

**International**

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WORLD AFFAIRS

# GLC RENTS

## INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

# Kremlin betrays

# Vietnamese

# struggle



# WORKERS' CONTROL and the POST OFFICE

## Letter from a Post Office Worker

The Postmaster General, John Stonehouse MP, has gone on record as saying that when the Post Office becomes a corporation, he will never tolerate workers' control in it. Workers' participation maybe, but control, never! The idea of workers' participation as the Right Hon. John Stonehouse well realises, is not a new concept for the civil service. With the advent of a new, corporation status for the Post Office however, the idea of workers' control seems particularly repellant to him. As long ago as 1917 a system called the Whitley Negotiations was introduced into the civil service and the unions dragged into joining it. The reason for this was stated quite categorically at the time by Whitehall. This was to damp down workers' unrest and stop a spread of unofficial disputes to the civil service. The Whitley system works on the basis of discussions between union and management at local, regional and national levels about every small detail EXCEPT pay and benefits.

Such a system was first envisaged by J. Whitley - who forced it on his own workers in the USA, where he was a successful business tycoon. The effect of this method is to draw the unions into quite consciously taking responsibility for any unpopular decisions made by the management, and is an attempt to create company unions such as exist in the USA and Canada. It is small wonder that most workers in the Post Office have little faith in the negotiations at Whitley level. Besides many small-grade associations, three unions are primarily responsible for operating the Whitley system and representing the Post Office workers.

These are:

(1) POST OFFICE ENGINEERING UNION: This is one of the most militant in the country and has one of the best records for left-wing policy. It includes most of the engineering staff up to Foremen and Inspectors, and a few clerical staff associated with engineering staff.

(2) UNION OF POST OFFICE WORKERS: Probably the most conservative of the three unions, it represents postmen, telephonists and assorted clerical staff. Its secretary, Jackson, has however, a reputation for militancy and has called for workers' control on more than one occasion.

(3) CIVIL SERVICE CLERICAL ASSOCIATION: this union represents most clerical and technical staff and is the only one of the three to represent staff outside of the Post Office, as it represents most clerical civil servants. Unlike the other two, it is not affiliated to the Labour Party, but opposes the incomes policy and has a reasonably "left" leadership including Kendall, its General Secretary.

None of these three unions are docile, either in membership or rank-and-file, and the fears of Mr. Stonehouse may well be founded in reality if he is not careful. The change from treasury control to corporation has raised doubts in many people's minds. What is entailed is a change from a government department, e.g., the Admiralty or the

Mint, to a nationalised industry such as the Gas Board or the Atomic Energy Authority. The question of redundancy has been raised on numerous occasions by the unions but so far no definite assurances have been received. Such a situation obviously requires workers' control over hiring and firing, yet Mr. Stonehouse says "no" to such a suggestion.

A much stronger reason than even the question of redundancy, is the way in which the GPO is constantly exploited by private enterprise to the detriment of both its workers and its subscribers. A ring of five, inter-related companies supplies most of the material used in the Post Office. Realising their near-monopoly position and the scarcity value of their products, they can delay delivery of articles and exact high prices for them. If the workers had any control over this then this sort of malpractice could be brought to a halt. However, the main case for workers' control is the future of the Post Office. Automation is becoming an ever-increasingly large part of the GPO's future. Automatic sorting machines have drastically reduced the number of postmen needed on sorting duties. The new automatic-relay telephone exchanges have cut the number of telephonists needed, and the Fulton Report must be seen as an attempt to do away with surplus clerical workers in the Civil Service.

Such uncertainty about future employment and conditions, and also of the methods of introducing automation, can only be allayed when workers have a genuine say in their future. Whitleyism is played out, as are all forms of participation opposed to control. As socialists we should demand the following:

1. Nationalise the sub-contracting firms;
2. no redundancies;
3. an end to Whitleyism; and
4. workers' control of the industry.

Only when such actions are fought for will both the workers in the GPO and the general public be sure of their future and disgusting, anti-socialist drivel, such as that John Stonehouse pushes, be exposed.

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# INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

## Betrayal of socialism, Betrayal of Vietnamese struggle

Pat Jordan

August 21st, 1968, will go down as a day of infamy in the annals of socialism. The Russian bureaucracy, motivated by fear, demonstrated on that day, beyond all doubt, that they put their own privileged position above all other interests.

Thus they have shown that stalinism is not dead - despite all the talk - and that it remains a cancer which has to be cut out of the labour movement. By deciding to invade Czechoslovakia, the Russian bureaucrats not only showed their complete contempt for self-determination and the equality of workers' states, they also demonstrated that nothing matters to them in comparison with their prime instinct: that of preserving their privileged position on the backs of the Russian workers.

Many have argued in the recent past that since the death of Stalin and the relaxation of international tension (in practice, a modus vivendi between the U.S.S.R. and U.S.A.) that the Russian leaders were becoming more civilised and that there would be a gradual democratisation of the Soviet Union. We doubt if there would be anyone who would dare argue that theory now!

In fact, the exact opposite is true: as the development of the means of production in the Soviet Union more and more undermines the economic backwardness that helped to give rise to the bureaucracy, the more parasitic it becomes. The lesson of history is that the more parasitic a social formation is the more brutal it has to be in trying to hang on to its privileged position.

### BETRAYAL OF THE VIETNAMESE STRUGGLE

The invasion of Czechoslovakia is not only a terrible crime against the Czechs and Slovaks, it is a crime against the whole of struggling humanity, not least of all the heroic people of Vietnam. By its cynical action the Russian bureaucracy has given comfort to the American imperialists and right wing forces all over the world.

Johnson, Wilson and the whole gang have shed their crocodile tears about the "poor people of Czechoslovakia" - but secretly they are pleased that the Russians have invaded that country.

Johnson - whose soul is as shrivelled up as the napalmed children of Vietnam - dares to talk of rights of the people of Czechoslovakia! In the inner sanctums of the White House he must have drunk a toast to the rulers of the Kremlin - they came to his aid just as evidence was piling to expose his hypocrisy about "relaxing the bombing of the North."



### WILSON DIVERTS BIAFRA ANGER

Wilson must have said "thank God for Brezhnev" as he used the Czechoslovakian invasion to divert attention from his murderous role in Nigeria. As skilful as ever, he has managed to dodge the mounting pressure to recall Parliament over the supply of arms to the butchering Nigerian Federal forces by recalling it over the Czech affair. These arms, supplied with the sole purpose of making the Ibo-hinterland safe for British oil investments, are now being used to kill Ibo women and children by the thousand. For every Czech so far who has been killed, there must have been at least a thousand Nigerian children starve.

And we could go on....Every tin-pot right-winger protests against Russian aggression and under cover of the hullabaloo clobbers the left.

But times have changed: 1968 is not 1956, still less is it 1936. The Russian bureaucracy could strangle the Spanish revolution and scarcely anyone apart from the vanguard noticed; it could crush the Hungarian Revolution and still retain the semblance of an international following in the workers movement. But the smashing of the Czechoslovak people's bid for a democratic form of communist rule will end forever its pretension of being a progressive revolutionary force.

Today everyone who can think realises that the main danger to the socialised property relations in Czechoslovakia comes not from the efforts to "liberalise" but from the reaction to the Russian invasion.

### THE FIGHT AGAINST STALINISM

It is no accident that the first people to protest in Britain against the Russian attack were the very same people who have led the fight for solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution. They did not have to have stalinism explained to them - they have been engaged in mortal struggle with it in its attempt to prevent a solidarity movement





SOVIET CONVOY MOVING THROUGH VILLAGE IN BOHEMIA

from being built. The slogan "Hands off Czechoslovakia" is completely consistent with the fight to build support for the Vietnamese revolution.

Both are aspects of the fight against what the Russian bureaucrats call "peaceful co-existence"; although we see that it is not so peaceful in its application to communist dissidents.

One of the arguments that we have come up against in fighting for solidarity is that the Russian had to be careful not to provoke the Americans... how does the invasion of Czechoslovakia fit into that argument?

The British Communist Party has come out against the Russian action. That is very good, but not enough. The British Communist Party must take ACTION to show its good intentions. But more than that, the leaders of the British Communist Party must answer some questions about the past: why did they support the Russian invasion of Hungary? Unless they come clean on this one, we will be justified in assuming that their conversion to the principle of self-determination owes more to the fear of the consequences of isolation than to political ideals.

The leaders of the C.P.G.B. must answer some questions about theory, to. When the disclosures about Stalin were made, this was explained in terms of the cult of the individual. We know that Stalin was an extraordinary man, but not even Jesus could direct a state of 200,000,000 people some 15 years after his death.

#### SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION NEEDED

Unless the leaders of the Communist Party can give some sociological explanation of what has gone wrong in the Soviet Union, it is a very bleak prospect, indeed, that they hold out for their members. After 51 years of workers' power, according to these gentlemen, the first socialist country can act in a completely "big-power" way. Is this what they are asking their members to fight for?

We would advise all those members of the C.P.G.B. who are looking for a marxist analysis of what has gone wrong in the Soviet Union to read: "The Revolution Betrayed" by that much-maligned victim of stalinism, Leon Trotsky.

The Czechoslovak people are facing a terrible ordeal, many of their leaders are behaving in a



most heroic manner. What ever the outcome of the present struggle, the sacrifices of the Czech people will not be in vain. By their determination not be intimidated, to combine socialised property relations with freedom of expression and their refusal to flirt with the right, they have helped to dig the grave of international Stalinism. The C.P.s in western Europe will rue the day that their mentors in the Kremlin invaded Czechoslovakia. Already exposed as having no revolutionary potential by events in France, they will now have to break their close relations with the Soviet Union.

But the Czech people have achieved more than that - by their systematic attention to the Russian troops they are striking at the soft-under belly of stalinism. Stalinism will be destroyed when that sleeping giant, the Russian working class springs into action. The ideas of the Czech revolutionaries will seep through to the Russian intellectuals and then workers.

For our part we have the job of helping to expose and destroy stalinism. But this can only be done to the extent that we continue in our general fight against imperialism. This mean exposing the hypocrisy of all those who claim they defend the right to self-determination of the Czech people but who keep quiet about Vietnam and other victims of U.S. and British imperialism.

This is the best way to defend the socialised property relations in Czechoslovakia and continue our fight for solidarity with the Vietnamese people in their struggle against U.S. imperialism and its allies.



# NATIONALISM MYTH AND REALITY

Bob Purdie

INTERNATIONAL and THE WEEK can justly claim to have taken the initiative in discussing the issues raised for the left and the labour movement by Scottish and Welsh nationalism. Gradually, other journals are taking up the discussion - a hopeful sign. Recently, both the NEW STATESMAN and NEW LEFT REVIEW have carried articles. To develop the discussion let us examine their ideas.

Paul Johnson, in the NEW STATESMAN of July 26th, waxes impatient with "Nationalist Cloud-Cuckoo Land", and Tom Nairn, in the May/June NEW LEFT REVIEW, offers us "Scotland - the Three Dreams". At the outset let us assure the reader of the material existence of the subjects under discussion: the nations of Scotland and Wales.

It is because Mr. Johnson refuses to start from reality that he has so much difficulty in grasping the issues he is discussing: he keeps catching strains of the tune like the music of the elfin piper, through the mist of his ideas, and as he clambers through the hill and glen of his argument he becomes more angry and perplexed. But he never gets any nearer to the source of the melody.

"Where does one begin", he asks, "to refute a proposition so preposterously compounded of adolescent emotionalism, political naivety, phoney economics and sheer barefaced opportunism?" Where indeed when one has the barefaced opportunism, not to mention political naivety, to tell the Welsh miner and the unemployed Clydeside plater that "Britain is going through an unpleasant period of adjustment.....which is all the more harsh because it has been so often and so cravenly postponed", but that Mr. Johnson finds it "....an exciting time in which to live, because our arrogance and complacency has received a brutal shaking, and we are now forcing ourselves to consider entirely new ideas, and discard baseless assumptions...."

Had he been fortunate enough to pick an unusually sweet-tempered ex-miner or ex-plater to voice his opinions to, Mr. Johnson might have been told that his listener was in the process of discarding such baseless assumptions as the right to a steady job, was being forced to consider such entirely new ideas as working in another industry for half the wages he had previously earned, or leaving his familiar area and friends, moving to England or overseas.

This is not to say that his characterisation of the philosophy of the SNP and Plaid Cymrie does not have some justice, "....the firm is doing badly, so let's break it up and go our separate ways." But to understand the most important element in the nationalist upsurge: the flood of working class support; it is totally inadequate.

The gains of the nationalists have been in direct proportion to the attacks on the working class by the Labour Government and its failure to convince the working class that they will receive anything else. In face of the lack of any alternative, particularly a socialist alternative, the workers have turned to the lively, youthful, forces of

the nationalists. Unlike Mr. Johnson, they cannot justify the betrayals of this Government by indulging in moral abstractions - such an attitude is far more easily sustained on a comfortable income.

However, more is involved than simple disorientation by Wilsonism, the nationalists strike deep chords in the minds of millions of Scottish and Welsh people, we can find a clue to the reasons for this if we examine some of Mr. Johnson's dishonest, as distinct from ignorant, arguments.

"Ulster has had its own Parliament since the twenties....Their unemployment rate is consistently higher than that of any other part of the United Kingdom....Yet even their meagre prosperity seems attractive to independent Ireland.... If the Scots and Welsh have reason to envy the wealth of the South East - and they have - this is a consequence not of political structure but of economic geography. It can only be mitigated by purposeful policies determined and operated by the Union Government. Once this union is dissolved blind economic forces would take over...Under a United Kingdom, English men are content, or at any rate prepared, to accept and largely finance the policy of regional development. They would have no such moral spur, still less political compulsion, once the Celts opted out.

Quite apart from the nauseating insinuation, that the Scots and Welsh ought to be bloody grateful for what they have been given, this is a complete inversion of the economic effects of capitalism on a historical scale on the "Celtic Fringe"; the wealth of the South East is not the result of a fortuitous accident of "economic geography", but of the centralising force of capitalism which is more and more concentrating wealth in particular areas of this planet and in the hands of particular sections of the population.

In the colonial world the effects of this are famine and starvation. Now this tendency manifests itself in the imperialist countries themselves. But not only that: from the beginning capitalism imposed an atrophying and piratical regime on these nations. Starting by imposing feudal property relations on the land as opposed to the old communal tenure of the clan system. It drove the people from the land and decanted them into its factories and sweatshops or sent them overseas to die like animals in the floating coffins of its emigration ships. This process has been examined with precision and passion in such books as Thomas Johnston's "A History of the Working Classes in Scotland" and James Connolly's "Labour in Irish History".

If these nations are economic backwaters, with large underpopulated areas - and are becoming more and more so - this is because of the development of British capitalism. And this is one of the powerful factors which helps the nationalists - the smoke from the burning clachans has not yet dispersed!

Tom Nairn's efforts are much more rewarding, if only because he is a Scot and therefore understands the problem a little better than Mr. Johnson.



His article is basically a merciless dissection of the cultural background of the ideas of the right-wing of the SNP, placing these ideas firmly in the context of Scottish petit-bourgeois thinking, it is literate and well-written and to an (ex) Presbyterian from Edinburgh like the writer of this article, devastatingly accurate in its characterisation of Scottish Bible-and-Tawse ideology. (One passage is worth quoting: "The Irish rose up and wrenched their independence from imperialism when the latter was at the apex of its power. With sleekit Presbyterian moderation, the Scots have restrained themselves until it is abundantly plain that the English would be incapable of stopping an insurrection on the Isle of Wight.")

However, as an analysis of Scottish nationalism it is too one-sided to grapple with the problems which the phenomenon presents for Scottish socialists. This comes out when he attempts to find a historical place for this nationalism.

"Nations and nationalism are aspects of the bourgeois epoch of world history....it has two sorts of justification as a historical force. Firstly, as a necessary means of escape from feudal or other primitive systems that are an impossible barrier to economic and social progress. Secondly,.....as an analogous instrument for the non-European societies to escape from.....Western imperialism.

"Where is Scottish nationalism located in this perspective? In its present form, nowhere. That is, as a tragic dream comparable to the other dreams of Scotland's history precisely in its remoteness from those real conditions which could give it the historical significance it implicitly claims."

This discussion purely in terms of ideology, and not also in terms of the forces it mobilises; the political/economic situation in which it is developing, and the various currents which are active within it, is the source of the inability to fit Scottish nationalism into its historical context. This context is quite clear: it is part of the tendency towards separatist currents that have sprung up in an number of imperialist countries, for example: Belgium and Canada. Capitalism strains the seams of the old nation-states - this separatism is part of the reaction to the centralist tendencies of latter day monopoly capitalism. These movements, though petit-bourgeois in ideology and leadership, can often mobilise working class support on quite a large scale and can often be quite radical in their demands, due to their opposition to the main current of capitalist development.

This one-sidedness in Tom Nairn's outlook prevents him from giving a clear answer to the problem he poses at the end of his article: "The only possible sane reaction to the dilemma is a socialist nationalism, whose dream has dimensions which really correspond to those of the stubborn visionary drive towards identity we have been considering." But he can pose no perspective because he searches for this socialist nationalism solely on the plane of ideology.

There is, of course, no easy solution to this problem, but what Tom Nairn does not seem to see is that the workers turn to the SNP not because they are taken up with the Knox-and-Sabbath ideas of the Scottish middle class, but because they have real economic problems which only the nation-

nalists seem to be bothered about and because they vaguely want a Scotland which they can control more closely.

This then is the problem in real terms: how do we convince the workers that they can achieve these things and solve their problems only by overthrowing capitalism? If anyone says that he has the solution at this moment he will be worthy of suspicion, the discussion has barely begun, but that solution will only come out of a discussion which grapples with the reality in all its complexity and which seeks to test its ideas in the living struggle for a socialist Scotland.

## LETTER

One of the most important debates at the Blackpool Labour Party Annual Conference will be on the report of the Committee of Inquiry set up by the NEC to investigate party organisation.

The committee recommends a number of detailed changes to the rules governing the organisation and National Conference of the Young Socialists. One is that subjects of general interest can be included on the conference agenda. This, the report says, would give the Young Socialists "more control of their own organisation than the Labour youth movement has ever enjoyed before."

This hesitant step forward is undoubtedly a belated recognition that the Labour Party has been unable to build a viable youth movement because it has insisted on shackling the Y.S. Youth is everywhere in the vanguard of the socialist movement and they could certainly not be confined within the narrow bounds laid down for them in the past by the Labour Party.

It is doubtful, however, if this small concession will bring the revolutionary youth flocking into the ranks of the Young Socialists. The committee is opposed to having an autonomous youth movement - it suggests that it would collapse without party support and warns that political youth organisations are "especially vulnerable to infiltration by subversive" (read "revolutionary") "elements". The bureaucratic mind cannot conceive of support without control and this indicates the severe limitations of this "advance."

The one other proposal which has some merit is the abolition of the five seats of the women's section of the National Executive. It recommends that the trade union section should have three more seats, giving it a total of 15, and local parties two more, making nine.

Although, on the face of it, the trade union section would now have an overall majority on the 28-strong NEC, in fact this marks a gain for the constituency parties. In the past, the women's section was elected by the whole conference which meant, in effect, that it was the massive trade union vote which decided who should be on it. The women's section has generally been filled by solid supporters of the Transport House establishment.

The abolition of the women's section is also a step towards the recognition of the equal place of women members in the party. Women will now be elected on their merit as party members and not simply because they are women. This should lead ultimately to the abolition of the different membership cards for men and women members and of women's sections in the local parties.

HAMMERSMITH LABOUR PARTY MEMBER



# Government, party and the working class

Charles Van Gelderen

Labour's 67th Annual Conference convenes at Blackpool on September 30th. One wonders what the pioneers who attended that first conference at the beginning of the century would have thought if they could have caught a glimpse of the resolutions which will be debated this autumn! After two Labour governments with large majorities in the House of Commons, resolutions still call for the most elementary of socialist demands. Those early delegates would have been astonished to hear that in 1968 it was thought necessary to call upon a LABOUR GOVERNMENT, in the words of the resolution from Sheffield Trades and Labour Council "to put the interests of working people before the preservation of the pound; to put control of profits, prices and foreign trade before control of wages; and to support all popular movements against privilege, racialism and world imperialism". Even Labour Party members who were far from being revolutionary socialists took these demands as axiomatic within a Labour Party programme.

The capitalist press has already remarked on the fact that there are fewer "left" resolutions than customary on this year's Conference agenda. Such as there are, with the exception of a few really good ones, seem to be largely inspired by the Tribune Socialist Charter. The reason for the dearth of left-wing resolutions is not because there has been a rightward shift in the constituency parties. On the contrary! But there has certainly been an increase in spathy and disillusion and many of the active party workers who were responsible for some of the better resolutions in the past have either given up politics or turned to other fields of action, such as the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. Young Socialists, also a fruitful source of resolutions with a real socialist content, are almost non-existent.

## WHAT VALUE HAS CONFERENCE?

The cause of this is not only the Government's sorry record of anti-working class legislation. More and more party members are beginning to question the value of conference itself. Is it worthwhile sending in resolutions and going to the expense of sending delegates when clearly, Conference decisions have little or no effect on Government policy -- or even on the Parliamentary Labour Party when in opposition? There was a time when annual conference was a real parliament of labour. Now it has been transformed into a meaningless society.

It is time that the labour movement gave serious thought to the role of annual conference. There is no sense in filling the agenda with hundreds of resolutions which are debated or not, according to the whim of an almost omnipotent Standing Orders Committee (viz., the Rhodesia resolution last year). Conference should be re-organised so as to give real democratic control to the party's

rank and file as represented by the assembled delegates.

## ENDORSEMENT OR REJECTION

Whether Labour is in power or in opposition, the leadership should, each year, present a report of its stewardship before the conference for endorsement or rejection and also an outline of the policies it intends to pursue in the year ahead. This should be subject to full debate and right to more amendments. Both reports should be circulated to the constituency parties and the affiliated organisations, at least three months before the conference meets so that there can be the fullest dialogue between the rank and file and the leadership. Delegates should only be elected after the branches have discussed the policy documents and should reflect the views of the constituency or affiliated organisation. Block votes and mandated votes should be abolished. Delegates must be free to vote on the basis of the actual debates at Conference. Decisions when taken should be binding on the whole party, including the parliamentary caucus and the leadership.

As a corollary to this, the Leader and Deputy-Leader of the Labour Party should be elected by Conference and subject to annual re-election. Reform along these lines could restore a socialist dynamic to annual conference and ensure that the leadership, in office or out, pursue a policy corresponding to the views of the party.

## calling all archivists

We are in the process of making up sets of THE WEEK into volumes.

As readers will know, THE WEEK played a major role in building the campaigns for solidarity with the Vietnamese people and for workers control. These volumes will give a week-by-week account of the development of those campaigns.

THE WEEK devoted the years after the election of the Wilson Government in 1964 to doing its best to build opposition to the increasing drift to the right. Whilst this fight was not so successful these volumes will give a history of how sectors of the left responded in that period. Those who wish to learn from this experience should study this period very closely.

Already we have available sets of volumes 8 and 9 - covering the second half of 1967 and the first quarter of 1968 respectively.

Volume 8 covers the period leading up to the Scarborough conference of the Labour Party, it contains valuable material on the Debray trial and the OLAS conference, which has not been published elsewhere. It also contains the special issue of THE WEEK produced for the Scarborough conference. Containing 25 issues, it costs 12/6d postage 2/- extra.

Volume 9 covers the period leading up to the March 17th Vietnam solidarity demonstration and the period immediately after. It contains the now famous, crushing, reply to the CP's attack on the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. Containing 13 issues, it costs 6/6d postage 1/- extra. Send your orders to: 8, Toynbee St., London E.1.



# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE IN U.S. ELECTIONS

Alan Harris

For British socialists, the words United States and reaction are more often than not synonymous. American atrocities committed in Vietnam immediately flash through our minds. We instantly think of the sinister C.I.A. manipulating and toppling governments in distant lands, of National Guards rifle-butting anti-war demonstrators, of white police clubbing Afro-Americans. In short we correctly identify the U.S.A. with gunboat diplomacy, assassinations, violence and with lying and hypocritical politicians like Johnson and Nixon.

If this was the only face of the U.S.A., it would indeed be a sick picture. Fortunately, it isn't. The other side of American society is the working class which, while still lacking a political party of its own, is highly organised on the trade union front and has shown itself capable of powerful and dynamic struggles - witness the organisation of the C.I.O. in the late thirties and early forties. As delegates to the Democratic National Convention meet in Chicago, they are faced with taxi, telephone and transport strikes.

At the present time, large layers of youth and black Americans are being radicalised, mainly through the war in Vietnam. It is a fore-runner to the radicalisation of the great mass of American workers. Eventually they will move into action to defend their rights and place a government into power, which represents their own interests and not the interests of a small group of wealthy financiers.

The idea that class struggle and socialism are alien to American society is promoted not only by big business in the U.S.A. itself but also by their counter-parts in other countries. The 1968 elections, for example, are generally presented by British propaganda outlets as a "contest" between the Democratic and Republican parties. As if there can be any choice as far as the working class is concerned between two capitalist parties! The "differences" between the Rockefellers and the McCarthys are similar to the differences between the Enoch Powells and the Heaths, i.e., whose policies can best serve the interests of capitalism most efficiently.

The ruling class is well aware of the criticism and dissatisfaction that exists in large sectors of the population over such questions as Vietnam. How else can we explain the withdrawal of Johnson and the "promotion of "peace" candidates like McCarthy? In fact nearly all the bourgeois candidates find it gets votes to appear as "doves" and to disassociate themselves from Johnson's South East Asian policy. They all talk about "peace" - but each and every one of them supports capitalism which has war embedded right in its heart.

The field however is not limited to capitalist politicians. Anyone not wishing to vote for the status quo has an alternative -- in fact thanks to the Socialist Workers Party (the organisation of American Trotskyists) they can vote for a fundamental change and vote socialist. The S.W.P. is contesting positions up to and including the president and vice-president. Fred Halstead and Afro-American Paul Boutelle are the respective candidates for the highest offices in the country. The main points in their programme are: "Bring the GIs home now, black control of black communities and workers power." While the electoral laws make it hard for minority parties to get on to the ballot (in Ohio 25,000 signatures from registered voters are required) the S.W.P. anticipates that sufficient signatures will be got to put them on the ballot in more than 20 states. A vigorous campaign is underway to reach hundreds of thousands of American citizens in order to explain amongst other things why the White House and Pentagon carry out a policy of genocide against the Vietnamese people, what must be done to establish a government of peace and progress.

In an open letter to American radicals Halstead and Boutelle emphasised the importance of building a revolutionary leadership. They stated: "We must learn from the French experience, as from other revolutionary experiences, that not only will the workers, black people and students of this country at some point rise to challenge the capitalist rulers, but that an essential ingredient for their victory is a revolutionary leadership. Such a leadership is being forged in France today, and we have to build one right here.

"We urge you to help build this kind of revolutionary socialist movement by joining and supporting the 1968 Socialist Workers' Campaign."

Their campaign is being conducted by means of radio and TV interviews, meetings, leaflets and speaking tours. A highlight in the campaign is Halstead's trip to Vietnam where he will talk with the American armed forces about the nature of the war, the anti-war movement, and the S.W.P. programme.

One might assume that all left forces would see the need to decisively break with capitalist politics and run their own candidates. This is not the case. The trade union bureaucrats, getting a cushy living from the present system and having a thoroughly reformist outlook, are by-and-large supporting the Democrats as the "friends of labour". The American Communist Party, having learnt nothing from their support of Johnson in 1964, have a more complicated orientation but it is basically the same as the trade union flunkies': support the Democrats as the "lesser evil". Not wanting to isolate themselves from an increasing number of radicals who just won't swallow this line, the C.P. have given their election programme a few twists. They talk about supporting Senator candidate McCarthy in order to stop Vice-President Humphrey. At the same time they promote the idea of fielding a third ticket and drafting Dr. Spock and Mrs. King for it.





And just to blur the issues still more they have nominated from their own ranks a presidential and vice-presidential candidate to run under the CP ticket - the nomination of their own candidates amounts to a token campaign. (The decision to run was announced in April but the nomination did not take place until July when it was too late to get on the ballot in most states). Their real position of supporting the Democrats is the concrete application in the USA, of Moscow's "peaceful co-existence" line. While the application of this policy may vary from country to country the intended result is the same: preservation of the status quo. The French CP rushed to save de Gaulle when his Government was on the verge of being overthrown from the left. In Latin America, the Moscow-influenced CPs oppose the Cuban position of revolutionary struggle. In Britain it is personified in the peaceful and parliamentary road to socialism. In the USA it is support of capitalist politicians.

The SWP campaign provides a welcome relief from the politics of class collaboration. It states the class struggle issues as they really are and shows the way forward by projecting a socialist programme.



## meet Fred Halstead

Fred Halstead, the Socialist Workers Party's candidate for president in the forthcoming US elections, will be speaking at a meeting at:

C A X T O N H A L L\* (Norfolk room) on  
Wednesday, the 18th of September at 7.30 p.m.

His trip to Britain is part of his round-the-world campaign tour.

In the course of this tour he has been to several countries in Asia (including Japan and India - we do not know, at time of writing, whether he has been given permission to go to Vietnam) and will be visit all the main countries of western Europe.

Fred Halstead will thus be in a very good position to answer all kinds of questions about the world socialist movement as well as dealing with his party's policy in the elections.

Come along and bring a friend!

\* nearest tube station, St. James Park.



Among the slogans carried on the last mass Vietnam protest demonstration was: "Better Fred than Dead!"



# BRITISH THEORY & French events

Julian Atkinson

Marxist theory has always exhibited a dynamic equilibrium between two of its aspects: economic determinism and voluntarism. The predomination of one or the other generally reflects the prevailing political climate. During times of capitalist stability, or when there is little working class militancy, there is a tendency towards determinism. The air becomes sonorous with declamations that inevitably, but sometime in the distant future, the objective and iron laws controlling the capitalist economy will lead to a catastrophic crisis and the ushering in of the millenium. The mechanistic invocation of the objective conditions plays a very important role in rationalising the quietism of the labour movement during politically slack periods and also giving it hope for the future. The pre-1914 German Social Democracy evolved a very determinist version of marxism. Trotsky characterised its tradition as one that "bore a semi-automatic character: each day followed 'naturally' from the day before and just as 'naturally' prepared for the day to follow". The limits of this mechanistic approach are reached when the class struggle flares and most "unnatural" jumps in political life occur.

When crises do occur, then voluntarism becomes stressed. Before the Russian Revolution, Lenin confidently predicted the inevitable revolution - but not in his lifetime. With the revolution came the April Theses and the statement that theory is a guide to ACTION and not a dogma. The strength of voluntarism lies in its understanding that it is men who make their own history, and therefore lays an ideological basis for the subjective factors such as the role of the vanguard, when the objective conditions were ripe for action. The weakness in voluntarism lies in its ability to ignore objective conditions and to degenerate into adventurism - a process much evident during the "third period" which led to the tragi-comedy of the Baltic States when handfuls of communists tried to seize power in the face of working-class apathy.

## WAR OR SLUMP

The debate among the British marxists during the fifties and early sixties was set firmly within the confines of economic determinism. Socialism, it was assumed, could only follow in the wake of a catastrophic crisis. Lenin had clearly stated that, "Revolution is impossible without a national crisis affecting both the exploiters and the exploited." The majority of British marxists saw the national crisis as being either a war or a slump. Nuclear war could only be regarded as the precursor to socialism by a lunatic fringe, so the debate as to whether socialism was on the agenda in Britain became translated into a debate on whether or not there would be a slump. A majority decided that the permanent war economy had given capitalism a very considerable breathing space and therefore revolution in Europe was impossible. Instead, there would be the steady fragmentation and depoliticisation of the working class. These concepts clearly show

the pressure of bourgeois ideas such as the Daniel Bell "end of ideology" school and Goldthorpe's sociology of declining class consciousness. The events of France in May rudely intruded themselves into the carefully woven theories.

The point that no-one predicted the French events is not too important: it could mean being drummed out of the Soothsayers' Circle, but marxism has never attempted to compete with astrology. The important fact is that the majority of British marxists refused to accept that such an eventuality was possible. Why was this so? Very largely the fault can be found in the mechanical and economic determinist version of marxism prevalent in Britain. Crude equations such as crisis equals slump, which in turn equals revolution have been implicit in much of the pre-French debate. This, in spite of the "red" thirties, that mean dispirited decade, when it was shown that slump could lead to working class demoralisation and political reaction.

## ENGELS ON CRISIS

Crisis need not mean slump, nor does it have to be a purely economic phenomenon. Engels made this point in a letter to Joseph Bloch: "the economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure - political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc. - forms of law - and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas - and their further development into dogma - also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form." The French events, certainly, cannot be understood on the basis of a slump theory. There were economic problems - an unemployment figure oscillating in the 500,000 to 700,000 region, and some cut-back in welfare provision - but no slump.

Neo-capitalism has, probably, the ability to avoid catastrophic crises. This does not mean that it will suffer no crises. Wage freezes, regional unbalance and problems of liquidity have dogged all of the metropolitan capitalist countries. The "affluence" of sectors of the working class brings an additional problem, as alienation as consumers complements the alienation suffered as producers. The "affluence" does not destroy the militancy of the workers; in fact it is often the most prosperous sections of the workers who are the most militant. The economic and social gains made by the working class ensure the emergence of new categories of essentials such as cars, paid holidays, televisions, security of employment and state health services. These gains are not contrasted with the wretched conditions in the Third World, thus solidarising the workers with the capitalists, nor does the worker use the depressed thirties as a reference point to judge a "utopian" present. A relativism comes into play only with regard to the standards of life that the workers have struggled to achieve for themselves. A figure of 500,000 unemployed in France, given a climate of disillusionment with Gaullism and the militancy of the students was unacceptable to the workers.

## INCREASING ALIENATION

The increased alienation of the workers clashes with the mechanism of neo-capitalism; the prices and incomes policy, increasing division of labour



national planning and automation. The demands of the labour movement that are necessary to combat these phenomena have to be raised to a higher level. Potentially, the call for nationalisation under workers' control is no longer just the demand of the revolutionary vanguard, but has become the property of the whole labour movement. Over whole areas of neo-capitalism latent crises exist: authoritarianism, the anti-imperialist struggle, education and the student revolt, incomes policy and even questions to do with the quality of life. No economic eschatology is required - the opportunities for struggle exist now.

## GLC rents

George Cunvin

A good example of what will happen if the Tories are returned to power is provided by the Greater London Council. Almost by instinct a Tory's first impulse when the chance arises is to hit at the workers. In London in addition there is an old score to settle. It is the working class voters of London, and especially the tenants of council estates who have kept the Tories in the political wilderness since the 1930's. Now, thanks to the gerrymandered constituencies of the Greater London Government Act, and the shocking record of the Labour Government, the Tories rule at County Hall.

Their moment of vengeance has come and they are turning their guns, first of all, against that section of the working class who they think they have in their power: the council tenants. Vicious rent increases will add an average of 7/6d to the budget of the council estate householder. THIS REPRESENTS AN INCREASE OF 16%, and even overrides the recommendation of the Prices and Incomes board which was THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO INCREASE AT ALL THIS YEAR and only an average increase in 1969-70 of 3/6d.

What is the Government doing about this? When the workers have won a grudgingly given increase, the Government has not hesitated to use its power to clamp on a freeze. Wage increases, it insists, must be linked to productivity agreements. But what of the G.L.C. rents? Does the same criteria apply? Not on your life! The tenants are not going to get better maintenance and service for their increased rents. On the contrary! A large part of the cost of internal repairs, hitherto a charge on the council must now be met by the tenants.

By the action of the Tory G.L.C. the whole principle on which municipal housing is based is thrown overboard. This is that housing is a social service the cost of which must be born by the community as a whole. London's Tories want the "better off" tenants to subsidise those not so well-off - though many of them are living on estates which are already paying their way. From the Tory point of view this is not only good economics but it also helps divide the working class. Inevitably there will be bitterness on the part of the tenants paying the higher rents against those receiving rent rebates at their expense. It also divides the workers on the council estates from those living in privately rented houses to whom the Tories will say - "our policy will mean lower rates," forgetting to add that the private landlord will not be slow to follow

Ernest Mandel put his finger on a vital point when he wrote, "...it is above all the subjective factor which plays the key role in deciding whether or not the workers' movement makes use of the opportunity which neo-capitalism provides for an anti-capitalist strategic offensive." The British left has to do more than free itself of economic determinist concepts and to abstractly realise that struggle is possible. The next stage of debate has to come to grips with the subjective factor. Questions about the transitional programme and the revolutionary party will have to be settled - and quickly at that.

the G.L.C.'s example and put up the rents as soon as he is able.

Tony Greenwood, as Minister for Housing, must intervene immediately and veto the rent increase. Just for once let the Prices and Incomes policy be shown to work for the workers and not against them. But the tenants will not wait for hypothetical action from Whitehall. They are organising to resist the rent increases. In this they must have the full backing of the whole labour movement for as stated in the opening paragraph of this article the G.L.C. action is only a foretaste of what the Tories have in store for all of us when they get back to power.

## support JCR

As has been reported in previous issues of our journal, members of the JCR are facing repression in France.

The latest information indicates that Alain Krivine and several other members of the now-banned JCR will face trial some time during the month of September. The charge against them will be that of trying to re-form a banned organisation.

This carries a sentence of two years' imprisonment and other punishment.

There is no doubt that the French authorities are "cracking down" upon the JCR in the hope of intimidating and confusing the student militants before the new university term starts.

Thus any action by British socialists in support of the JCR is helping to counter the attempt by de Gaulle's Government to destroy the French student movement.

We ask all those who received the appeal forms to return them to us with as much money as they can raise. This money will be wanted as soon as the trial begins.

We ask all student groups, trade union branches, Labour Parties, Young Socialist groups, etc, to send letters of protest to the French authorities at their earliest convenience.

As soon as definite news comes through about the trial we will be issuing a call for a demonstration in London and we hope to get other people up and down the country taking action too.

If you require any further information, please write to us. We will also be pleased to send a speaker to any organisation on this topic.



# Demonstrations and violence

Mike Martin

## DEMONSTRATING WHAT?

The movement for solidarity with the Vietnamese has advanced considerably in the past year. Two major demonstrations have shown the strength of the movement and created an atmosphere of confidence on the left, which is unfamiliar to many activists, but which has brought thousands of new young people into political struggle for the first time.

The demonstration scheduled for October 26th this year is likely to be bigger than ever, and is already beginning to involve wider sections of the political movement than ever before. In the last few months the Young Communist League and its associated organisations have joined the ranks of the solidarity movement; a significant step forward from the period just before March 17th when VSC supporters had to defend the movement against a factional onslaught from this\* quarter. In addition there is every prospect of fruitful cooperation with a section of the trade union movement. It seems, however, that there is a need for clarity on what the left should aim to get out of the forthcoming actions, in particular in relation to violence on demonstrations - an issue which has tended to come to the fore in recent months. At root, this is a question of political attitudes, and it is desirable to outline the position which has characterised the VSC, and which INTERNATIONAL fully supports.

Basically it must be stressed that because of the importance of the Vietnamese struggle on a world scale, it was necessary to initiate a special campaign in its defence. For more than two years the VSC has sought to do this, acting as a united front on this one issue alone. This work has led the VSC and its supporters into battle against the right-wing of the Labour Party over its support for US aggression and against those sections of the left which favoured a negotiations formula. The argument for solidarity as against negotiations has been largely resolved, although the underlying political differences may still assert their presence in some form. The great majority of people formerly organised around a negotiations platform are now in the solidarity camp and their organisations have been drawn into united front type activity.

## WINNING WORKING CLASS SUPPORT

The next major hurdle facing the VSC is the task of winning sections of the working class to a solidarity position, and more immediately opposing British complicity in the war. Dramatic gains in this field are unlikely, given the low level of political activity in the labour movement and the tendency for demoralisation following the savage attacks by the Labour Government against the workers, which so far have not met with a coordinated response. Furthermore, unlike the American working class, British workers have little perspective of acting decisively and effectively against the war. In spite of this, it is necessary to carry the campaign into broader layers of the working class movement. What must be stressed again and again is that VSC exists in order to win people to the



side of the Vietnamese, and everything falls into place behind this; and not the other way round.

Undoubtedly, the VSC experience can lay the basis for progress in other fields; it can have a uniting effect. But this is not to say that VSC should mobilise on other issues or that the only reason it should concentrate on Vietnam is because more people will turn out on that issue. Both these arguments have been put forward of late, and both betray a failure to understand the united front character of VSC - a tendency to confuse it with building an organisation with broader political objectives. (as if we don't have a number of these already!) There is also an element of sectarianism which seems to imply that the Vietnamese cannot triumph until there has been a revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. Welcome as such a development would be, it must not be assumed implicitly or explicitly that this is a precondition for the victory of the Vietnamese.

Nor does our wish to see revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries absolve us from the responsibility of defending the Vietnamese Revolution; indeed it could be argued that if we cannot rise to defend the Vietnamese Revolution we cannot be expected to achieve sufficient consciousness to make a revolution in the west.

Something of this confusion and sectarianism pervades the argument for considering demonstrations as militant confrontations with the state. Having said that we want to create a mass movement on one issue, our energies should be directed to that end, and not be diverted into often meaningless battles against the police, all the more meaningless since the prospects of victory are extremely remote in the absence of a mass revolutionary movement of the working class. While "fuzz-bashing" displays a very healthy attitude towards the capitalist state and its representatives, it is quite a separate matter from our central task of mobilising increasing numbers of people in support of the NLF - a political task rather than a military one!



## DEFENSIVE STRATEGY

This means that the limited resources at the disposal of the movement should be used mainly for ensuring the maximum involvement in activity. Organisation in demonstrations should be aimed at fairly modest and basically defensive measures such as ensuring that the demonstration is protected from harassment by the police and that individuals are not left in a situation where they are vulnerable to police attacks. This involves a certain amount of self-discipline, but is more likely to win the sympathy of bystanders than a series of uncoordinated adventures. It means that we must resist behaviour of the type seen in Grosvenor Square on July 21st when some comrades sought to draw the demonstration into a confrontation on the green, contrary to the declared intentions of the organisers, even when most demonstrators preferred to remain spectators.

Tactics on demonstrations should relate to the needs of the situation and the mood of the marchers; although one's first instinct is to act to help those engaged in battle we should always avoid having our tactics determined by minorities whose motives (as on July 21st) were largely factional - seeking to expose the "revisionism" of the organisers. Whether the revelation was worth the effort is debatable, but what is certain is that such activity contributes nothing to the progress of the movement.

\* See COMMENT 17/2/68 and reply: "The Left and Vietnam", 9d post paid from 6, Toynbee St., E.1.

## EDITORIAL STATEMENT

**SUPPORT THE AUTUMN MOBILISATION AD HOC COMMITTEE**  
The war in Vietnam has been completely overshadowed by events in Czechoslovakia. As we go to press, reports are coming through that the N.L.F. has launched a new offensive. The North Vietnam Government has exposed the absolute hypocrisy of Johnson's claim to have relaxed the bombing of the North.

Thus - despite our concern for the struggle of the Czechoslovak people against stalinism - we must have it clearly in our minds that the key fight against world reaction is still taking place in Vietnam. It remains as true as ever that the outcome of this struggle will be decisive in determining whether the revolutionary forces go forward or retreat for a whole period.

This is the global context in which we must see the preparations for the Autumn mobilisation for solidarity with the Vietnamese people.

### DANGER OF DIVERSION

The grave danger in the immediate period is that events in Czechoslovakia will break the united front which has been built through the VSC and the ad hoc committees. There is no need for this if we have our political priorities firmly based.

Another danger to the unity of the solidarity movement needs chronicling despite its much less importance. There have been reports in the press about a serious "split in the ad hoc committee". This is not so, the trouble has come from a tiny sectarian group of pro-Chinese political complexion which makes up for its lack of any kind of important support by wrecking tactics at meetings.

This group is now no longer in the ad hoc committee and has established its own organisation.

These factors should be borne in mind for the October mobilisation. We must continue, and develop the practice of having stewards linking arms along the front of the march and at the sides applying consciously the policy of "No arrests". The "target" of the demonstration must be determined by the political objectives of action, i.e., the exposure of British complicity and the desire to show our solidarity with the Vietnamese people in their fight against American imperialism. This takes priority over tactical considerations. The fact that many demonstrators are unable to contain their anger at the sight of the American Embassy underlines the need to take steps to try to protect the demonstration from traps set by the police.

Comrades must surely be aware of the extent to which police infiltrate demonstrations. If a couple of hundred in plain-clothes are used at a football match - how many for Grosvenor Square? In order to propagate its ideas on a mass scale, the movement must operate openly and legally, using such rights as we have to the full. We do not have the means to do otherwise, unless we abandon the overall political perspective of building a mass movement (itself a prerequisite of militancy). This is the issue at the centre of the discussion on "tactics". We are demonstrating for the support of the Vietnamese, no more and no less, and October 26 will be a step forward in this respect.

### COMPLETELY FACTIONAL APPROACH

It loudly proclaims itself as being the only true pro-Vietnamese political formation in this country and then goes on to disprove this by completely subordinating the struggle to its own factional interests.

It is far more concerned to "expose" other people as "revisionists" or "trotskyists" than working for a large movement. Its slogans are deliberately divisive; among those it wanted to insist upon for October was "Long Live Ho Chi Minh".

Having said all this, we want to make it clear that we believe that the main pro-Chinese groups in this country should be in the ad hoc committee and that every effort should be made to prevent the activities of this one group from stopping that.

### MUST BE BIGGEST YET

Supporters of INTERNATIONAL have given valiant support to the Vietnam solidarity movement in the past. We ask them to go all out in support of the Autumn mobilisation. Time is short. Owing to a low level of activity in August we have effectively only some 6 to 7 weeks to get things moving. However, reports indicate that as things stand now, we can have the biggest mobilisation ever seen in this country on a foreign issue.

If you have not already done so you should write immediately to:

Autumn Mobilisation Ad Hoc Committee,  
120, Commercial Road,  
London E.1. Telephone: 01 480 6789.

Helpers are urgently required in the London area there is a mass of work to do of all kinds. In other parts of the country the urgent task is to get local ad hoc committees formed and functioning immediately. Please do not delay.



# Women as mothers

Leonora Lloyd

What is the excuse put forward to deny women their rightful place in the working world? The fact that they are the child-bearers. It is this aspect of the problem that I intend to consider, from two angles. First, women's rights in regard to their functions as child-bearers; second, how it affects them in their larger lives.

Pre-industrial revolution, when the home was the centre of work, men, women and children worked in the house and the fields together and there was little conflict between woman's "two roles". With the coming of the factories a constant life of child-bearing up to, or nearly until, her death isolated woman in her home, and financial considerations forced children out to work at an appallingly early age.

But, particularly in the last few years, a great revolution has taken place. When the full history of women's emancipation is written, surely Marie Stopes will be placed above the Pankhursts, the birth pill before the vote, in importance. After all, there is no point in discussing the work of women in industry if only spinsters are free to work. Increasingly, women have control over their own bodies, and any organisation fighting for women must make as one of its central planks the establishment of full control. This should include: free contraceptives on demand, free abortion on demand (even the pill is only 99% effective) and a change in social attitudes so that women who do not want children do not feel constrained to have them. As well as this, women must demand the right to free pregnancy testing and more research into congenital abnormalities - their detection and prevention.

Only then will every child born be wanted. For both men and women, the birth of a wanted baby is still one of the greatest joys life has to offer, whilst an unwanted child is a misery to both itself and its parents, and often turns into a social outcast. Having had the child, the mother must be given equal rights over it with the father, or, in the case of an unmarried mother, total rights.

More and more, the small family is becoming the normal thing, with most having two or three children. If women stay at home for the first two or three years of the child's life and have children at two or three year intervals, then the average stay away from work will be between six and nine years. We are told that, in an increasingly technological age, many men will have to be retrained every ten years or so, but no-one suggests this as a reason for not educating men properly in the first place.

At the moment about 2½ million mothers work. Of these approximately 20% have children under five, mostly in the three and four age group, and over half the mothers work part-time. Even pre-pill, in 1951, 60% of all households had no children under sixteen, and only one in twelve has three or more. For more and more women work ceases - temporarily - on having children, not on getting married. Yet women's education, job-training and

employment prospects are all based upon an ever decreasing influence in their lives. At the same time, increased leisure and changing attitudes mean that fathers are taking more part in bringing up their children. The question of his children's schooling may influence a man's decision on where to work as much as pay, yet who suggests that his prospects should be curtailed as a result? A woman may spend 35 years working and ten years bearing and rearing babies full-time, but these ten years over-shadow her entire life.

Yet, just because more children are, and will be, born wanted, mothers take more interest in them and are willing to learn more about their needs. I should like to see both boys and girls taught much more about the processes of birth and child cares and development. The importance of the first few years of life is becoming more understood, but, like all "woman's work", the care of babies is belittled. In some societies mothers willingly pass on the early care of their young to people they despise, as in South Africa, if it was approached in the same spirit as other jobs women would get much more satisfaction out of bringing up their children.

The independence of women and the "upgrading" of their jobs as mothers would be achieved by paying a wage to women during the ten years they work at home. It is important that women are not financially dependent on men during this time.

Of course, the mental health of the mother is of great importance, as is the need for her to prepare for her return to work. A whole article could be written about the ways in which the drudgery of housework could be cut down by community action, leaving more time for community provided activities for mother and baby. Only a socialist society could do this properly, of course, because at the moment such services are provided by private enterprise for profit.

The question of educating girls to be something other than just "wives and mothers", not to mention consumers, is worthy of yet another article. Indeed, the whole "woman question" covers a very wide field.

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# Rent struggles in Brent

## Keith Venables

The brief period since the Tories captured control of the London Council - for the first time in thirty-four years - has seen a tremendous upsurge in tenants' militancy. This is a direct result of the savage rises in rent which the new Tory councils have saddled tenants with. The borough of Brent was no exception. Confident, after they had captured control of council for the first time since the amalgamation of the old Wembley and Willesden boroughs, the Conservative group on the council prepared a series of measures to bleed the already overburdened tenant still more. The proposed rises amount to 7/6 per week this September, 15/- next July and 22/6 in July, 1970.

The manner in which the Tories forced this through the council is, in itself, instructive. No proposals were put to the Housing or Finance Committees of the Council, and the resolution to raise the rents was moved on an emergency motion from the chairman of Finance. Among the points he raised was the assertion that council tenants have a "bargain" in the places they get for the rent they pay. This was greeted with derisive laughter from the public gallery, where over forty tenants, assembled at two day's notice, saw all the talk of "fair rents" being swept under the carpet.

One question to be asked is why the Tories saw fit to stampede the increases through the council with such haste. I am convinced that the one thing the Tories feared was action by the tenants to block the rises. The Brent Federation of Council Tenants, re-formed in 1966, is one of the strongest and most militant federations in London. It has a superb record in struggle and has been a thorn in the side of Labour and Tory councils alike when they have attacked council tenants. It was fear of delaying action by the Federation which scared the Tories into taking such swift action.

### PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The next move was up to the Federation, which took the following decisions:

1. To get every member Association to hold a public meeting in its own locality, the purpose of which was to ascertain how far tenants would go in opposing these rises.
2. To write to trade union branches, trades councils and other such bodies for donations and support.
3. To organise a petition and a levy on all tenants, to pledge support for the Federation.
4. To hold a demonstration against the rises and a public meeting in the Town Hall.
5. To consider action such as rent strikes or withholding the increases after each Association had reported back from its own meeting.

The meetings were successful beyond all expectations. Over 300 tenants turned up to a meeting in South Kilburn. The meeting hall was too small so the meeting was transferred to a piece of waste ground outside. The meeting was overwhelmingly in favour of and fully supported all the Federation's proposals, including a rent-strike.

Over £20 has so far been collected from this one Association's levies alone. Similar meetings took

place in Stonebridge, Kingshaven and other areas. All pledged support for the proposals outlined above.

What has been the attitude of the Labour Party to this? Once again the glaring contradictions between the Labour Government and the constituency parties has been revealed. It was on a circular from the Government, via the Prices and Incomes Board, that the Tories decided to raise the rents. This "Green Light" circular has caused rent rises in most London boroughs. In marked contrast to this, the local Labour Parties have placed themselves in full support for the tenants. East Willesden LPYS has firmly supported the tenants and, on a resolution moved by the YS, the constituency party voted unanimously to render every assistance to the struggle.

### COMMUNIST PARTY CAUTIOUS

The Communist Party, despite a leading role that some of its members play in a few of the Associations, has adopted a cautious approach, and has found itself outflanked for militancy by the Labour Party. The Socialist Labour League, despite its claims to have three YS branches in Brent and its incessant pleas that it is the tenants' vanguard, has been curiously absent from the struggle.

For marxists the lessons of the Brent Tenants' struggle are obvious. Those on the left who take a gloomy view that workers won't fight and are feeling dispirited and defeated have been proved wrong. An even bigger rebuff has been given to the sectarians who have argued for quitting the Labour Party, and that the workers will never again support it. Many workers have already realised they were wrong to abstain or vote Tory in the borough elections and have become firmly resolved never to take such action again. Even more important is the fact that workers are learning to differentiate between the antics of the Parliamentary Labour Party and their local constituency's actions. Of course in the long run tenants' associations by themselves cannot prevent rises in the rent, but as a short-term measure they can play a vital role in instilling confidence into tenants and reversing the drift of workers into apolitical and stagnatory moods. All socialists should render every assistance possible to their local tenants' committees and help to raise the understanding of workers about the society they live and suffer under. The Brent tenants have paved the way to a link-up of all London tenants' associations. Already support has been received from and contact established with Ealing and Paddington. We are sure that in the struggle ahead this will play a part in the ending of Toryism for good.

### GLC TENANTS BRING OUT NEWS-SHEET

The very active GLC Tenants' Action Committee is now publishing a news-sheet. This gives news of current struggles and activities, past and present. The first issue gave notice of the mass rally in Trafalgar Square on September 22.

The news-sheet can be obtained from:  
GLC Tenants' Action Committee,  
24, Atholl House,  
London W.9.



# FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF



## MALCOLM X AUTO BIOGRAPHY

Any account of Malcolm X has to see him as a transitional figure on at least two counts. Firstly, he was the man, above all others, who ended the dominance of the civil rights movement by the Randolph, Rustin and Wilkins type and prepared the ground for the new militant leadership of Rap Brown, Carmichael and Farman. Secondly, Malcolm was a man whose own ideas were in transition, and whose most fruitful period was ended by the assassin's bullet.

Malcolm learned the facts of life about the role of a black man in racist, white America very early. His father, a member of Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association, was threatened several times by the Ku Klux Klan and was finally murdered by a racist group, called the Black Legionaires, for spreading unrest and dissension amongst the "good niggers". His mother was not equal to the task of keeping the large family together during the worst days of the depression. She went mad, and Malcolm drifted first to Boston and then to New York, where he gradually fell into the Harlem underworld. He reached the bottom; became a cocaine addict and a petty gangster, and finally was sent to prison for ten years.

It was in prison that Malcolm became a member of the Black Muslims. A young thug had gone into prison, but the Malcolm that came out was a non-smoking teetotaler who had read deeply into the history of his people and was a dedicated fighter against racialism. The new Malcolm rose quickly to prominence in the Black Muslims. He was a forceful speaker, but also a man with ideas. The old civil rights leaders were integrationists. They represented the black middle-class who wanted to get into the expensive hotels and golf clubs. They saw their political role as a pressure group in the Democratic Party.

Malcolm's base, however, was firmly in the ghetto where the problems were more acute and the remedies had to be more radical. The black ghetto had to organise itself outside the framework of the white capitalist institutions. Malcolm argued for independent black action, separate from the deadening grip of the white liberals. He refused to subscribe to pacifist illusions. If the blacks were attacked, they should defend themselves, and if they needed guns to do this, then guns they ought to get.

It is not surprising that, with these views, he should become the number one hate target of the white capitalist class, and even of the respectable black leadership. Eventually, things became so hot that the Black Muslim leadership moved against Malcolm, using the pretext of his "chickens coming home to roost" comment on the Kennedy assassination. In this final period his ideas developed apace, largely as a result of his tour of Africa. His thinking became more global as he interpreted the struggle of the Afro-American in the light of the Third World Revolution. He also began to examine the possibility of a future alliance between the Black Power

Movement and white revolutionaries. Then the assassin struck.

Death did not destroy his influence. It is Malcolm that dominates the Black Power Movement even now. This book is part of his legacy. It has to be read in conjunction with his more overtly political works, such as "Malcolm X Speaks", but it has to be read.

*Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Penguin Books, 6/-

## Black Power leaders detained

The arrest of the leaders of the Black Power movement has been well publicised. Although for legal reasons it is impossible for us to comment on the actual charges some things can and need to be said.

First, one is struck by the use of a familiar device: that of remanding in custody. This means that a person is punished before they have been on trial, let alone had a chance to defend themselves. One of the chief principles of British justice is thus completely ignored: that of a person being innocent until found guilty.

Of course, it is easy to envisage circumstances in which the state machine feels it necessary to detain someone because that person might flee. But in this particular case - which has all the hallmarks of a political show-trial - it can hardly be thought that Obi Egbuna and his colleagues are likely to give up their entire political activity by doing a bunk.

Secondly, we are profoundly disturbed by an almost complete lack of solidarity on behalf of white socialists with the Black Power comrades. Obi Egbuna has spoken at both the mass solidarity demonstrations of October 22nd and March 17th. Yet to our knowledge, not one of the journals on the left which support the VSC has protested against the remands in custody.

Black militants have formed the opinion that this silence is due to a combination of fear and opposition to the whole idea of Black Power. The latter feeling, our Black Power comrades believe, has racist roots - which may or may not be unconsciously held.

We must confess that it is not difficult to see some logic in this opinion: witness the shocking failure by the left to protest against the trial of Michael X (many on the left criticised *THE WEEK* for making a stand on this question.) Those who want to refute these charges can do so easily all they have to do is show solidarity with Obi and his colleagues.