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Lock-out on Tyneside

TWO THOUSAND shipyard workers on Tyneside have been locked out by the recently privatised Swan Hunters shipbuilders amid the jubilation of the Tory press and TV news at a middle-of-the-night launch by supervisors and management of the frigate HMS Coventry on Tuesday morning.

BY HUGHIE NICHOL

All 2000 craftsmen, members of AUEW, GMBATU, EETPU and UCATT received a letter on Tuesday morning from D.P. Shadbolt, Swan Hunter's personnel and industrial relations director.

It read:

'Dear Employee,

'The Board of Directors have considered your action in leaving work at approximately 10.30 am today in support of organised unofficial industrial action.

Breach

'Their conclusion is that this is a serious breach of your contract employment. You are therefore suspended off pay with immediate effect and until further notice. This suspension is pending a decision being taken on the appropriate disciplinary action. Further instructions will be conveyed to you if and when you are required to resume work.'

The new private owners of the yards are determined to destroy the trade union organisation built over many years of struggle.

They have thrown up a smokescreen about the need

to compete for orders from the Ministry of Defence with the Belfast shipyards of Harland and Wolff.

An offer of a two year wages deal — £153 a week and a further £8 next year — was decisively rejected by a mass meeting last Friday with a five to one majority.

Management were demanding that workers give up their working allowances, give up their travelling money when transferred to other yards, give up their afternoon tea breaks and be prepared for 24-hour working at the yards!

The role of shop stewards in individual yards has constantly been challenged by management over the past year. The management now say they would not be prepared to meet the shop stewards for any further discussions, and they are now locked out with their members.

But the bosses are prepared to meet with full time or national union officials to discuss the suspensions.

When the workers voted by 1600 to 300 to reject the pay deal they also imposed an immediate overtime ban on all the yards and decided to also take all-out strike action if any section were victimised or if management were brought in to do their work.

Navy

The walkout came when management threatened to take some shipwrights off pay for refusing to carry on work on the Royal Navy frigate Coventry, scheduled for launching the following day.

Suspension letters were immediately sent out.

It was clear that management had prepared for this event, and what followed was in the best traditions of Tory anti-union activity.

The countdown for the secret launch of the royal navy ship had begun. One hundred managers and staff met at the Moat House Hotel at 8 pm. Coaches carried them the three miles to the Wallsend yard, where police with tracker dogs were on duty in case the striking craftsmen had heard of the plans.

But in the dark at 3.45 am, in gale force winds, sleet and rain no opposition had gathered. The managers and supervisors began to grease the slipways and knock out the timbers under the £100 million frigate watched by a small top-level royal navy party.

By daylight messages of congratulations were pouring in to the company headquarters from Tory MPs and other industrialists. The Tory press were hysterical in their joy.

The launch was only one round of the battle, and shipyards workers are meeting to decide on their next moves to fight the lock out — with a real possibility that the full-time officials will be used by management to betray their fight.

LOYALIST VIOLENCE EXPLODES

THE explosion of violence by the Loyalists in the north of Ireland is creating a serious crisis for the Tories and the ruling class as a whole.

Over the last week 150 officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary have been threatened by Loyalist gangs or had their homes attacked.

Leading Unionist politicians, including Westminster MPs, have not only raised the prospect of 'going it alone' against the Anglo-Irish agreement, but are also tacitly encouraging the attacks on the British state.

Loyalist leader Ian Paisley waited a week before 'condemning' the violence — and then stressed that Thatcher was the 'main criminal'.

Official Unionist MP for Strangford, John Taylor, said in Birmingham that the Tory party and the Unionists would sever links before the next election.

Enoch Powell, Official Unionist MP for South Down, refused in the House of Commons to condemn the violence, turning his fire on the 'evil counsellors' who had pressed the Anglo-Irish agreement on Mrs Thatcher.

He accused the government of trying to rule without consent in the north of Ireland, and said that a change of policy was needed if increasing violence was to be stopped — meaning of course that the Anglo-Irish deal should be junked.

RUC chief Sir John Hermon said: 'There are some politicians at local level, and I am not totally excluding them at national level, who have got close associations with the paramilitaries and others of extreme background.'

The British state have encouraged the growth of Loyalism over a long period: and now the monster they have created has gone out of their control. It is a sign of the extreme crisis of parliamentary rule when the Loyalist gangs, once faithful to the words of their Westminster representatives, are now turning on the notoriously pro-Unionist RUC and beating its officers over the head with flagpoles carrying Union Jacks.

Tory-Unionist alliance cracks



Where it all started. Rally outside Dublin Post Office recalls Easter 1916 Rising, renews fight for Workers' Republic.

Senior Tory backbencher Bill Benyon raised the prospect of the province being cut loose by Britain. He said that events posed the issue of whether Britain should reconsider 'the expenditure of lives and money in keeping Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.'

The cause of the break-up of the Unionist-Tory alliance, which has been central to British capitalism's 'divide and rule' policy in Ireland throughout this century, is the deteriorating economic situation on the one hand and the unbroken resistance of Irish Republicanism on the other.

The privileges of sections of the Protestant working class, so important for the maintenance of Unionism, are being eroded by mounting unemployment, cuts in social, welfare and educational services.

To keep their hold on north-east Ulster, the British ruling class have been compelled to strengthen their alliance with the Irish bourgeoisie and their political representatives in the Dublin government.

Hence the Hillsborough deal, whose aim was to iso-

TURN TO PAGE 3

Stop the strip-searches

PICKET

Every Saturday, 11.30am - 1.30pm
Brixton Prison, Jebb Avenue SW2

Against the strip-searching of Martina Anderson and Ella o'Dwyer, and also in support of the women in Armagh Jail who are undergoing similar treatment. Support this important campaign organised by the Irish Prisoners Appeal, Women and Armagh and the Troops Out movement.

JUST prior to the expulsion of Healy, a report was read out at a London meeting from a comrade who had been drawn into a relationship with him.

At first she took pity on him.

But when she realised he was taking advantage of her and tried to break off the relationship, she was told that if she did this the section she represented would be expelled en bloc.

Healy was outraged. He told her that he didn't care what she wanted. She and her comrades were of no significance and if she did not comply he would rape her.

She refused. He raped her.

She is still suffering the effects of this episode in her life and has to take drugs in

MITCHELL'S RECORD

BY PHIL PENN

order to carry on.

Immediately after the split, Mitchell denied on TV that it ever happened.

At a party in Lambeth Town Hall on the night of the occupation a number of leading members of the rump came along in order to ingratiate themselves with Councillor Knight.

After a few drinks the real

picture of their feelings on this question began to emerge.

In order to get a laugh from Ben Rudder and company at the expense of a couple of women members of the WRP who were there as part of the occupation, Mitchell, now unsteady on his feet, began falling around loudly declaring in a high pitched voice, 'Help! I'm being raped!'

Heroic

Possibly this heroic behaviour can be explained by the fact that this overweight hack had a few friends to defend him should the women have quite understandably lost control.

Threat to anti-fascist writer

TORY MP IN MURDER PLOT

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

WHICH Tory MP was involved in a plot to kidnap and murder a journalist?

Why was the journalist's investigation of fascist groups considered so threatening, by this MP and certain former senior military officers?

For some years now, jour-

nalist Gerry Gable has specialised in investigating and exposing the activities of racist, fascist and neo-Nazi groups in Britain. He has uncovered arms-running, indoctrination of young people, organised thuggery, and infiltration of political parties.

The anti-fascist magazine 'Searchlight' on which Gable works has provided much background information used by other journalists, on such matters as links between Tory MPs and fascist organisations. The BBC Panorama programme two years ago, 'Maggie's Militant Tendency', drew heavily on its revelations.

tion. Following Special Branch inquiries, a report was given to Thatcher and to Lord Bridge, then chairman of the Security Commission.

Since then, however, no charges have been brought against the 'Bulldog Drummond' characters involved. 'Searchlight' says it knows the MP's name, and so does Thatcher. Its April issue asks if the Prime Minister is 'prepared to allow a would-be murderer to sit on the government benches and help sustain her in office?'

It also asks, quite rightly, just what further secrets this Tory MP, and others, were afraid might come out — so afraid that they would resort to such criminal means to silence a journalist?

The murder plot sensation has been treated with a strange hush from our 'free', i.e. capitalist, press. Aren't they concerned that a fellow-journalist was threatened? Where are all those fearless news-hounds who go around sniffing for 'dirt' about militant trade unionists and left-wing councillors? What, no scandals in the Tory party? Or is a murder plot by the Right so run-of-the-mill as to be not even news-worthy?

Will the 'Observer', once so keen on alerting the PC Plods to non-existent 'hidden arms dumps' at the WRP's school, start up a hunt for the MP conspirator? Will the BBC Money Programme, so interested in mysterious 'Libyan gold' flowing into left-wing printshops, turn its attention to the big-money private 'security' industry?

Labour MPs should be giving Thatcher no rest until we get the truth about this murky business. And the whole labour movement must be woken up to the real, sinister and violent nature of the British ruling class. Then we can draw some conclusions.

Jobs

At least one Tory MP seriously got the wind up, fearing just how much Gable might know. Enough to approach a posh security firm run by ex-Army officers, and said to do certain jobs for the intelligence services. One of the firm's directors was implicated ten years ago in discussions among military men on a coup against the then Labour government.

The Tory MP had a special request to make. Get rid of Gable. According to the April issue of 'Searchlight', a meeting was held at the security company's London office on June 26, 1984, at which plans were made. Gable was to be placed under surveillance, and then abducted. He would be taken to a house in Dorset, and interrogated. When public interest in his disappearance had died down, he would be killed.

The plot had begun when Gable found out, reported to the police, and got protec-

Sparks oppose Hammond

IN THE event of the EETPU electricians' union being expelled from the TUC, a parallel organisation for those loyal to trade unionism should be set up.

This call was made by John Aitken of the EETPU London Press Branch to electricians from all over south Wales at a meeting last Friday.

The meeting in Cardiff was called by Flashlight, the 'broad left' organisation in the EETPU, to discuss the organisation of scabbing in the News International plants at Wapping and Glasgow by the union's leadership.

The meeting was also addressed by SOGAT and NGA members. Aitken, who stood against Eric Hammond in the last election for general secretary, explained the internal methods of the EETPU, its role in the News International dispute, and then how a policy of a parallel organisation came about.

Discuss

'In the days before the TUC General Council meeting to discuss the EETPU expulsion Hammond said the union supported him. We in Flashlight had to ask these questions: What would be our position if the union was expelled? What would happen if Hammond joined with the UDM? What would happen if the EETPU was expelled from the TUC? We wouldn't go — we would make it clear that Hammond doesn't speak for us.

'We must say to them, if

Monthly Fund

£1245.18 received this week
March fund closed at £3000
Total for April fund £229.61
Legal Fund

£66.54 received this week
Total now £33,206.87

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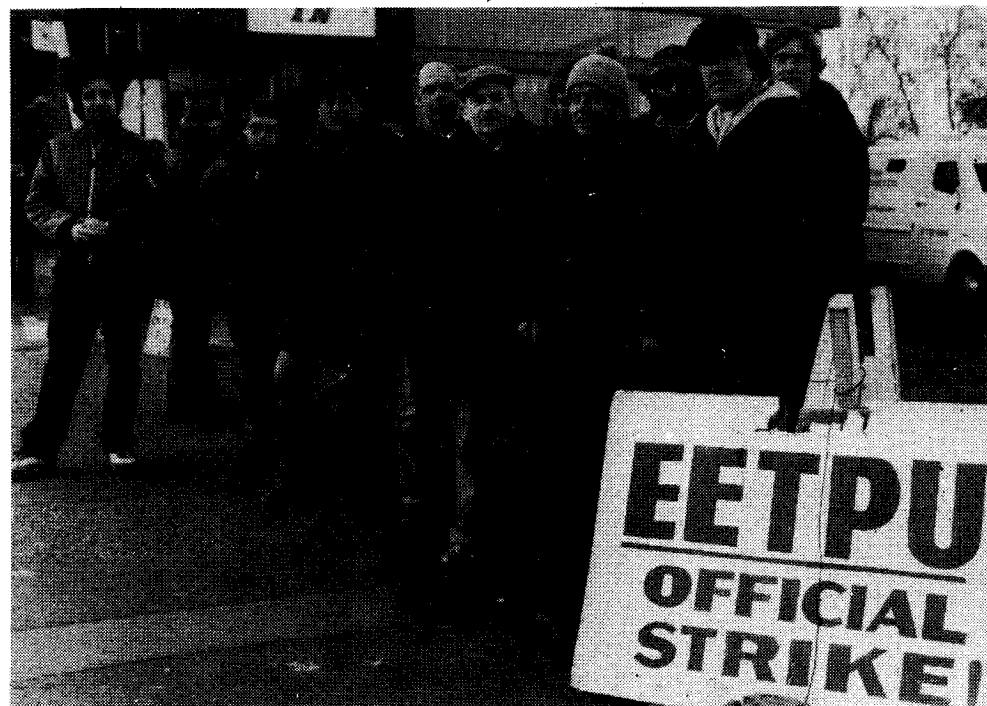
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Bar and Food — Tickets £2
Proceeds to Dependents of Republican Prisoners. Organised by London-Birmingham Irish Republican POW Campaign Committee

you want to leave the TUC, there's the door. There used to be a name in the trade union movement — scab. Now it's electrician.'

His call was supported by speakers from the floor.



Electricians in fighting mood

Other EETPU members were critical of the local deals signed in South Wales by local executive member Wyn Bevan.

One spoke of the embarrassment of being in the

EETPU.

The meeting was part of a national campaign by Flashlight to discuss these issues in preparation for a national meeting in Manchester on May 17th.

Hangers metal workers sacked

BY BOB MYERS

THIRTEEN sheet metal workers, members of TASS, were sacked last week at Hanger's artificial limb factory at Roehampton, London.

The men had all worked there for less than two years so did not qualify for redundancy pay.

The sackings were a management reprisal for the metal workers' defence of demarcation in the factory.

The management of Hanger's, which is controlled by the British Tyre and Rubber company, had moved work away from the Roehampton site in order to frighten the workforce into accepting a deal to end demarcation between TASS and FTAT — 'You give up demarcation, we'll bring the work back'.

When management found the metal workers' committee had rejected the deal they banned them from meeting their members and instead insisted they attend a meeting designed to change the committee's recommendation.

Despite this interference, the metal workers threw out the deal.

Behind their rejection was the understanding that to end demarcation would lead to cuts in pay and jobs.

One of the managers in an unguarded fit of enthusiasm for a non-union factory gave the game away — 'When I'm short of a van driver I would be able to ask one of you to drive'.

In many factories it was the strength of the metal workers and their demarcations that led the way on rates of pay and conditions in spite of the slump and the growing use of plastic in the limb industry.

Those who argued in favour of the deal said it would save jobs, a claim hard to sustain in the face of factory after factory that has made concessions on work practices only to have job cuts later. Men knew that if they gave into the blackmail once, they would see years of hard won conditions taken away.

Management waited only for the Easter holidays to end before hitting back with the 13 sackings, saying that the metal workers' inflex-

ibility meant that work would not return to Roehampton.

Now the metal workers faced the acid test. They had taken a stand for principles, could they defend them?

A meeting was held. A proposal to strike was moved. The full-time official described this as suicidal and blamed the sackings on the men's rejection of the management deal.

After every speaker he intervened to stress if members went out they might not come back in. Eventually the motion was lost. The sacked men were put out the following day.

But from both those who voted to strike and those who didn't, there was great bitterness at the lack of support and strength by the union leadership.

Up and down the country trade unionists are facing the same problems. Every group of workers whether it is 150 metal workers at Hanger's or 100,000 miners, is left to fight alone. This isolation leaves each group facing the entire strength of capitalism singlehanded and equally singlehandedly left to solve the problems the

movement faces — unemployment, slump and treacherous union leaders.

For these bureaucrats there has been and still is only one 'principle' — do a deal to avoid a conflict.

Deal

All that's changed is that in the boom the deal was often financially beneficial but now they sell off the past gains.

Trade unionists must fight for the principles on which our movement was built and relearn the slogans that previous generations learned the hard way — 'One out, all out', 'United we stand, di-

vided we fall'.

But capitalism today in Britain cannot tolerate effective trade unions. It will accept only company, collaborationist unions or none at all.

The fight for trade unionism today is the fight against all those opportunists, careerists and time-servers who have taken control of our movement.

Principles cannot be defended nor conditions maintained without a change in the trade union leadership to people who want to fight, who are not afraid to use the strength of the movement and who, like Scargill, are prepared to lead.

ISRAEL BOMBS CAMPS

Israeli US-built F16 fighter-bombers dropping 500-lb high explosive bombs hit Palestinian refugee camps near Sidon, southern Lebanon, on Monday. Children were among the injured in the raids on Ein el Hilweh and Miyehiyeh, the second in two weeks. The Israeli military said the targets were bases of Fatah guerrillas.

FRANCE SNUBS LANGE

France's new Tory government has told New Zealand premier David Lange he won't be welcome in Paris till two French agents, held for sinking the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior, are freed from jail. French government leaders have threatened to block New Zealand trade with the EU.

The previous Socialist Party government assumed responsibility for the Rainbow Warrior sinking.

WAPPING PROTEST

THE SACKED News International printworkers gave a unanimous thumbs down to Rupert Murdoch's latest 'offer' last weekend.

Murdoch, in an attempt to defuse the growing anger at the sacking of 6,000 trade unionists following the move to Wapping, east London, offered to turn over the Gray's Inn Road plant to the victimised workforce as part of a 'peace settlement' on Saturday last.

But at a mass demonstration in Trafalgar Square on Sunday, the sacked printworkers, along with nearly 20,000 trade unionists who turned out to support them in spite of continuous rain, Murdoch's contemptible offer was met with jeers.

'You cannot play Monopoly with people's lives,' SOGAT leader Brenda Dean told the printworkers and their supporters.

'You cannot play Monopoly with people's families, and you are certainly not going to be able to play, Mr Murdoch, Monopoly with our people either. There is no way that any offer will be used at the expense of our membership,' added Dean.

Harry Conroy, secretary of the National of Journalists, hinted that his union would possibly start to take action against the journalists who decided 13 weeks ago to accept Murdoch's offer and head east from Fleet Street.

'I shall be telling our membership at Wapping that it's time they got themselves on the right side of the barbed wire. Their actions have given succour to Murdoch,' he said.

TUC general secretary Norman Willis was roundly

booed before the demonstrators set off for Wapping when he referred to Murdoch's latest ploy as being a 'serious offer'.

But there were cheers for Barbara Switzer, deputy general secretary of TASS, when she referred to the electrical union, the EETPU. They agreed to supply the workforce at the heavily fortified Wapping plant, cutting out the traditional workforce supplied by the print unions.

'They (the EETPU) have chosen Murdoch instead of the trade unions,' she said, 'but they will have to pay the

price when this dispute is ended.'

The sacked printworkers were in no doubt what should be done with the Gray's Inn Road offer: there must be no sell-out — Murdoch cannot be allowed to get away with sacking 6,000 workers and then offering them an out-of-date building.

When the march finally reached Wapping the enthusiasm of the stewards boiled over with confidence that they could stop Murdoch's scab publications getting out of his east London fortress — but the police used horses and riot shields to clear the way as usual.



Sacked printers march on Wapping



Seeing off the Glasgow to London printers' march

Fulham for sale

The Tory-Liberal controlled Hammersmith and Fulham council seem intent on an asset-stripping spree before the May elections. It looks like a bonanza for the developers.

This week the Guardian suggested that a mysterious holding company called PALCO (the Fulham Palace Company) is bidding for the council's long leasehold of Fulham Palace, a listed building dating from the sixteenth century.

A financial killing could be made on the deal even if the Tory-Liberal coalition loses control in the elections.

Private commercial interests have their eyes on the palace for prestige offices, and seem prepared to offer space to a consortium of museums — for fifteen years, after which they could let the 15,000 square feet of office space at top rents.

Tenants are angry at the decision to sell a 32-flat block on Fulham Court estate to the private developers Barratts. The council voted in 1984 to sell to a non-profitmaking organisation, but agreed to accept the Barratts bid at a meeting called at short notice and held behind closed doors. Angry tenants from the estate said they were 'sick and tired of

being treated as pieces of dirt under the Council's feet'.

Tenants Association vice-chair James Crane gave notice of the tenants' intention to carry on the fight, and Ian Harrison, spokesperson for the Labour group, pledged that a future Labour council would do everything to stop the sale of the rest of the estate.

Site

They have the site of the old Western Hospital, Fulham Baths site, Avalon Road, and

the old Drayton Paper Works. It had been zoned for industry, and local people expected to see new people moving in and providing jobs.

When the council gave planning permission for the housing scheme, they handed Barratts an increase in the value of the site which amounts to a cool £1.5 million.

Loyalist violence

From page 1

late Republicanism and destroy the IRA. But within a few months, it has rebounded in the face of the Tories — who now face demands from within their own ranks for the agreement to be ditched.

Of course that deal was supported by the rotten social-chauvinist leaders of the Labour Party and their cowardly counterparts of the Social Democratic Labour Party. This followed logically from their support for the bastard six-county state ever since Ireland was partitioned in 1922.

Naturally, they have fallen

in behind the Tories' hypocritical condemnations of Loyalist violence. John Hume, SDLP MP for Foyle, accused Unionist MPs whom he did not name of 'encouraging and organising violence.' Labour leader Neil Kinnock, typically, 'absolutely endorsed' Thatcher's pontifications.

But the part played by the reformist Labour leaders in organising British repression in the north of Ireland; the sending in of troops in 1969 and their maintenance of military dictatorship, their condemnations of Republicanism with louder voices than the Tories themselves — to mention the

toleration of religious discrimination by British unions in which Protestant workers in the north of Ireland are organised — has paved the way for the explosions of Portadown and north Belfast.

The urgent need to build a revolutionary leadership in the British working class, which takes the side of Republicanism against British imperialism, which advances the demand for a united socialist Ireland, which fights to unite the struggle of the British and Irish working class movements against the capitalist enemy, is powerfully underlined by the events of the last week in Ireland.

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COMMEMORATION OF 1916 UPRISING

Dublin marchers defiant

TEN THOUSAND people marched through Dublin last Saturday to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Easter Rebellion on Saturday, April 5th.

Thousands of Saturday afternoon shoppers cheered as the parade went by in brilliant spring sunshine. It was led by a Cuman na mBann colour party in black berets and dark glasses, their faces covered by masks, and Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein's President.

Fife and drum bands from Ireland's 32 counties played stirring and defiant freedom songs as the parade marched from St Stephen's Green in a disciplined three-column formation. Delegations from the Irish Socialist League and Workers Revolutionary Party took part.

When the marchers reached the GPO in O'Connell Street, the Proclamation of the Irish Republic was read in Irish and English from the steps where it was first declared by Padraig Pearse on April 24, 1916.

In his main address, Pat Doherty, Sinn Fein national organiser, said: 'The Dublin government is afraid to commemorate the 1916 Rising. The Irish establishment is afraid that Irish people might take seriously the Proclamation of 1916; afraid that the social and economic intent of that Proclamation could be seized upon by the

FROM LIZ LEICESTER IN DUBLIN

deprived and dispossessed sections of our people; afraid that the call to arms in that Proclamation would be seen as a rejection of the current collaboration with Britain and a vindication of the IRA's armed struggle.'

Continuing his attacks on successive Irish governments, he said: 'Since British guns were employed by the fledgling Free State government in the counter-revolution by which the Republic was overthrown, right up to the present day, the Dublin administration has never hesitated to defend British interests.'

'How correct James Connolly was when he asserted that the raising of a green flag above Dublin Castle would not end English rule in



Young people joined the march behind Sinn Fein banners

Ireland. As he declared, 'England will still rule you through her landlords, through her financiers.' And so it has come to pass.'

Doherty had special praise for the new generation of freedom fighters, the youth of the 70s and 80s, and he extended Sinn Fein's solidarity to the families of those who have died, and to Irish political prisoners in jails throughout Ireland, Britain, the USA and the Netherlands.

Underlining the class interests of the Dublin parties, he said that their refusal to

tackle the issue of the 32-county Ireland was 'found in the fact that they and the class interests they represent fear — as much as they did in 1916 or 1922 — the consequences of such a development.'

'They fear the coming together of a united Catholic and Protestant working class in a new independent Irish democracy. To the Protestant working class, we make a special appeal. Do not allow yourselves to be used once again by the Unionist ascendancy. You will be dumped by them and by

the British government when it suits them to dump you. Only within a 32-county republic can you be guaranteed your religious and civil liberty and your equal rights and opportunities. It is to that republic that we are committed, not to a sham dictionary definition of a republic or an extension of Dublin rule into the six counties. With the same determination with which we oppose the loyalist veto and the British connection, we are committed to building a society which truly reflects the interests of all our people.'

Michael Flannery, a veteran of the 1916 Rising and a leading member of Noraid, brought a message of solidarity from Sinn Fein supporters in the United States. 'We're not going to surrender to any government in the US or here', he said. Speaking of the many generations who have fought for Irish freedom, Flannery said that the 'men of today are going to finish the job.'

Following the parade the Irish Socialist League, fraternal organisation of the WRP, held a public meeting to commemorate the 1916 Rising. In the main contribution, comrade Felix Quigley from the ISL, said that there had been a major change in the form of class dictatorship with the Anglo-Irish agreement.

'Thatcher has turned to the Irish government to smash the IRA and Sinn Fein. British imperialism has been forced to link with the southern Irish bourgeoisie. This is an expression of the relative weakness of the Unionists in the north.'

Quigley went on to say that there were important changes taking place in the Protestant and Catholic working class which were very complex. Big campaigns in the working class in the north against the use of plastic bullets, supergrass trials and strip-searching were gaining considerable support and highlighting the trade union bureaucracy's continuous backing for imperialism.

He also spoke about the

importance Lenin and Trotsky placed on the 1916 Rising and their careful analysis of it. The class issues were sharpened in the national liberation struggle which culminated in 1921 with the Irish bourgeoisie seizing power and establishing their dictatorship. What had been necessary for victory was a revolutionary party.

'In an oppressed country such as Ireland, which has not yet achieved national liberation, freedom will be won only when the working class can take state power.'

He added: 'James Connolly's main strength was that he never turned away from the nationalist movement, the very thing the Communist Party and their offshoot the Workers Party, attack him for. The Republican movement is now extremely open to discussion and many workers can be won to Trotskyism but the importance of the national struggle must never be underestimated.'

Comrade John Simmance, WRP Central Committee member, brought greetings to the meeting from the Workers Revolutionary Party. He said that the struggles of the working class in Britain and Ireland were directly linked. Thatcher's policies were having a big effect in Ireland and the working class in the north and south fighting for their rights.

Since the expulsion of G. Healy and his followers and in particular since the Eight Congress, the WRP has been supporting the fight of the Republican movement and the building of a section of the Fourth International in Ireland.

'We stand shoulder to shoulder with the freedom fighters and are campaigning in Britain on the question of strip searching. We must raise this atrocity in the trade union movement in Britain and mount a big campaign against it,' said Simmance.

Sinn Fein supporters, members of the Irish Workers Group, Workers Power, and the Socialist Group came to the meeting and took part in the discussion that followed the main contributions.



Banners of the Irish Socialist League and Workers Revolutionary Party on the march

LIFE IN SANDINIST NICARAGUA

WE WERE hearing a fair amount a few weeks ago in the media about Nicaragua, or at least, President Reagan's hysterical ravings.

He was trying to justify his proposal that the US Senate grant £100,000 in military aid to the Contras. This request was refused by a very narrow margin, and he is expected to make a compromise suggestion soon.

Reading the bourgeois press we glean very little about the gains of the Sandinist revolution or the life of Nicaraguans since the 1979 victory, or the 'Triumph' as it is now called.

I interviewed Charles Fletcher, who spent three months in Nicaragua with the first British Coffee Brigade, about his impressions of the developments in the country and the difficulties which are created by the hostility of the US.

1972 earthquake. A lot of the families in the area worked at the nearby market which was uncontrolled so there were no controlled wages and the people were removed from the revolutionary process of re-organisation.

'The new school building was being built by people who lived near the school, the parents of kids and the students at the school themselves, which was good as it drew the school and community closer together. This was reflected in the increasing numbers of children attending.

'It's exciting being in a place where there is a revolutionary process going on. Where you can speak to people who are involved in that and who are willing and

Interview by Lynn Beaton

SINCE the Triumph the coffee harvest has been crucial to the economy and every year for the three months of the harvest, brigades of Nicaraguans from the cities go out to pick the coffee beans.

The harvest coincides with the long school break and a number of Ministries close down or run on a skeleton staff to release workers, teachers and students are released for the harvest. Increasingly, they are being joined by brigades from overseas.

The British Brigade picked coffee on an UPE (state farm) for four weeks near Matagalpa in the middle of the coffee growing region to the north of the country. This UPE was chosen to host several international brigades because it was considered safe from Contra attack.

Triumph

Charles explained: 'The poorest people in Nicaragua are the campesinos (peasants), but those I met are totally behind the Sandinista Revolution and are very clear that their living conditions are much better now than they were before the Triumph.

'The agrarian reform which has been taking place since the Triumph has meant that campesinos have been given land to farm cooperatively which belonged to Somoza. On this land they are able to grow food for themselves as well as crops for sale, whereas before the Triumph these campesinos were dependent on the seasonal work of harvesting.

'Each UPE has a number of permanent workers who receive a wage throughout the year. Some of these are involved in the harvest as well as the brigades, but they are responsible for making the decisions about the running of the UPE.'

After Charles had been on the UPE for a couple of weeks he learnt about a project in Managua to build a school and decided to extend his stay to work on that after the harvest. The project was mainly funded by money from Britain and involved building a new pre-school unit in a poor area of the city.

'The school was in a region that was destroyed in the

'Directly, not at all. Over the last year the Sandinista army has driven the Contras out of the coffee-growing region. Activity now seems to be confined to sporadic attacks from across the Honduran border.

'In last year's coffee harvest the Contras were able to kill a number of pickers — the aim being to frighten people off and generally disrupt coffee production, whereas this year the Contra couldn't interfere, so the only real evidence I saw of the war was the number of soldiers and armed people about.

Defence

'I must stress that seeing soldiers and armed people in Nicaragua is very different from seeing soldiers and police in this country, because in Nicaragua there is no distinction between soldiers and other people except that they wear a uniform. On our UPE there was one member of the rural militia who was responsible for defence but who was also involved in the harvest itself and most of the actual defence duty was done by men and women who worked on the UPE.'

The bourgeois media seem puzzled by the venom of Reagan against such a small country which hardly seems a threat to the might of the US. But Charles found this understandable

'Reagan presents Nicaragua as a military threat which is just a lie, you can't deal with that presentation seriously. But Nicaragua is a



One of the biggest problems faced by Nicaragua is the shortage of materials but people are keen to build their new society. Here, local people are helping to build a new school for their children's state.

threat to US imperialism, there's no two ways about it. It is a threat by example, it's the same threat that Grenada was. It's the threat of a tiny country in Latin America kicking out US imperialism and it's the threat of progress. Nicaraguans themselves are aware of this, I saw wall paintings there which said 'Cuba yesterday, Nicaragua today, El Salvador tomorrow.'

'The presentation that Nicaragua is militarily aggressive is a lie to cover up what the US wants to do to preserve its exploitation of Central America.'

Charles felt that the Contras had very little support in Nicaragua itself. 'Any support for the Contras comes from the bourgeoisie who are opposed to the state intervention of the Sandinista and who are worse off now than they were before the Triumph.

'But most people I met support the Sandinistas who are very confident and open about the process they are engaged in. At the moment they are dealing with a mixed economy while trying to build a socialist society with socialist institutions.

Process

'But it is always noticeable that things are made very difficult by the war and the blockade; hospitals run short of medicines, schools don't have enough materials. I visited a factory where they roast and grind coffee and cocoa where there were no filters for masks, so people were working without masks — it is those day to day shortages that you notice and that seem to be the biggest problem to the development of the socialist

state. 'Fifty per cent of businesses in Nicaragua are still private and so it's not a socialist country by any means, but I'd say it's a country that is building socialism.

'The cost to the Sandinistas of the Contras being there and being supported by the US is that they have to spend fifty per cent of the government's income on defence to build up an army and militia.

'The lesson of Vietnam is that the US couldn't win anyway in a war, but US policy has always been a combination of the economic attack and the military terrorist activity of the Contras. Both have an enormous effect on the development of the country and greatly hinder the programmes they are trying to initiate.

'The Contras claimed to have 15,000 fighters last year. During this year 10,000 of them were either killed, captured or gave themselves up to claim amnesty — so in terms of numbers the Contras are ceasing to be a real military problem. Despite the amount of US money that they've had, they haven't been able to claim control of a village, let alone an area.

Amnesty

'Their actions are the actions of terrorists, I mean during the literacy campaign teachers were always a target for Contra attack. Teachers were killed, schools were burnt down. So they don't appear to have anything positive to offer.

'In the last elections, 80 per cent voted and of those 70 per cent voted for the Sandinistas — that seems to show the support that they have.

'The Triumph is seven years old now and half the population in Nicaragua is under 15, so in every way it's a very young country. The pride in the revolution is very strong and people say that they will defend it with their lives and it is clear that is true.'

Nicaragua is greatly in need of support from Britain. Coffee and building brigades as well as material aid, is organised by the Nicaraguan Solidarity Campaign, 20-21 Cornwall Terrace, London, N1.



Half the population of Nicaragua is under 15: the spirit of the revolution is shown here by eight-year-old Orlando, helping to make window shutters for a new school in Managua

COMMENT

by Tom Kemp

French Stalinists in turmoil

As the full effect of the electoral defeat on 16 March sinks in the French Communist Party is in the throes of the biggest crisis in its recent history.

Party members and branches are demanding a reckoning from the Marchais leadership as they realise that it has lost more than a half of its electorate and much of its influence in the past decade.

A Central Committee meeting held on 24-25 March to review the situation did nothing to allay the discontent and demoralisation bordering on panic running through the party.

A demand for a re-call conference with over one thousand signatures has been published in the bourgeois newspaper *Le Monde*. Many party branches have also sent letters to the press as well as to the leadership calling for a reckoning.

While seldom referred to by name it is clear that many blame the Party's decline on Georges Marchais, the Secretary, and his team. They have the illusion that a younger, more dynamic leadership could stop the rot and restore the Party to good health. The real reason for the Party's decline lies in the Stalinist policies and manoeuvres over many years.

Support for the reformist Common Programme and the alliance with the then weak Socialist Party under Francois Mitterrand and a section of the Radicals led to the disarming of a large number of workers under the Party's influence.

It put forward a nationalist policy to meet the crisis; posters headed 'Produce French!' were put up all over France. It was unable to lead more than token struggles against shut-downs and redundancies. During the 1970's it seemed that the Party was growing in strength as it brought in many, often middle class, recruits on the basis of the alliance with the Socialist Party.

But it soon seemed to many that reformist policies could best be carried out by the declared reformists. The Socialist Party gained ground at the Stalinists' expense as was shown in the elections of 1981.

Mitterrand graciously allowed four Communist ministers to hold portfolios as a left cover for his government. As discontent mounted against the austerity policies of the Socialists, the Communist ministers quit after three years of unqualified support.

The CP was unable to lead a principled struggle against racism. It was a 'Communist' mayor who bull-dozed an immigrant workers' hostel. Some Communist voters followed this logic, and turned to the National Front.

Through all this time the Marchais leadership complacently presided over the Party's decline. It first hoped that the Communist ministers would gain popularity by their part in a government introducing reforms like those of the Popular Front government of 1936. But in a crisis situation no reforms were possible.

Then they came out of the government and Marchais hoped to capitalise on growing discontent and win back votes. Not only was this manoeuvre regarded cynically by many workers, but the Stalinists had no alternative policy to propose except the application of the now discredited Common Programme.

While the Party ranks were becoming increasingly demoralised and many were leaving in disgust the leadership barred any real discussion of the reasons for the decline in the Party's fortunes. The election debacle has now brought matters to a head. The leadership is being challenged openly in an unprecedented manner. Many members now want Marchais' head.

Although many of the critics are obviously moving to the right, the demand for a full discussion and for a new leadership, arising from all sides, is a healthy sign. Many militant C.P. workers are rejecting Stalinism for the first time, and seeking a genuine revolutionary alternative.

MARCHERS CONDEMN -SEARCH BARBARITY

THE campaign against the strip-searching of Irish women remand prisoners Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer reached its height with a demonstration through south London to Brixton prison last Saturday.

The 350-strong march was followed by a lively two-hour picket at the rear of the prison where many prisoners were able to hear and see it.

Among those who addressed the picket were Dr Maire O'Shea, who was recently acquitted under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and Liz Hill, sister of Paul Hill, one of the 'Guildford Four' frame-up victims.

When it reached Brixton town centre the march was joined by members of the Black Liberation Front, who had been campaigning for the release of Winston Silcot and other youths who had been framed following the police invasion of the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham last November.

'These women, who should be regarded as innocent until proven guilty, instead are being punished before anything was proved,' Maire O'Shea told the meeting. 'We must be proud to be Irish.

We are now going to give a lead to British trade unionists who are in struggle. Miners, printworkers! a nation that suppresses another can never itself be free'.

Many messages of support were read out from prisoners in jail both in Britain and in the north of Ireland

Tee from the Black Liberation Front spoke of the savagery of the police

against black people.

'We resolutely support all those in struggle against British imperialism' he said.

John French spoke on behalf of the Irish Republican POW Campaign Committee, and fiercely condemned the hypocrisy of the press and MPs who 'bear a heavy moral responsibility' for British repression.

'Britain is running out of

options fast in Ireland, and is relying more and more on collaboration with the Dublin government to maintain her rule, while the Unionist monster she has created is now busily petrol-bombing the homes of their sectarian police force,' he said.

'The contradictions of British rule in Ireland are showing themselves more clearly. Britain will continue



From left: Dr Maire O'Shea, Liz Hill and Marion Hill

This attempt to break our comrades

'Today we meet to "stop the strip-searches", next year — unless each individual here today can unite in the solidarity shown by Martina and Ella, also the women in Armagh — we may be meeting to stop juryless trials, or mass internment of the unemployed, or we may not be even able to meet at all. I can only repeat what Marx said over a century ago, look to the Irish, they are fighting back.

'To my comrades in struggle, Martina and Ella, and to those in Armagh I send my revolutionary and fraternal greetings — never shall they even touch our spirit of freedom, for it's in the streets of Derry and Belfast with those who fight in our name. One people, one struggle — victory to the Irish people.'

Jimmy Anderson, Frankland Prison, Durham

'We, the Irish POWs in Albany, stand in solidarity with all anti-imperialists at today's meeting. We remind you all, that the treatment being meted out to Ella and Martina could not be carried out without the support of the SDLP and Fine Gael.

'In fact, it can be said that it is done at their behest.

'But we have resisted for 817 years since the invasion of 1169. We call on all revolutionaries, anti-imperialists, unite, smash British imperialism and join the Irish struggle.'

Tommy, Billy, Johnny and Sean, Irish prisoners in Albany Prison

'Brixton is a top security prison which renders superfluous the amount of activity

directed at these two young women. However it is only superfluous in the context of security. When looked at as part of an overall systematic policy aimed at breaking the morale and weakening the determination of Irish people it is not so superfluous and has its purpose.

'Furthermore the tactic of strip-searching takes on a much more ominous significance when it is viewed against the background of a British society which is at present witnessing an unprecedented upsurge in sexual abuse. In times such as these when each woman nurtures private fears, women, perhaps unwisely, tend to look to the state for a measure of protection. For Ella and Martina, the state, far from offering protection, is in fact the violator of the sanctity of those women's bodies.

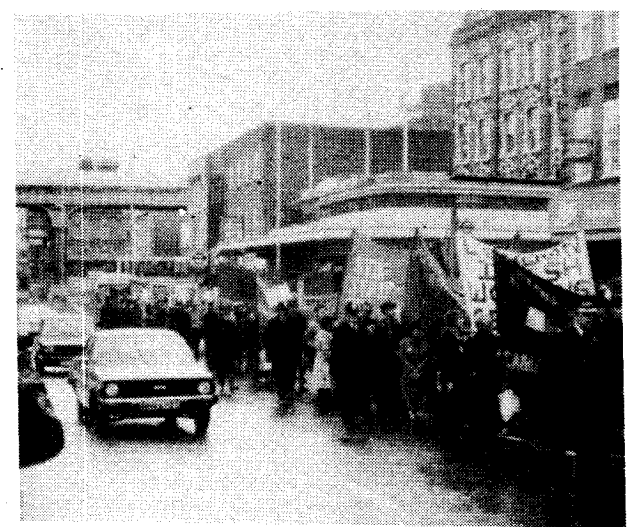
'That these two women should be protected from the state is a matter of the utmost urgency. We urge you all to apply yourselves, individually and collectively, to the best of your ability to providing that protection.

'We further extend our gratitude to all who have worked so hard to highlight this obnoxious issue and we express full solidarity with Ella and Martina. When a woman is abused we must all become women and fight on their behalf.

Victory.'

The Republican Prisoners, H Blocks Long Kesh

'We are all grateful for the amount of time and energy you give to highlight issues concerned with the struggle, and the acquittal of Dr Maire



The marchers in Brixton shopping centre

O'Shea shows just how effective street protest, marches and pickets can be. Wishing the Irish Solidarity Movement every success in the future, I send greetings and thanks from all comrades here.'

Lawrence McKeown, H Block Long Kesh

'It should be quite clear to even the most naive observer that the daily strip-searching of Ella and Martina and other Irish women prisoners is a deliberate tactic of the British government to destroy the dignity and self-respect of these courageous comrades who provide such outstanding examples of resistance against oppression.

Forward to victory!

Shujaa Moshesh, a black prisoner

'I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Ella and Martina. The women are being humiliated and treated inhumanely day after day. It is up to us comrades to stand in solidarity. My support, my comradeship, my friendship goes out to Ella and Martina and of course to all the men in H-blocks and Portlaoise. Stop the strip-searches, stop the brutality.'

Danny Grimes, Blundestown Prison

'I urge everyone here to take a closer and active interest in the prison struggle generally. Remember: Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson are in there for you, make sure you are out here for them.'

Breakout Prisoners Collective

STRIP

to use up her options, until there is only one final option, to remove herself lock stock and barrel from the north of Ireland.'

There were speakers from a number of organisations including the Workers Revolutionary Party. But the most moving speech came from Liz Hill, who spoke of the treatment her brother Paul was receiving at the hand of the state.

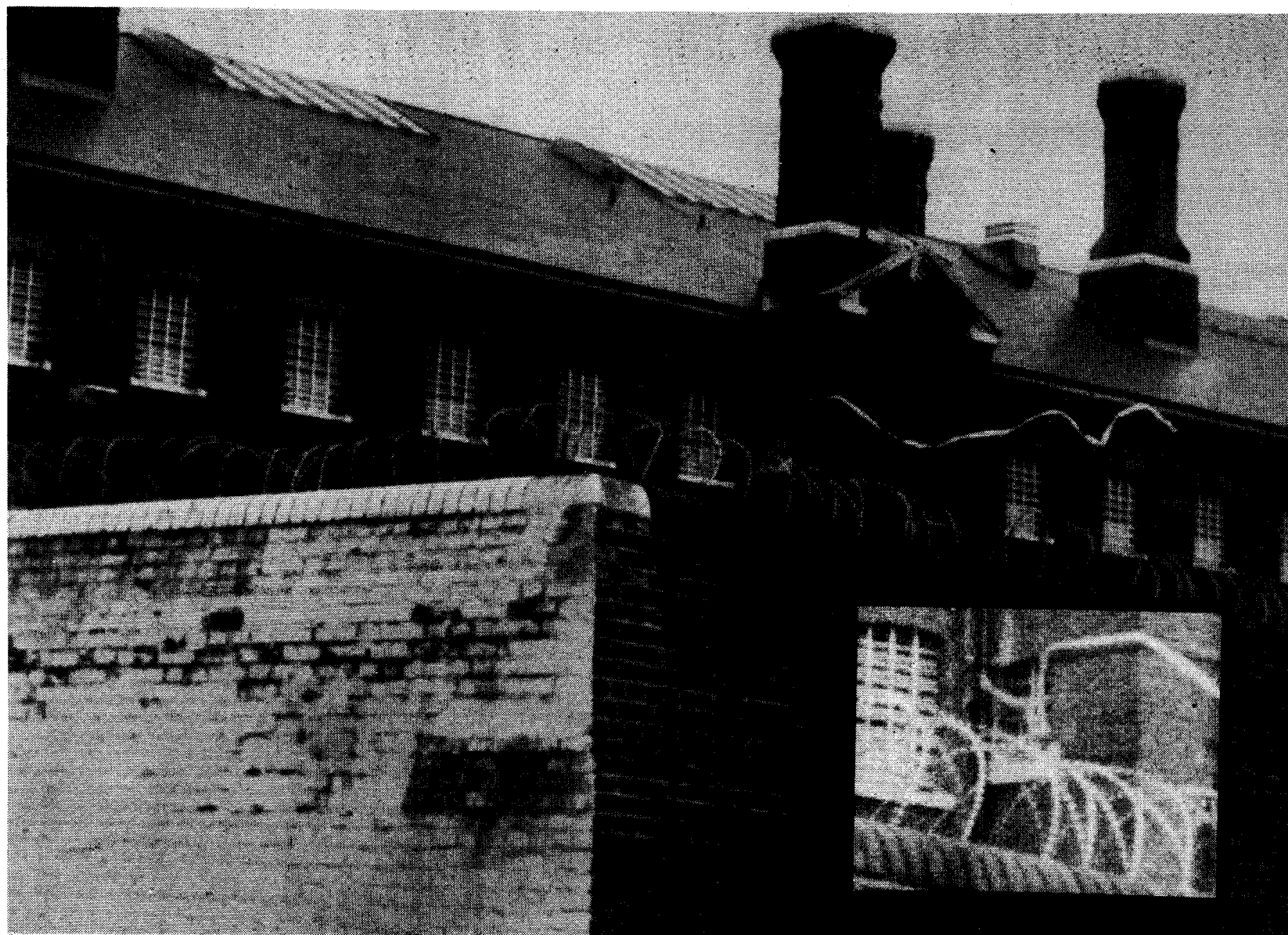
While she was reading her report she began to cry, the audience quietly waited for her to regain her composure, she ended however with a fiery condemnation of state repression.

As the meeting finished a cheer went up as a prisoner who had pushed a toilet roll through the bars of his cell, demonstrated his support with a victory salute.

The demonstration was organised by the IRISH SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT and was an important development in the campaign against strip searching arising from co-operation amongst various groups and individuals

A special message of support was sent to the picket from Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer who said that they would be able to hear the demonstration.

Their trial begins on 5 May. In the meantime there are weekly pickets of Brixton Prison every Saturday from 11.30 to 1.30, organised by the IRISH PRISONERS APPEAL



A prisoner at Brixton greets the demonstrators with a victory sign — and a toilet roll

spirit will fail — prisoners' messages



'We salute the bravery and determination of Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer and their comrades in Armagh prison, who flaunt their courage in the face of a system that has to employ mindless goons to implement and thus perpetuate their laws and policies. The imperial British government lies indicted on countless charges of inhumanity of which strip-searching is one.

This device was cunningly conceived to try to break the spirit of our brave sisters but they will not succeed. I stand in solidarity with our sisters in Brixton and Armagh and with all those who are engaged in the noble fight to secure an end to strip-searches. If you know a good rebel song please sing it to the girls on our behalf.'

Richard Miles and Mike Joiner, Wandsworth Prison

'Though we are in different prisons you are never far from our thoughts and are constantly in our hearts. This picket and demonstration today confirms that you are both part of a new society.'

'You have not been forgotten, sisters, and we are only too pleased to reaffirm our support for you, we stand by you, solid, secure and united in the belief that WE WILL WIN! Our common bond of incarceration joins us together in struggle, and though they can imprison and mistreat our bodies, they can NEVER incarcerate or destroy our beliefs.'

'When the burden you are forced to shoulder becomes too much to bear, when the injustices under which you labour sap your strength, remember the following words:

When things get tough
as they sometimes will
When the path you tread
is all uphill
When spirits are low
and oppression is high
And you want to smile
but you have to sigh
When that brutal place
gets you down a bit
Rest loyal sisters
but don't you quit!
Life can be funny
with its twists and turns
As each of us
often learns
But what seems failure
can suddenly turn about
And you can win
if you stick it out
Don't you despair
maintain the pace

And you can conquer that brutal place.
Success is failure turned inside out
The silver lining of the clouds of doubt
And you never can tell just how close you are
Success can be near when it seems so far
Hold your heads high when you're hardest hit
It's when all seems lost that you must not quit!
Tiocfaidh ar la!
In solidarity.'

Sixty-two comrades and brothers in struggle, Lewes Prison FRFI

'Our thanks to those here today, our congratulations to each and all for your having overcome the power of the corrupt "media" which has sought to speak either lies or nothing at all about this policy most foul which is practised in your name!

'Don't let the British public say when history's page of war crimes is displayed for all the world to see: "We didn't know!" Good can triumph over evil — go out and tell people what is being done in the institutions of the state. Where human beings are treated worse than animals. Where things are done which if they were done by one member of the public against another would warrant a prison sentence! Expose these crimes. Who is going to take the perpetrators to justice? Support us and we will try. . . keep up the fight.'

Gerry McDonnell, Peter Sheney, Pat Magee, Brixton Prison

'I'd be proud and honoured to give my full support to all your pickets and demonstrations to highlight the disgusting and barbaric practice of strip-searching. The courage and determination of the women in Brixton and Armagh is an inspiration to me and a source of great pride.'

'I wonder how long the blood suckers who give out the orders and the cowardly parasites who carry out these orders could stand up to this violent pressure.'

'I was in Brixton for 15 months and at no time did I have to endure even a fraction of what those women are going through. . . I remember well the pickets and demonstrations while I was in Brixton and going to Lambeth. They were always a great morale booster and I'll never be able to repay all those who took part in them.'

Thomas Quigley, Irish POW

'I wish to pledge my complete and unconditional support for any show of solidarity towards women like Ella and Martina. Marx himself pretty much sums up the essence of my feelings in relation to whole issue of strip-searching. "We are ruthless and ask no quarter from you. When our turn comes, we shall not disguise our terrorism. But the royal terrorists, the terrorists by grace or god and the law, are brutal, contemptible and vulgar in practice, cowardly, secretive and double-tongued in theory, and both in practice and in theory they are without honour".'

John Bowden, Welford Road Prison, Leicester

REPUBLICAN PRISONERS OF WAR

LONG LARTIN
HM Prison Long Lartin, S Littleton, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 5TZ

JAMES BENNETT: 20-year sentence, 464989.
MARTIN BRADY: Life sentence, 119087.
GERRY CUNNINGHAM: 20-year sentence, 132016.
ROBERT CUNNINGHAM: 20-year sentence, 131877.
ANDY MULRYAN: 20-year sentence, 461576.
PATRICK MULRYAN: 20-year sentence, 461575.

PARKHURST
HM Prison Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX

HUGH DOHERTY: Life sentence, 338636.
HARRY DUGGAN: Life sentence, 338638.
PATRICK HACKETT: 20-year sentence, 342603.
JOHN McCOMB: 17-year sentence, B51715.
STEPHEN NORDONE: Life sentence, 758663.
JOE O'CONNELL: Life sentence, 338635.
ROY WALSH: Life sentence, 119083.

ALBANY
HM Prison Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS

WILLIAM ARMSTRONG: Life sentence, 119035.
SEAN HAYES: 20-year sentence, 341418.
PAUL HOLMES: Life sentence, 119034.
TOMMY QUIGLEY: Life sentence.

WAKEFIELD
HM Prison Love Lane, Wakefield, W Yorks, WF2 9AG

ANTHONY CLARKE: 14-year sentence, 726381.
SEAN KINSELLA: Life sentence, 758661.
CON McFADDEN: 20-year sentence, 130662.

GARTREE
HM Prison Gartree, Leicester Rd, Market Harborough, Leics, LE16 7RP

ROBERT CAMPBELL: 10-year sentence, B32954.

PAUL KAVANAGH: Life sentence, L31888.
RONNIE McCARTNEY: Life sentence, 463799.

LEICS
HM Prison Welford Rd, Leicester, LE2 7AJ

EDDIE BUTLER: Life sentence, 338637.
BRENDAN DOWD: Life sentence, 758662.
BRIAN KEENAN: 21-year sentence, B26380.

HULL
HM Prison Hedon Rd, Hull, Humberside

LIAM BAKER: 20-year sentence, 464984.
PAUL NORNEY: Life sentence, 863532.

FRANKLANDS
VINCENT DONNELLY: Life sentence, 274064.
EDDIE O'NEILL: 20-year sentence, 135722.

WORMWOOD SCRUBS
HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs, PO Box 757, Du Cane Rd, London W12 0AE

NOEL GIBSON: Life sentence, 879225.

REMAND PRISONERS BRIXTON
HM Prison Brixton, PO Box 369, Jebb Ave, London SW2 5XF

MARTINA ANDERSON
ELLA O'DWYER
GERRY McDONNELL
PETER SHERRY
PAT McGEE

INNOCENT MEN AND WOMEN FRAMED BY THE BRITISH POLICE:

CAROLE RICHARDSON, PATRICK ARMSTRONG, GERARD CONLON, PAUL HILL, JUDITH WARD, HUGH CALLAGHAN, JOHN WALKER, BILLY POWER, GERARD HUNTER, RICHARD MC ILKENNY, PADDY HILL.

They are all serving life and in the case of Carole Richardson, indefinite detention.

The memory of Robert Shaw

Seminar on movement's history

IT WAS NOT my intention to enter into public discussion through *Workers Press* on the question of the sixth anniversary of the death of Robert Shaw, but the contribution in the issue of April 5 by Bill Hunter on behalf of the Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party under the headline 'Robert Shaw — Revolutionary Fighter' forces me to do so.

When G. Healy was expelled from the WRP last October for violation of revolutionary morality, the party, and especially the central leadership, declared that never again would such practices be permitted and that the party would speak the truth to the working class.

And yet, the very first paragraph of the contribution on Robert Shaw is a gross untruth.

The Central Committee did not 'recall with pride Robert Shaw as a revolutionary fighter' at its meeting on 23 March. The truth is the Central Committee did not recall Robert Shaw at all — until it was reminded by a newly elected member from the East Midlands that 22 March was the sixth anniversary of his death and nothing had appeared in the *Workers Press*. The leadership stated that this was an 'oversight' (my emphasis) and that it would be put right.

The issue of *Workers Press* of 29 March did not put the matter right. This we are informed, in the issue of 5 April, was due to 'an error in our editorial office'. An apology is made to readers of *Workers Press*, but no apology is made to the party, or to myself. The purpose of the apology is merely an



BOB SHAW

attempt to soften the letter from comrade Des Warren who speaks out honestly and forcefully as a communist.

Comrades of the leadership, why are you not also honest? Why do you not admit that you gave not the slightest thought to the sixth anniversary of Robert Shaw's death? That you had forgotten Robert Shaw, whose family relations, as comrade Des Warren correctly states, Healy tried to destroy? That you allowed Healy and the anti-Trotskyist News Line to claim Robert Shaw as one of their company, in their issue of 22 March and you have remained silent?

Be honest with yourselves, with me, with the party and

with the working class. That is the only way to defeat Healy's gross disregard of revolutionary morality and his practice of opportunist clique politics and the devastating effect of this on our party.

As to the statement which does so belatedly appear in *Workers Press* — it was not possible for you even to get the facts correct.

Robert Shaw did not grow up in Nottingham, he grew up in Leeds. A glance at the first chapter of the book 'Robert Shaw — Fighter for Trotskyism' would have told you that. But perhaps it is asking too much that you should refer to that book, certainly you showed no desire to publicise it in *Workers Press* on the anniversary of his death. If you had done only that, it would have been an acknowledgement of the contribution he made as a revolutionary fighter for Trotskyism for forty years.

Ally

Instead what finally appeared in *Workers Press* attempted to ally Robert Shaw with Healy by stating: 'At the end of the war he joined with G. Healy in a faction in the Trotskyist movement advocating entry into the Labour Party.' But why do you refer to the entry struggle and not to the ear-

lier, much more important struggle to unify with the other Trotskyist groupings and become part of the Fourth International?

Is it because you do not accept that we were ever outside the Fourth International?

Towards the end of the contribution it states 'Despite the respect in which he held Healy in the past... Do you know that Robert Shaw ever held Healy in respect? What right have you to make this assumption?'

It will not do comrades. I do not accept your excuses of 'oversight' and 'editorial error' and I am sure that many members and supporters of the party who have read 'Robert Shaw — Fighter for Trotskyism' will not accept your excuses either.

Your untruth cannot be countenanced and if you cannot write of Robert Shaw in a truly objective perspective, then better indeed that you remain silent. But I, and I believe many other comrades also, will not permit you to use his memory for opportunist ends.

Mickie Shaw

'Robert Shaw, Fighter for Trotskyism' by Mickie Shaw is available from New Park Publications, 21b Old Town, London SW4 0JT. Price £3, plus 95p postage and packing.

A CONFERENCE on the history of Trotskyism will be held in Nottingham on 26 April (see advert). It is open to all those recognising the urgency of building a revolutionary International, whether outside the WRP or in.

In the morning, Bill Hunter will open the discussion on the question 'What is Trotskyism?', and Dave Temple will speak on 'Lessons of the Miners' Strike'.

In the afternoon, participants will have a choice of three two-hour workshops. One, led by Chris Bailey, will concentrate particularly on Cuba and will discuss the way in which organisations calling themselves Trotskyist abandoned the theory of Permanent Revolution.

Alan Thornett of Socialist Viewpoint will open a workshop on the history and method of the Transitional Programme.

A third workshop on the history of the Fourth International, 1938-53, will be opened by Keith Hassell of the Workers Power Political Committee.

The final full session of the conference will be entitled 'Build the Revolutionary International'.

There is a conference charge of £1.

RE-ORGANISATION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL
A PUBLIC DISCUSSION
 Wednesday April 30th, 7pm
 Conway Hall
 Red Lion Square

Pierre Broué
 will speak on

RECENT RESEARCHES INTO THE LIFE AND WORK OF LEON TROTSKY and the HISTORY OF TROTSKYISM

at Friends Meeting House, Euston Road NW1
 on Thursday April 17, at 7.30
 Admission 50p, unwaged 20p

Friday April 18 at 7.30

POPULAR FRONTS IN THE 1930s and THEIR LESSONS FOR TODAY

Speakers: Tom Kemp, Pierre Broué

Exhibition of recent publications and translations
 Admission 50p, unwaged 20p

at Friends Meeting House (Westminster)
 52 St. Martin's Lane WC2

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY Midlands Area

WHAT IS TROTSKYISM?

A Day Conference on the History of Trotskyism and its importance today

Saturday April 26, 10am - 5pm
International Community Centre
Mansfield Road
NOTTINGHAM

Speakers: Bill Hunter (WRP Central Committee)
 Dave Temple (WRP C.C.; Murton Mechanics NUM delegate, in personal capacity)
 Chris Bailey (WRP Central Committee)
 Alan Thornett (Socialist Viewpoint)
 Keith Hassell (Workers Power National Committee)

For conference details phone Nottingham 619109, Leicester 707730, or write to YSTC, 4-8 Commerce Square The Lace Market, Nottingham.
Conference charge: £1.00

The lost tribes

SCIENCE NEWS

FIFTY THOUSAND years ago, or thereabouts, the first modern humans left Africa and populated the rest of the planet. Recent genetic research has filled in some of the detail of this emigration and the resulting diversification of human populations.

From the fossil evidence it is evident that fully modern Homo Sapiens was around in southern Africa 100,000 years ago and by 50,000 years ago was widespread throughout Africa. However modern man appears to have replaced Neanderthal man in Europe only 30,000 years ago, while modern looking hominid fossils from Asia have been dated to almost 50,000 years ago.

By analogy with the spread of later and better documented populations this expansion was probably extremely rapid. For example the population spread through the Americas started some 12,000 years ago when Inuit peoples crossed the Bering straits. Within just a thousand years their descendants had reached Tierra del Fuego, the southern-most tip of the continent.

The genetic study, reported and reviewed in *Nature*, is based on an analysis of a small segment of DNA which is responsible for the formation of beta-globin in the blood.

Out of fourteen variables in this segment found within the human populations studied, two are characteristic of African populations, one



exclusively so, and another three characteristic of non-African populations. This new information together with previous studies indicates that the evolution of modern man had a longer history in Africa than elsewhere, and that the migrant population which populated the rest of the earth was initially very small.

Genetic studies of blood and enzyme forming DNA provide evidence that the African population is much more diverse genetically than non-African populations. The reason for this is that the population of Africa must have been evolving and diversifying long before one segment of that population gave rise to the rest of the human population. The beta-globin information provides

a basis for calculating the effect of this so called 'population bottle-necking'.

Segment

This occurs when a small segment of a population, with a necessarily restricted and unrepresentative selection of the genes of the entire gene-pool, is the founder group of an entire new population. The article proposes that to account for the disparity in the beta-globin genes the bottle-necking must have been very severe, i.e. the gene pool of all non-Africans was carried by very few individuals. Consequently, the initial migratory population would have suffered from considerable inbreeding and may at times

have been on the 'endangered tribe' list of 50,000 years ago.

The length of the bottle-neck has to allow time for the observed beta-globin divergence to take place before the non-African populations began to differentiate. Otherwise not all non-African populations would exhibit the same, observed degree of divergence. If the bottle-neck was say 20,000 years long, then on classic population genetics calculations an average population of 600 throughout that time gave rise to the entire non-African population. However if the bottle-neck was only 200 years long then the population would have only been six!

However, this is an extreme case, and when one looks at calculations based on divergence of mitochondrial DNA the average population for a 200 year long bottle-neck climbs to 40. Not surprisingly therefore the same article also sounds a warning against placing too much reliance on data from individual genes. On the other hand, blood group and enzyme studies show no bottle-neck effect at all, and differences between African and Europeans on this molecular level are no more pronounced than between African tribes or European countries.

The genetic level does however seem to provide the best clues to the history of modern man and our dispersal around the globe, and this research not only confirms that Africa was the cradle of 'modern' man some 50,000 years but emphasises that even Enoch Powell is just another member of one particular 'lost tribe of Africa'.

IRAQ: THE BLOOD ON HEALY'S BANNER

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

IN MARCH 1978, the Communist Party of Iraq published a report criticising the Iraqi government's alleged failure to carry out pledges on economic, social and political progress. The party was in a coalition with the ruling Ba'ath nationalists, the so-called national front government.

Any illusion that government participation meant a real share of power was soon brutally dispelled. Twenty-one Communist Party members or sympathisers were tried by a military court on charges of conducting political work in the armed forces, and executed.

Repression

It was the beginning of a campaign of repression. Laws were passed making it an imprisonable offence to promote any doctrine aimed at altering the constitution or changing society. It was decreed that anyone who recruited members of a Ba'ath-controlled organisation to another party could face the death penalty. Communist Party members, other left-wingers, Kurdish nationalists, and religious dissidents, were arrested, tortured, and killed.

The repression in Iraq threatened to spread abroad. Left-wing Iraqi students in Britain and elsewhere feared that the Ba'ath-controlled National Union of Iraqi Students might serve as a cover for their government to move against them, as they campaigned on democratic rights in their country.

The issue of Iraq was taken up by the Communist Party here, by some Labour MPs, by the Stalinist-led National Union of Students, and by some writers in the capitalist press. Undoubtedly there was some hypocrisy and opportunism involved. Some of those supposedly espousing the rights of Iraqi Communists had little or nothing to say about the rights of the Palestinian people struggling against Zionist oppression, or about the repression going on in Sadat's Egypt.

Even when more than 15,000 people had been killed in the anti-communist onslaught after a right-wing coup in Iraq in 1963, the response of the British Stalinists was muted, while Labourites like Fenner Brockway defended the Aref regime responsible.

Nevertheless, there was a principle involved. For any genuine socialist, there was an obligation, regardless of differences with the Iraqi

C.P., to defend its right to organise and put forward its views, and to denounce the murder of Communist Party members.

This principle was betrayed by the then leadership of the Workers' Revolutionary Party, notably by G. Healy and Alex Mitchell, running the News Line. Not only did they fail to make any protest over the killing of 21 Communist Party members in Iraq, they actually tried to justify it. This must rank as one of the most scandalous episodes in the history of any movement calling itself 'Trotskyist'.

While turning the movement into public apologists for a bourgeois nationalist regime's reactionary policy, Healy and Mitchell went further in secret. News Line photographers were instructed to take pictures of demonstrators outside the Iraqi embassy, and to deliver these photographs to the embassy. We know this from the testimony of one of our photographers, who refused to do this dirty work for Healy.

It is easy enough to imagine what the Iraqi secret police had planned for any Iraqi students identified from the pictures, or for their families back home.

Since getting rid of Healy and his rotten clique, the Workers Revolutionary Party has determined to re-examine its history, to investigate fully the crimes and betrayals carried out by Healy's gang, and to analyse all the political issues involved. This process has begun.

Torrance

Meanwhile, those who went with Healy are still pretending nothing happened, just as they pretend that they are the WRP and the majority which threw them out is a 'clique' which defected. Sheila Torrance knew all about Healy's sexual abuse and brutality against women comrades, but has told her rump following to deny it. It is also reported that she claimed in answer to a question about Iraq that News Line 'never had an editorial' on the killing of the 21.

Maybe Torrance was so busy chasing WRP members to get their fund in that she never speculated about Healy and Mitchell's little trips to Baghdad, who was paying their fares, and why? Maybe she was so busy bossing the Y.S. National Committee about discos and swimming galas that she gave no thought to the political mis-education YS members were getting from the paper they sold? It certainly seems she can't have read the News Line — or maybe on this, as other things, her memory is a little faulty?

On February 2, 1979, under the rubric 'What We Think', an article in News Line headed boldly 'A CONSPIRACY EXPOSED' attacked the Communist Party and 'Morning Star' for



**WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
HANDS OFF THE ARAB BA'ATH
SOCIALIST PARTY AND THE
NATIONAL UNION OF IRAQI STUDENTS
VICTORY TO THE ARAB REVOLUTION**

Healy speaking at a WRP meeting 'defending' the Ba'ath regime from the Communist Party

'scurrilously defaming the Arab Revolution—the Republic of Iraq and its revolutionary vanguard the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party.'

Without a by-line (who'd want to claim it!), the article has nevertheless all the hallmarks of Healy's thought and Mitchell's style to it. The Communist Party is accused of acting 'At the obvious instigation of the Kremlin' and the 'Morning Star' of 'scurrilously defaming the Iraqi people and the conquests of the Ba'ath Socialist Party leadership.'

(We might note the way opposition to a Party leadership becomes 'defaming the people'— a turn of phrase used in Stalinist show-trials, here adapted to Healy's spurious anti-Stalinism, in reality anti-communism.)

The charges made in a petition to the Iraqi embassy are dismissed as 'ludicrous' and 'preposterous'; indeed 'so preposterous that the Iraqi Ambassador in London, Mr. Hisham al-Shawi, forcefully denied them and refused to accept the deputation's letter.' Of course, if the ambassador denied it all, that should have been good enough for us! After all, diplomats are gentlemen, and always tell the truth!

News Line

The News Line statement went on: 'It is true that 21 CP members were executed early last year for illegally forming cells in the armed forces. The purpose of these cells was to fight against the government. There are no prizes for the answer to what would happen to Ba'athists who set up cells in the Soviet army. They would be ruthlessly purged!'

This kind of argument is all too familiar, from the enemies of the working class. Protest against repression or persecution of communists in any capitalist country and you get the sneer 'what about Russia!' As though the murdered Iraqi CP members can be blamed, or their murder

justified by reference to the policies of the Soviet bureaucracy. And this was being said not in a Tory paper but in the supposedly Trotskyist News Line!

The issue was raised again in the News Line of March 8, 1979, when a trade unionist wrote in, referring to the paper's apparent condoning of the execution of the 21, and asked: 'Are readers of the News Line to conclude that you actually support the murder of members of the Communist Party of Iraq?'

'I thought that it was a principle among Trotskyists that they should defend workers against all attacks from the state in any capitalist country. How is the Brit-



SADDAM HUSSEIN

ish working class to have any confidence in your organisation when you show such indifference to the murder of workers abroad at the hands of their state?'

In a manner reminiscent of Stalinism at its worst, News Line began its 'reply' by referring to a 'lurid slander campaign' against Iraq by the 'Guardian' and 'Morning Star' and warning the letter-writer of 'the company he is keeping'. After a lengthy but somewhat crude critique of the Communist Parties' record in Iraq and other Middle East countries, and noting that countries like Cuba and Bulgaria still had good relations with Iraq, the anonymous News Line writer eventually gets to the question asked.

'The fact is that the CP members were executed according to military codes which the Iraqi CP discussed, approved and agreed to implement. To this day the Iraqi CP has not called for the repeal of the military laws which ban the formation of secret cells in the army. . . This is a straight case of Moscow trying to set up cells in the Iraqi armed forces for the purpose of undermining the regime. It must accept the consequences.'

Of course it was not 'Moscow' which had suffered 'consequences', but 21 Iraqi CP supporters. All that News Line could say blandly in reply to the reader's pointed question was: 'It is a principle with Trotskyists that we defend workers, whether they are Stalinists, revisionists or social democrats from the attacks of the capitalist state.'

'But, as the facts show, that has nothing to do with the incidents in Iraq.' The facts had shown nothing of the sort. What the case did show was a betrayal by Healy and co. of every principle in the book.

The Ba'athist regime in Iraq is a bourgeois nationalist regime which in its efforts for Arab national liberation, economic independence and social progress has at times come into conflict with imperialism and Zionism. In these circumstances, it is the duty of Marxists to defend Iraq against reaction. It is certainly not our duty, or in any way acceptable, to defend the Arab bourgeoisie and its methods of rule against its own working class, the poor peasantry, or the national minorities.

In every capitalist state, the bourgeoisie tries to ensure that whatever it gives 'socialists' or 'communists' in either political rights or government positions, it keeps the armed forces in its own tight grip. There are always laws against 'politics' — i.e. left-wing politics, among the troops.

In fairness to the Iraqi

Ba'ath leaders, being comparatively new to the game, they are less hypocritical than the ruling class in older capitalist countries like Britain. They don't pretend to ban 'all politics'. An Iraqi government publication 'Political Work in the Armed Forces' refers frankly to insistence 'on making political activity in the armed forces an exclusive right of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party'.

Published in 1978, — the same year the CP members were executed — it says 'the loyalty of the armed forces to the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party alone will ensure the preservation of the unity of the armed forces in the first place, and their performance of the patriotic and nationalist task in the most perfect and accurate manner...'

The Ba'athist publication acknowledges that 'the revolution and its leadership have been careful to prevent any political contingent, including the contingents of the progressive front from working inside the armed forces.' It says 'the only legitimate political action within their ranks is that of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, and that the death sentence is the just revolutionary retribution to be awarded on all those exercising political activity within the ranks of the armed forces apart from the militants of the leading party, the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party.'

Treachery

Point taken! So where do the Healyites stand on this? Do they regard Iraq, where the working class has yet to take power, as 'socialist'? Do they believe the aims of national liberation can be entrusted entirely to the bourgeoisie? Do they support laws forbidding Marxist propaganda and agitation? Do they believe the ruling class is entitled to its monopoly over the armed forces — just as Allende and his Stalinist supporters granted it in Chile, with horrific consequences?

None of the criticisms made of the Arab Communist Parties by the Ba'athists or the Healyites, none of Mitchell's attacks on Stalinist hypocrisy, can detract from the fact that the line of News Line on Iraq had nothing in common with Trotskyism, and was against everything Trotsky stood for.

We have not dealt with all the treachery which the Healy leadership carried out in this episode. There is more to come out, and we will probe and expose it all. One last thing has to be said. It was the proud boast of Trotskyism that the Fourth International, unlike social-democracy and Stalinism, had not betrayed, that workers should rally to its 'spotless banner'. Thanks to Healy, Mitchell, et al, that banner has been stained with blood and filth. For this we will not forgive them. We are going to clean it up.

LETTERS

TEACHERS NEED PERSPECTIVE

YOUR ARTICLE on the teachers' dispute (Workers Press 15) while containing much that was useful, in particular on Tory plans for education, suffered grievously from lack of any perspective.

It should now be a dictum of your paper that approaching events from a 'the end of the world is nigh' stance is the best way of confining yourself to irrelevance.

Yet, here again we had the same one-sided analysis concluding that 'education in Britain cannot be reformed or a return made to past gains'.

Such a statement, apart from being open to some debate, carefully begs the question of what militants should be doing in the present situation.

As if to rub in this total lack of any political perspective for teachers (or anyone else for that matter) in education the author of the article has to retreat into a ritual restatement of the truism 'only the emergence of the political independence of the working class as a revolutionary force with a socialist programme etc, etc, as the solution to the crisis.'

Missing

What is missed out is how we get there! On that, not a word.

It is all very well to attack Carole Regan (and the Socialist Teachers' Alliance) for promoting a perspective of unity of NUT with NAS/UWT as a key goal of the present dispute.

I also disagree with that perspective, not least because I do not see disputes being won in negotiating committees, and all unity with NAS/UWT would provide is a majority in Burnham since in many areas we have already had 'unity in action'.

But you criticise without offering an alternative.

What is perhaps most interesting, however, is the way in which the working class — and the trade unions in which workers' organise — are allocated no real role in the scenario painted in the article.

True, the working class gets a place in the final breast-beating statement about 'revolution' but in the

interim the concern is solely with the Tories, the banks and the bureaucrats.

It is as though the working class only has a role in determining events at the point of revolution — a nonsense worthy of Healy, and in fact derived directly from him.

Whatever the failings of the teacher unions, they have in fact caused the Tories to re-examine what they do about education. The smooth transition they anticipated from the MSC-inspired TVEI scheme to a tripartite system has not happened.

The reason for this is simple. While many of the left were indeed seduced by TVEI and the MSC money and its 'radical' realism, most of these have subsequently failed to deliver the goods as requested by the MSC.

Attacked

Our own TVEI scheme in Leicestershire was, for example, attacked by MSC for having been swallowed into the general comprehensive system and for not being a distinct new initiative.

Similarly with the new GCSE, the debate goes much further than 'will we run the new courses in 1986/87'. In fact the debate over curriculum content — initiated by Callaghan in 1976 — is only just getting under way.

At grass-roots level, beginnings of a serious critique of the MSC, the various profiling schemes and the new 'skills' curriculum is emerging.

As a result of this opposition, most clearly expressed in the current pay dispute, the Tories have been moved to tackle the problem of 'education' in a different way, via privatisation.

Their plan to sell off schools is the natural logic of their policies. But by so doing they have opened up, at last, education's Pandora's Box by overtly making education 'political'.

The latest batch of Tory plans clearly stands as a challenge not only to the teachers but to the whole labour and trade union movement.

In that situation the level of organisation developed by union branches and schools during the present dispute will be crucial because it poses the real alternative.

Beginning from September 1985 with the ballots on half-day staggered action the NUT membership began to play a decisive role in the development of the dispute. I don't think your correspondent realises how far militants have taken this 'licence' to create the maximum disruption in some areas.

Action

In many schools in Leicestershire over the past term (11 weeks — 53 days) schools were shut for between 25 and 40 days, i.e., up to three-quarters of the time. This was school-based action, with members organising their action to keep schools closed for up to four days per week.

Where headteachers resisted closure, they faced immediate walkouts by school groups, something headteachers were not keen to tackle. As a result, the NUT members secured a high degree of control in their schools. Perhaps for the first time headteachers had to consult the unions rather than the managers.

This has applied equally in the general running of schools. Where issues of concern to the union — e.g. job loss — have arisen, staff meetings have been arranged in school time to decide a policy.

Naturally, in such cases the NUT group has met beforehand to agree a union policy first. Finally, no-cover action has not only

given teachers more control, it has also improved their conditions.

This growing control by the NUT membership in schools and by the local union branches in some areas provides us with an alternative to Joseph's 'parental' choice.

What we have to promote is labour movement control via committees of teachers, local trade unions, students, councillors, tenants and other community organisations.

Policy

But it needs to be fought for, both in and out of the union, as part of an overall policy for education including a victory on teachers' pay.

Your correspondent seems intent on blaming the union executive for all the retreats on pay, without facing up to the equally grave problem of local union leadership.

In many areas, despite encouragement from NUT nationally, associations have not organised staggered action which could bring the education service almost to a halt.

This retreat at local level is far more serious in that it isolates militant areas — or even militant schools — leaving them open to be picked off by the press, Tory parents or even the employers.

Isolated militancy is no solution. Yet the reality is

that in carrying out such a fight to maximise action militants have been and will be carrying out union policy.

Platform

The reason the one-day national strike was a central issue in the union was because it was an opportunity to bring together members from all areas and would then be a platform for militant union activists to promote their policies to new areas, a policy of unity through action.

Similarly, in order to move the executive and impose conference decisions on them it is necessary for those local associations who have won mass support for a campaign of intensive action to take that fight to national level.

To lobby the executive, Burnham, ACAS etc., to promote policies for intensified action, in defence of conditions of service etc. This means the activists accepting their national responsibilities.

Doubtful

The present NUT conference is unlikely to solve anything either way. While the executive wants to participate in ACAS — and therefore one presumes call off strike action for six months — it is doubtful that the other teacher associations (particularly NAS/UWT) or the

employer will let them get away with that.

They are demanding the NUT do more than 'climb down' on the question of ACAS participation. They want NUT to formally join the sell-out. The NUT executive cannot, whatever its wishes, do that. Hence their present dilemma.

Trapped

In that situation, with the NUT leadership caught in a trap of its own making, NUT members must prosecute the campaign at all levels using every new turn in the situation to build local and national action.

In particular, as job loss looms, this will mean stepping up campaigns of industrial action against budget cuts, oversize classes and loss of teaching jobs, linking these issues with the whole question of defence of state education.

With the pay question in the melting pot, the measure of the success of such a campaign will be the extent to which industrial action in schools marginalises the ACAS talks as a forum for 'establishing peace in the schools'.

Peter Flack,

Secretary, City of Leicester Teachers' Association (in a personal capacity)

LONDON BUSES strike still necessary

I would like to make a few points about the Workers Press report (March 29) about London busworkers calling off their proposed strike action.

True, London Buses Ltd did agree to withdraw their notice of termination of the wages and conditions agreement, but they have given no guarantee that the measures they wanted in the Agreement's place will not reappear at a later date, possibly as strings to the 1986 pay deal.

The strike was originally called over job losses, garage closures, conversion of buses to driver-only and the tendering of services on the open market. It was only in the run-up to the strike ballot and since, that management announced ending the agreements and went over the head of the negotiating procedure to demand pay cuts at Potters Bar and Hounslow Garages.

Demand

The original five demands of the busworkers have not been positively answered by London Buses Ltd. Instead they have given certain paper responses without giving any real concessions to the five demands.

They still intend to proceed with pay cuts, but now will only be able to do so with union consent, and they will continue to close garages, tender routes and convert buses to driver-only. The



'Bus workers must prepare for a strike'

only major concession they have made is that job losses will be covered by the Severance Agreement, but even this is only for job losses currently in the pipeline — with no guarantee for any future losses.

The report on March 29th stated that 'speaker after speaker from the floor of the

conference warned that busworkers must prepare for a future strike.'

I would wholeheartedly agree with this, as London Buses Ltd will continue their attack on busworkers' wages and conditions and the London bus services but, by calling off the strike action until some unspecified time in the

future, the Delegates to the London Bus Conference have allowed themselves to be manoeuvred out of a strike in defence of bus services into a probable pay dispute.

The former would attract a lot of sympathy from the passengers, who are fed up with the deteriorating level of service provided by London Buses Ltd; whereas the latter is likely to antagonise them, and will certainly be used by management to prove that it is the workers and not themselves who are to blame.

Class

The delegates to the conference who supported the call not to go ahead with the strike ballot are trying to replace the class action of London busworkers with possible manoeuvring by the union's negotiating team.

It is a method doomed to failure. The days of negotiating the way out of a dispute are over.

The longer the strike on London's buses is postponed the harder it will become to achieve a victory. Private operators using non-union drivers are taking over London's bus routes at an alarming rate — before long there will be so few red buses running that any strike action will have no impact at all.

Dave Dowsett
Branch Representative,
Stockwell Bus Garage

JOIN THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

FILL IN THIS FORM AND POST TO:
The General Secretary
21B Old Town, Clapham
London SW4 0JT

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
TRADE UNION _____ AGE _____
DATE SENT _____

Sacked Polmaise men fight on

BEFORE the great miners' strike, Alex McCallum hadn't been active in the union, he says, 'but I learned many things through getting involved in the campaign'.

These men from a Stirlingshire mining village never set out to be leaders: they just wanted to defend their jobs, their pit, their community. The strike brought a wealth of experiences and lessons, as miners found themselves in the front-line for the whole working class.

Polmaise happened to be out in front. Threatened with closure, the miners there decided unanimously to come out three weeks before the national strike was called — and wanted to spread the action. The men who speak up in this powerful little book are still out — victimised by the NCB.

When the management wanted to shut off power and flood the pit, Polmaise miners went down to occupy and stop this. After three days, George Bolton of the NUM Scottish area persuaded them that they'd made their point, and should come up. Alex McCallum recalls how the sit-downs by scabs in Ollerton and Staffordshire.

One Year On — Sacked Polmaise Miners Speak Out. Edited by Steve McGrail.

well-publicised by the media, brought no action against them. He and his comrades were victimised by the Board, using the Mines and Quarries Act, for trying to save their pit.

Altogether, eleven men from Polmaise were dismissed for their part in the strike. The five who we meet in this book are struggling along on the dole, and still thinking about all they have learned — about management, the press, the government and the police.

Brian McKinlay was lifted while demonstrating peace-



The strike brought a wealth of experiences and lessons . . . here scabs are escorted past pickets at Silverwood colliery

fully against scabs getting coal before pensioners. 'I got shoved up against this polis then two more came from nowhere, just grabbed me, snatch squad. One had me by the hair, the other by the arm. One said: "Don't you ever shove a polis again" and pushed me right into the back of the van.' Told he might get off if he pleaded guilty to breach of the peace, Brian refused this advice. He got fined £100, and victimised by the Board.

What's added to the bitterness of these Polmaise men has been their experience with the union, the CP-dominated Scottish NUM. They found themselves

'time-barred' — their cases were taken to Industrial Tribunal, but the forms were somehow lost in the Scottish NUM headquarters. They feel there should have been action to get the sacked men reinstated, that there should be action now, that the union officials have let them down.

'If we go to Edinburgh to ask questions of the union there's nobody prepared to give an honest answer', accuses John Swain. 'Bolton just keeps on saying "Hang on, hang on, we're on the right lines this time". But I'll tell you, it's all right for Bolton and Eric Clarke, go to Tenerife for their holidays,

and the boys here can't afford to go up the road for a pint!'

The hardship and bitterness has not diminished the men's determination. They are too class-conscious to accept a suggestion of suing the union. 'That would be like suing myself!', reasons Jimmy Graham.

They don't see themselves as 'politically-motivated' — after all, all they're asking for is their jobs back. But the Polmaise men are faced with a political issue. The criticisms raised of union leaders like Bolton do relate to the 'peaceful co-existence' outlook of the Euro-Stalinists in the unions. What the sacked men and ex-Polmaise delegate John McCormack are really confronting is the struggle for leadership worthy of the fighting miners. The Polmaise men want our solidarity. We, the rest of the working class, need to learn from their experience. ('One Year On' is available from Steve Mc Grail, East Lodge, Airth, by Falkirk, West Lothian. 70p. Plus postage. Proceeds to sacked miners.)

That's rich!

Funny Money. By Mark Singer. Picador, £3.50.
Metal Men. By A Craig Coppetas. Harrap, £8.95.

SELLING MONEY is 'the fun stuff', according to Mark Singer's book about the collapse of Penn Square Bank in 1982. Both he and A Craig Coppetas have written cautionary tales about capitalism running riot, books in which the numbers are astronomical as the bubbles inflate.

Both writers are drunk with heady fumes from the sprees they observed, and they write with the half cynical, half intoxicated style of outsiders who would really like to be inside.

In fact they got to fairly close quarters - Coppetas did some trading in order to infiltrate the world of the metal traders, 'freelance salesmen of the earth's resources'.

The London Metal Exchange with its frenzied hollering is one of the places where such men gamble.

'England outlawed pit bull baiting in 1835 and legalised the LME in 1837,' explained a hoarse ringmaster from Johnson Matthey. 'On a slow day it's maniacal; on a heavy day you're fortunate to walk off the floor alive.'

The book centres on the activities of Mark Rich, archetypal ten billion dollar white collar criminal, last seen clambering through a back window of a restaurant to avoid an interview. His hideout is Zug, a little village

in Switzerland, to take advantage of Swiss business secrecy laws.

The trick in metal trading, Rich style, is to maintain the velocity of money, moving cash in the world's financial markets so that no government, no taxman, can nail it down. Coppetas describes Mark Rich's operations.

The telephone became part of his anatomy, and he ruthlessly increased his dealings at the expense of rival firms from whom he stole experienced traders.

He was eventually indicted in his absence - but it is impossible to estimate how much money he made.

Singer's book is about the bank failures of 1982 when 'the intensive care wards of the banking system were full' and fresh corpses turned up regularly.

It is a book which romps with pleasure through the rise and fall of the Penn Square Bank in Oklahoma City, where 'irresponsible borrowers met irresponsible lenders' in an orgy which multiplied the loans of the bank.

Singer gives the process several colourful names, like 'leverage vertigo' and the 'bigger fool principle' - the notion that, no matter what you paid for something, there would always be a bigger fool to pay more for it.

The Oklahoma borrowers were primarily the 'new oilies', men who 'punched holes in the ground' and had 'Okiesmo' - the special life style characterised by

arranging to play golf, driving out of town, picking up the helicopter, and flying back to land at the first tee.

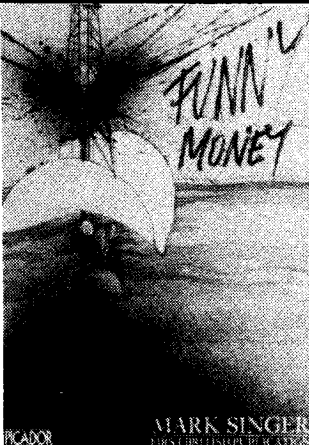
The basis on which vast sums were borrowed, Singer argues, was science fiction. The borrowers were asked to explain their actions.

'Oil and gas, according to these sworn statements, hang out in big pools underground, waiting for a real estate mogul from Marina del Rey to fork over a hundred and fifty thousand dollars so an oil company can sink a metal straw down there and slurp up the goo.'

The Penn Square Bank appeared to 'grow with energy', and its lending department passed loans — 1/77 million worth — 'upstream' to other banks.

In reality, oil would have to reach \$60 a barrel to cope with the real risks of many of the small investments, which got under way with 'no money down, just a letter of credit, interest payments built into the investment unit share, a rollover down the line into a straight oil-and-gas production loan, a tax deduction right now for intangible drilling costs, a chance to make more money down the road, and so forth - for all of that, all you have to do is sign on the dotted line right now'.

The ultimate failure of Penn Square threatened the whole banking system because of the concept dreamed up by the bank's chairman, 'Beep' Jennings, that they did not have to lend



their own deposits, because they could generate a lot of business lending other banks' deposits.

The bigger banks, Continental Illinois, Chase Manhattan and other world-famous banks, accepted the Penn Square vetting of the risks, and Penn Square earned more profits as middleman by handling more and more and more loans.

While legally the little bank in Oklahoma could lend no more than \$3m at a time, it could organise loans of unlimited size. It earned a percentage - so the bigger the better.

What is remarkable is that it survived so long, and that it did not bring down the whole 800 other interconnected banks.

Bill Patterson, head of the energy loan department survived 25 charges, which basically alleged that he played fraudulent 'musical loans' with hundreds of bad credits transferred to good customers - or was it the other way round?

Bridget Dixon

KING LEAR IN JAPAN

'Ran', directed by Akira Kurosawa
KURASAWA translates King Lear into Japanese in this spectacular film.

As Hidetora, a feudal warlord, gives his kingdom away to his two elder sons, he unknowingly sets in motion potent forces of malevolence and destruction.

The irony is that these are forces he himself has created, through his ruthless tactics in winning his kingdom.

They are personified in the Lady Kaede, who Hidetora has married to his eldest son, after destroying her family and seizing their castle.

Kaede bides her time until the opportunity comes to destroy the Hidetora dynasty, and Hidetora himself, who is driven mad.

There is a studied contrast throughout the film between the poise and tranquillity of the natural world, which is shattered by human beings into blood, death and chaos.

Those who try to escape the horror and ugliness of human destructiveness, like Lady Sue, whose family has also been destroyed, and her little brother, whose eyes have been gouged out, take refuge in Buddhism and try to forgive.

In so doing they bear out Becket's opinion of religion, which he said 'attempts to console the inconsolable'.

Kurasawa certainly seems to have no high opinion of the security of religion.

Lady Sue ends up decapitated, and her blinded brother ends up abandoned on the edge of a cliff in the closing scene of the film — a harrowing image of human helplessness.

Kurasawa's vision of the world, at the age of 75, is deeply pessimistic.

The striking beauty and splendour of the film serves as a bitter commentary on the human beings who bring their own world crashing down around them, and crush indifferently alike the innocent with the guilty.

The cycle of chaos and destruction carries on, in spite of anyone's wishes.

Bronwen Handyside

NON-STOP OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA
HOUSE TRAFALGAR SQUARE

PICKET

■ RELEASE NELSON MANDELA
■ RELEASE ALL SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS
■ CLOSE DOWN THE RACIST SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY

19 APRIL DEMONSTRATE
Assemble 2pm
Bidborough St, Nearest tube Kings Cross.

MARCH TO TRAFALGAR SQUARE TO START THE NON-STOP PICKET AT 4PM

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Workers Press

THE 6000 News International print workers sacked by Rupert Murdoch are settling in for a long battle. It is ten weeks after Murdoch moved from Fleet Street to Wapping, where scabbing is organised by the EETPU leaders and the crossing of picket lines tolerated by the TUC. The printers are building support throughout the working class movement. Here Martin High, sacked former SOGAT Father of the Chapel for The Times' clerical workers, is interviewed by Robin Burnham and Simon Burgess.

WE ARE inundated with requests for speakers. Most of us are doing two meetings a day. I have spoken at other SOGAT branches and chapels, student meetings, trades councils, other unions, and Labour Party meetings. Nearly every type of organisation in fact.

I have been to meetings where I had to work hard, and some meetings which were easy, but I haven't been to a meeting yet where I haven't had some sort of response either of moral support on the picket line or financial support.

Some organisations have started levies, and even a meeting of a dozen has produced a collection. I haven't come away from any meeting I've attended thinking, 'that was a waste of time'.

The University of Sussex students union, which was the first meeting I did, were activists and well-informed. They knew what it was about and just really wanted to be told how they could help. At other meetings I've had to tell them how the dispute started, as they didn't know.

Other SOGAT chapels, outside the dispute, knew the outline, but even they didn't know the severity of the ultimatum we were faced with.

When we first started out, we were just asking for moral support, but two or three weeks into the dispute SOGAT's funds were sequestered and we have had to make a plea for financial support.

We cannot exist or fight the dispute if we run out of money. We ask people to help in any way they can within their communities and organisations.

My wife was also sacked. We went to the DHSS and signed on. We were told that we were on strike and not

entitled to unemployment benefit.

We are not technically on strike now, we are dismissed.

They said we caused our own dismissal by going on strike. I did get some supplementary benefit, enough to pay my mortgage for the first couple of weeks, but my wife then found temporary work so that has been stopped. I was one of the lucky ones as Crawley DHSS seem to be a bit more sympathetic than a lot of places. The majority of people haven't been allowed to sign on for supplementary benefit.

The only people receiving supplementary benefit on a regular basis are people with young kids and even they receive a reduced rate.

The only way we can gauge the general public is by the campaign we are waging about not buying the four titles. The Sun was selling four million — now it is two and half million, so we must be persuading them.

Liaison

We have had a good liaison with the Wapping residents. On the May Day holiday this year SOGAT and the NGA are going to make it 'Residents' Day'. We are going to put on some sort of community activity with the residents. We want to form an even closer relationship with them.

The dispute is an attack on unions in general. As far as Murdoch was concerned it was an attack on the Fleet Street unions that he doesn't want at Wapping. If we go down, there is no doubt about it, other papers will follow and it will be the end of Fleet Street unions as we know them. We have to look on-

COMMUNITY NEEDED IN SUPPORT GROUPS

ward from that and say it would affect the trade union movement because if Fleet Street management just tear up existing agreements with the unions, what is to stop other companies doing the same?

It does affect people not in unions. It is a far-reaching dispute, and it could really make or break how things go in the future.

I would like to see the local support groups involve the community, not only because it affects all the community but because we do need financial support.

The miners, one of the strongest unions in the country, were taken on and the Fleet Street unions, who have traditionally been one of the strongest, are being taken on. It's a general attack. What they did to the miners, denying them benefits, trying to starve them into submission, they are trying to do us now by sequestrating our funds and stopping our benefits.

The way they used the police in the miners dispute, they are doing exactly the same at Wapping now. If anything with even more gusto than before. They have really got their teeth into it now. There are similarities all the way through, that's why the miners are so keen to support us.

SOGAT, especially, did more for the miners than any other union, and they owe us that debt. But I don't think it is just that, I think they see what is happening to us is exactly what happened to them. Another thing is the way the law is being used — anti-union laws, secondary picketing laws.

Especially on Saturday nights, residents have to have their identification passes — car stickers as well — so they can identify themselves with the police when they are out. They are being stopped, and people who go out for a walk are getting involved in police horse charges.

Some residents haven't



even got home on Saturday night. One person was arrested and kept in police cells until Monday. His wife wasn't even told where he was.

The police don't see themselves just upholding the law — they are there to make sure Murdoch gets his lorries out.

Dispute

I have been up there every Saturday since the dispute started and some of the things I have seen bear comparison to what you see in South Africa.

Two weeks ago, the word came from the factory that they wanted to get the lorries out, and the police just charged us with horses and set about us with batons. Women and children were in the crowd and it was completely unprovoked.

Neil Kinnock should be putting more pressure in parliament than he is. He should be telling the local Labour Parties to get much more involved than they are. He should be asking for an enquiry into some of the things the police are doing. Alan Prescott, a Labour MP, has done that.

I believe anyone scabbing for News International — Labour Party members, EETPU, TGWU, NUJ —

have got to be dealt with. Originally I thought the EETPU should be expelled from the TUC, but it was Hammond and his executive that set this up with the help of the Southampton branch secretary. If we expelled the whole union, a lot of good trade unionists would be expelled along with them.

Even Southampton branch have passed a resolution condemning not just Hammond but also their branch secretary. I think that at their annual conference Hammond and the executive will be forced to resign.

Fleet Street should come out on strike.

The union's view is that if the rest of Fleet Street comes out, the only titles on the street will be Murdoch's four titles. My view is that if Fleet Street comes out and you get 30,000 people down at Wapping he won't get his titles out anyway!

If nobody got a newspaper, millions of peoples' minds would be concentrated on the dispute.

Strike action may be forced on Fleet Street anyway.

The Express, for example, now have until the end of the month to reach agreement on similar terms that Murdoch threatened us with. The Mail have issued similar ultimatums; Maxwell is arguing all the time about

manning levels and agreements. It is not something for the future, it is actually happening now.

In the first two or three weeks, when Murdoch was getting the upper hand because he prepared for this and we had to start from scratch, there was always something on TV or in the papers. In the last four or five weeks, as the unions got organised and we gradually got the upper hand, affecting his distribution, so the coverage got less and less.

Broken

On the Saturday night when the fence was broken down, they reported that. That happened at 9 pm, three hours before the police charged in. It was reported that the police had things chucked at them, but the only things that were thrown was when we were defending ourselves against their charge.

While people like Murdoch and Maxwell hold the power in Fleet Street, then you are going to have this problem where they use the papers for their own political gains. The only way is for workers to get more control. I would like to see workers the owners, but I don't think you will see them do that in the present political climate.

'Friendly school' success

THE FIRST week of the Easter school holidays saw the continuation of a unique educational experiment inspired by the miners strike.

The Blidworth and Hackney Friendly school was conceived during the strike when a group of National Union of Teachers members from Hackney visited a picket line in Notts.

One of the teachers and organisers of the school said: 'I started talking to some of the women and kids and they just wouldn't believe I was a teacher. Some of the kids were having such bad experiences at school, often with teachers showing hostility to the strike and the kids feeling victimised.'

'We had a general conversation about schools and people's bad experiences kept coming up. One of the women suggested we needed our own school.'

The school had its first full session last summer. Sever-

al adults and kids from Hackney spent a week in Blidworth where the main theme was the sharing of experiences by the kids about their lives. The Notts kids wrote stories and drew pictures about their experiences of the strike while the kids from Hackney wrote about experiences in their lives which they felt were close to those of the strike. One girl wrote about being brutally harassed by British troops in Belfast and a strong sense of working class solidarity grew among the kids.

When they re-met in Hackney it was the turn of the London kids to show those from Blidworth something of their lives.

During the week the need for international solidarity was emphasized in many ways. The opening ceremony included Turkish

dancing by a group of girls who had only just learnt the art.

Speakers discussed a range of issues including the New Jewel Movement of Grenada, the situation in Nicaragua and the economic reasons for starvation in Ethiopia. Some of the children wrote letters to a school in Nicaragua and others sent post cards to Reagan protesting his support of the Contras.

One of the most exciting aspects of the school was the way adults and children were all learning and discussing together. It was a successful experiment not only in working class education but in educational methods as well and everyone enjoyed the experience so much that they are eager to meet again next summer.



Friendly School underway in Hackney