

LAST WEDNESDAY'S BBC 2 programme 'In man's labour is his dignity and pride' brought the corporatist philosophy which underlies the so-called Institute for Workers' Control right out into the open.

The entire programme served as an advertisement for this organization—or more exactly as a self-advertisement for its head, the ex-Pabloite revisionist Ken Coates.

Coates' sententious phrases were rarely off the screen for any length of time, and the programme got off to a flying start once the introductions had been made with a shot of Coates watching 'The Spokesman' being printed.

Coates' appearance on the screen was preceded by shots of Edward Heath, Wilson, Anthony Wedgewood Benn and Transport and General Workers' Union leader Jack Jones. 'What is a man here for?' Coates asked rhetorically. 'He doesn't get very long.'

Abstracted

One thing Coates obviously doesn't think man is here for is to fight for socialism. 'Workers' control', abstracted from the Transitional Programme, the struggle to build a party and the fight against Stalinism and reformism in the unions, has replaced the fight for socialism in Coates' circle.

The techniques of sociology, the search for 'job satisfaction' and the rest of the stock-in-trade of management consultants and productivity-dealing is here being given a 'left', even a 'Trotskyist', appearance.

That is undoubtedly why the BBC could find 50 minutes to show this film. This is a necessity in the present crisis of the capitalist system, where employers everywhere are seeking new and more subtle ways to hoodwink workers into selling their conditions and accepting speed-up.

Coates' Institute serves as a transmitting belt between the university researchers on sociology, productivity and the like and the trade union bureaucracy—particularly the 'left' union bureaucrats who figure prominently on the Institute's notepaper.

Corporatism tries to reconcile the working class to capitalism by 'overcoming' the class struggle within capitalism. In Spain and in Mussolini's Italy, the Corporate State takes the form of replacing the independent organizations of the working class by Syndicates of workers and their employers together—

tv column

GUEST REVIEWER—JOHN SPENCER

WHAT SORT OF WORLD DO WE WANT FOR THE WORKERS? IN Man's Labour is his Dignity BBC 2 September 23

Corporatism British style



KEN COATES

dominated, naturally, by the employers.

In Weimar Germany, before Hitler took power, successive governments tried to consolidate their bonapartist rule with laws designed to maintain the 'balance' between the reformist union leaders and the big monopoly trusts. Their efforts, aided by the union leaders, helped open the way for Hitler.

Derived

Many of the basic concepts of modern corporatism were derived from the work of writers like George Sorel, a French nineteenth-century anarcho-syndicalist many of whose ideas of workers' control and participation are echoed today by the Institute for Workers' Control.

The essence of corporatism, 'left' or right, is an attempt to demagogically do away with the class struggle and integrate workers into capitalism under the guise of giving them a say in industry.

It is the opposite of a socialist perspective, which fights for the independence of the working class from the employers and their state, with the aim of building a revolutionary party to take the power away from the employers.

But instead of even the most remote socialist perspective, the film—which contained some powerful shots of men at work in car plants and on docks interspersed with comments from Coates and others—ended with a perspective of a 'future more democratic society' to be worked towards by agitating for workers' control and participation.

All these developments are presumably to take place within the framework of capitalist society, since the only speaker who mentioned socialism explicitly rejected it.

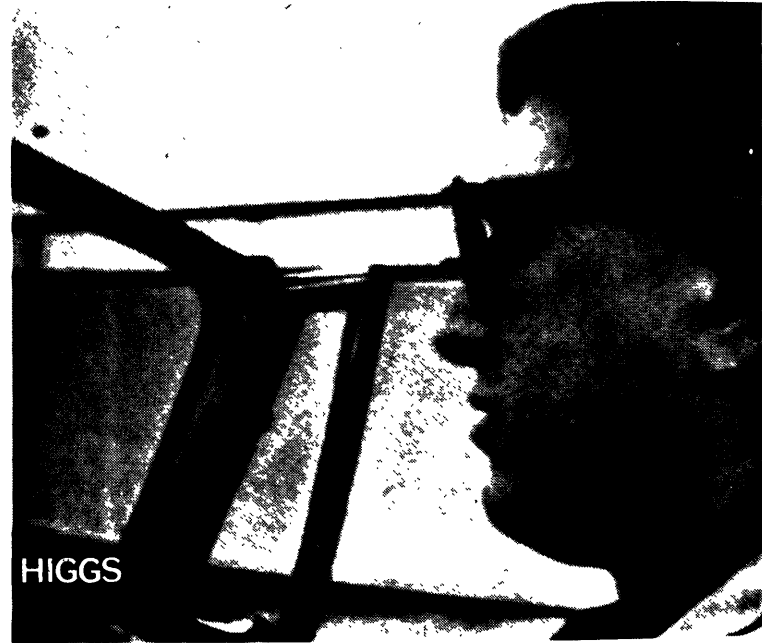
The film can only be described as an advertisement for corporatism, dressed up in high-sounding 'sociological' language. There are no reformist solutions to the problems facing the working class.

In fact, what the Institute for Workers' Control does is adapt the phrases of Trotskyism to the requirements of imperialism in crisis. In this task it supplements the work of Stalinism and the Labour leaders.

It is not surprising that the most open statement of this type on the programme came from Coventry Stalinist Phil Higgs, one of four workers from the Rolls-Royce plant who were interviewed at length in the film. (One of these 'workers' turned out to be a high-level manager, whose presence was presumably meant to add 'balance' to the programme.)

Higgs considers that the working class is not ready for socialism, or even for workers' control, but, especially among the youth, were ready for a degree of 'participation'.

A judgement worthy of de Gaulle himself!



HIGGS

In this period, when the employing class is forced to try and recoup its gains from the working class, all attempts to reform or 'humanize' capitalism must end in tailoring it to suit the employers' requirements. Thus when Coates talks of 'humanizing work', providing 'job satisfaction' and so on, he is talking within the framework of the continuation of capitalist society.

Cover

However 'left' his phrases, they can only become a cover for moves to draw the trade unions and working class organizations closer to the capitalist state. This is what corporatism means.

The independent struggle of the working class for power is written off, and the deliberately imprecise jargon of productivity men and sociologists is used to cover the political adaptation to imperialism.

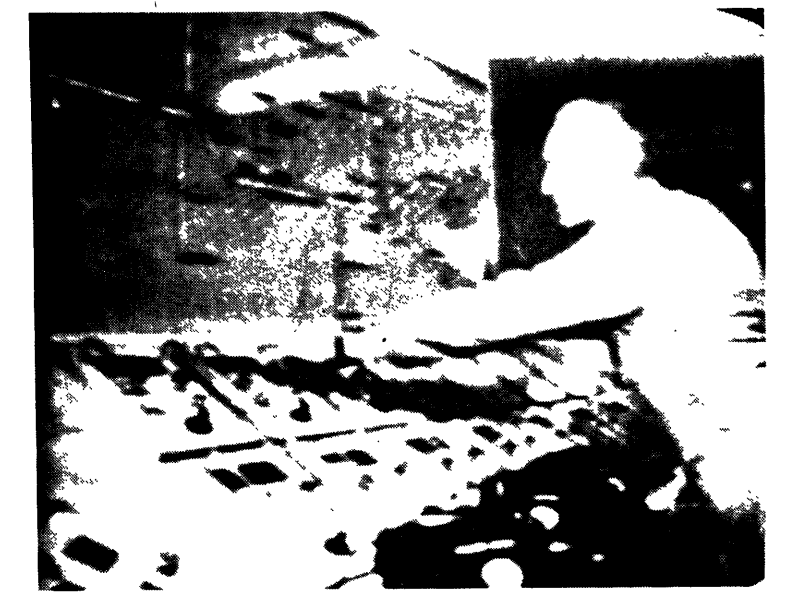
In the Institute for Workers' Control this means apologizing for 'good' productivity deals, providing a political smoke-screen for 'left' union bureaucrats like Jack Jones, Hugh Scanlon and Lawrence Daly and denigrating the fight for Marxism and the revolutionary party.

The programme showed workers in the Philips factory, Glasgow, whose 'job satisfac-

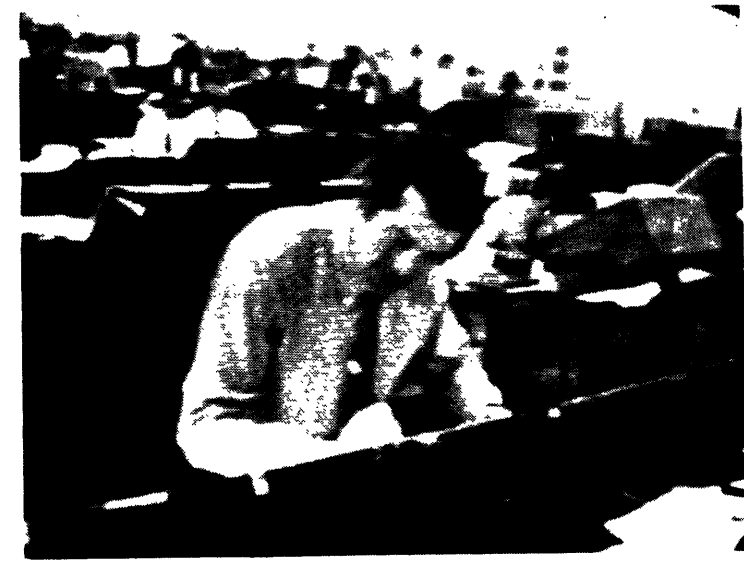
tion' had been raised by allowing them to make complete fan heaters rather than work on a production line. This also 'incidentally' raised their productivity and increased the employers' profits.

Coates avowed that 'increasing job satisfaction would be a much more powerful tool device if it was part of changing the structure of industry'. The whole battery of industrial and psychological devices should be put at the disposal of workers in order to do this, he said.

The Bevercotes mine in Nottinghamshire




A Rolls Royce drawing office in Coventry



IMPORTANT READING

REVOLUTION BETRAYED



TROTSKY

WHAT IS THE SOVIET UNION AND WHERE IS IT GOING?

Available from New Line Publications, 180A Clapham High St. SW4 Price 13s 8d post incl.

Some of their best friends

LAST WEEK'S 'South East London and Kentish Mercury' splashed in bold type a letter from the local National Front. It did not refer to all to immigration or race, but talked about 'a total solution to the "skinhead" problem'. The answer, the letter said, lay in the re-introduction of National Service. The only interesting part of the communication was its final paragraph. 'In the meanwhile,' it read, 'we can only look with admir-

ation and envy at the youth of Israel and its real sense of dynamism and purposeful patriotism. They are an example and a challenge.'

We hope the many admirers of Zionism among the Labour 'left', especially 'Tribune' circles, will be proud of their new allies.

It must be remembered, however, that friendship between Zionism and the extreme right is nothing new.

The so-called 'revisionist' wing of Zionism, whose successors today are Menachem Beigin's Herut ('Freedom'), had in its ranks many open admirers of Mussolini.

These were the core of Irgun Zvei Leumi (National Military Organization), the terrorists whose exploits were responsible for driving hundreds of thousands of Arabs into exile in 1948.

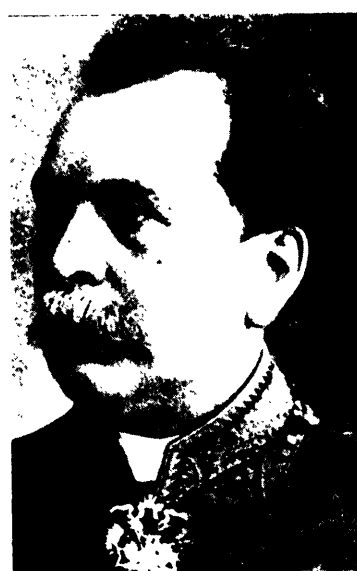
But the connection is older than that.

FOUNDER

Theodore Herzl, founder of modern Zionism, in the course of his efforts to persuade the Sultan of Turkey to permit a Jewish settlement in Palestine, negotiated with all kinds of imperialist rulers.

These included the Tsarist minister Plehve. This most reactionary of politicians concluded a secret deal with Herzl, which envisaged Zionism working to win Jewish youth in Russia away from revolutionary socialism, while the Tsar would get to work on the Sultan.

The point about this friendly arrangement was that Plehve achieved especial fame in April 1903 when he personally led the Kishinev pogrom. His anti-Semitism and his



PLEHVE

deals with the Zionists were all part of Plehve's struggle to smash the awakening Russian working class.

Lenin's paper 'Iskra' reported at that time the strikes and demonstrations of the Odessa workers against the actions of Herzl's friend, reassuring the Jews of the town with the words:

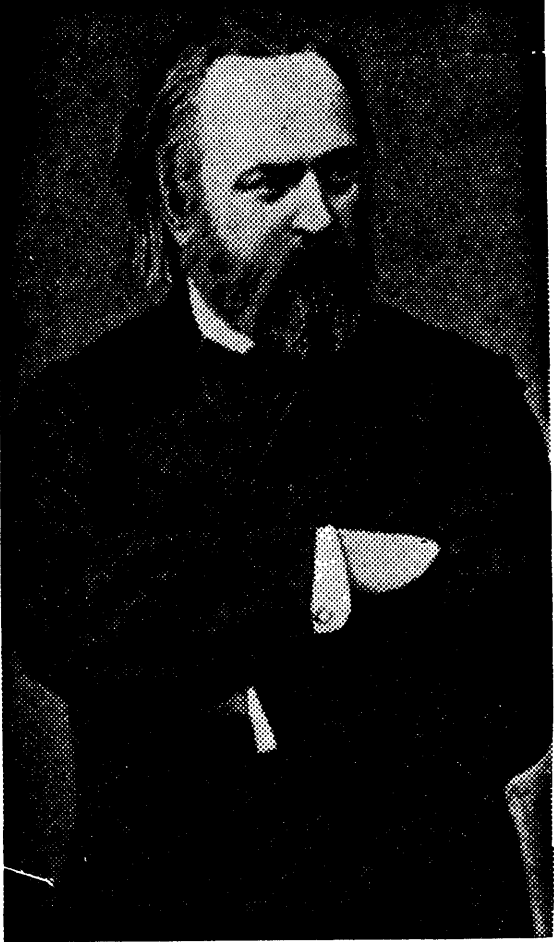
'We have neither Russians nor Jews in our midst, we are all workers, life is equally hard for us all.'

So the National Front is correct to see in Zionism a fellow servant of imperialism and enemy of the working class. The only mistake they make is to think that the youth of Israel is with them.

Even Moshe Dayan was worrying in a recent interview that young Israelis were no longer filled with patriotic pride at the actions of their leaders against the Arab Revolution.

Workers Press notebook

HERZEN AND 'THE TIMES'



AN IRONIC picture appeared in last Thursday's 'Times'.

It showed the paper's editor-in-chief, Denis Hamilton, Smirkovsky the Soviet Ambassador and Lady Dartmouth (with hat), representing the Tory Greater London Council.

They were engaged in unveiling a plaque on the Paddington house where the Russian revolutionaries Herzen and Ogarev had lived from 1860 to 1863.

As 'The Times' leader pointed out, the paper had been instrumental in getting the plaque put up.

UNVEILING

A former assistant editor, Professor E. H. Carr, author of a book about the group, 'The Romantic Exiles', was also present at the unveiling. One wonders what Herzen would have had to say about

this assembly of bureaucrats and bourgeoisie.

Although he took no part in English politics during his many years in London, he had a keen eye for British hypocrisy.

In his memoirs, 'My Past and Thoughts', Herzen refers to an incident in 1854, reported in 'The Times', he says, 'with malicious spite'.

EXECUTION

It concerned the execution, of the Paris worker-revolutionary Barthelemy, for the murder of a London policeman.

This man, a comrade both of the German communist Willich and of Herzen, had shocked English 'public opinion' by remaining an atheist to the very last. Herzen recalls:

'A few hours before he was hanged, one of the sheriffs, learning that Barthelemy had refused spiritual aid, thought himself obliged to convert him to the path of salvation and began plying him with the pietistic twaddle printed in

What is this but an appeal to employers to allow workers more 'participation' as a means to higher profits?

The only way in which such techniques can be applied for the genuine benefit of the working class is by the expropriation of the employers, a perspective the programme explicitly rejected.

After recounting the speed-up conditions in the Bevercotes 'model' colliery Coates spoke about nationalization in the following terms: 'Nationalization should be part of a strategy of industrial democracy. In our country, we've seen nationalization, but we've not seen developments in industrial democracy.'

Outside the perspective of the working class taking the power, all talk of 'industrial democracy' can only be a means of moving workers to better organize their own exploitation.

Thus the film dwelt at length on the Scott Bader chemical firm, where the workers hold shares in the firm and have a quarter of the seats on the board.

The appearance of this film at this time is not accidental. Ken Coates and his Institute are being boosted in an attempt to head off revolutionary developments inside the working class. This programme should be a warning to all workers about the real significance of their politics.

FORGOT

'The Times', which editorialized enthusiastically about Herzen's beautiful prose, and which loves a revolutionary—after he is safely dead—forgot to mention what this one thought of the paper when he was alive.

