in the coming weeks.

Now is the time to dig deep into your pockets, take collections at all your meetings. Keep on with the long term fund-raising plans, but we do need a big cash boost now.

The bills are coming in thick

and fast so we need you to get the money in to us as quickly as you can.

We have made a good start in catching up with the situation over the last week. The weekly fund drive total of £467 is considerably better than any total that we've seen in recent weeks.

However this is largely made up of £260 raised in an emergency appeal to our supporters at the Mandel school on Eurocommunism in London last weekend.

This coupled with an anonymous donation of £100 have ensured our healthy total. We need to do the same, if not better, next week.

In the post this week we had two letters from American readers enclosing donations.

## RESOLUTION

Mike Davis made a New Year resolution to win us at least five new LA subscribers — and if he hasn't got them by the beginning of March he wants to be billed for the difference.

Mike's contribution to the fund drive was given in memory of Neil Williamson whom he knew for a year in Scotland — 'a most remarkable and gifted young comrade'.

You are still sending in stamps at a steady rate — in fact recently we have not been able to keep up with processing them. We still have a couple of albums to sort out, as well as loose stamps.

## BOOST

Keep sending them in as they do provide a regular boost to the fund drive, as the £15 in the column this week shows.

And above all send in those emergency donations so that we can meet our debts over the coming two weeks.

G Price	£2.00
Anon	5.00
M Davis USA	8.50
Steve Vieux USA	2.50
A Cullen	5.00
P Davenport	4.00
Norman Geras	30.00
Stamp money	15.00
Yves Thebault	0.50
D Rice	2.00
Ed Mahood	10.00
The Red Drinker	10.00
Anon	0.50
Anon	100.00
Eurocommunism school	260.31

TOTAL £467.81  
Cumulative total this quarter £563.21

## SUBSCRIBE!

Domestic: 6 months, £5; 12 months, £10  
Abroad: Airmail, £16.50. Surface, £10 per annum.  
Multi-reader institutions: double individual rate

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.