

International

A SURVEY OF BRITISH AND
WORLD AFFAIRS

Aspects of
**MARXIST
UNITY**

CAPITALISM'S FINANCIAL CRISIS

ROTTEN RIPE FOR SOCIALISM

Britain

BRITAIN, Thursday.
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business news MARKETMETER

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Britain

RSSF Confer- ence report

Britain helps de Gaulle

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on spending

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standby credit by the other nine countries
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Lesson of October 27

1/6

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EQUAL RIGHTS

A delegated meeting on October 22 brought 300 men and women together to plan a national campaign on equal rights for women, with the demands of equal pay, equal training, equal opportunity in the forefront. Among organisations represented were AEF, NUWB, Furniture Trades Operatives, Shopworkers, TGWU, DATA, ASTMS, POEU, CAWU, Tailors and Garment Workers, National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers, various trades councils, Mothers in Action, National Assembly of Women, International Marxist Group, and the Communist Party.

A programme of militant action was developed, an October 27-type demonstration in Trafalgar Square, lapel badges, a national conference, local meetings and conferences, pickets of union negotiating meetings, lobbies of parliament, local demonstrations.

A voluntary general committee of 40 from this meeting met on November 11, elected an executive and a working sub-committee. Among the executive members are Baroness Summerskill, Honorary President; Chris Norwood, MP, co-chairman with Audrey Hunt, ASTMS and Women's Advisory Committee of the TUC; and F. Blake, NUWB, secretary-treasurer.

A lively discussion on limiting the aims of the campaign to equal pay and related demands took place, but it was the overwhelming sentiment that the campaign should encompass all the demands necessary to achieve equal rights for all women not just women who are presently in industry.

This campaign with its declared aim of achieving equal pay within 12 months; its militant outlook; its non-sectarianism; its extra-parliamentary construction, is bound to come up sharply against the state. Already proponents of the demands have denounced Barbara Castle and the Government's gradualist programme for achieving equal pay, and the implications of such demands for the incomes policy are obvious. The potential of this campaign for radicalising and mobilising thousands of men and women is only limited by the attitude of socialists and militant trade unionists towards it. The liberation of the working class will only be brought about by its willingness to fight for the rights of its component parts and the ability of the conscious vanguard to lead and deepen the struggle.

People interested in setting up local branches of the campaign should contact: NATIONAL JOINT ACTION CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE for EQUAL RIGHTS, c/o, F. Blake, (secretary), 76, Rainham Rd., Rainham, Essex.

Toni Gorton

Pat Jordan's article "Vietnam: the Priority for the Left", in the November INTERNATIONAL is a valuable starting-point for the debate on strategy that must take place after the October 27th demonstration. However, it seems to me that the article suffers from a serious contradiction.

At the beginning of the article, Jordan argues that the Vietnamese struggle is of a "decisive nature." Later, however, he states that the "crisis of British capitalism would exist even if there were no Vietnam war."

The only argument for giving priority to the struggle in one particular country is that that country is decisive for world revolution: e.g., the defence of Russia after 1917.

Vietnam has certainly shaken U.S. imperialism deeply - politically more than economically. But it now looks as though the U.S. wants to, and will be able to, get out of Vietnam, without being anywhere near the point of collapse.

Jordan's account of internationalism seems to be an entirely abstract one. Revolutionaries, and especially tiny groups, have to examine how they may intervene effectively. It is rare that such intervention can be effective other than on a local scale. Obviously if British troops were involved in an imperialist war, there would be scope for intervention. Otherwise solidarity must be largely symbolic, and no revolutionary can survive on symbolism alone.

It is, of course, true that Vietnam has radicalised a significant section of youth - above all where it has brought them into struggle on a more local level - against police, university authorities, etc.

But this is not to accept Jordan's assertion that the campaign on the solidarity issue makes "revolutionaries." It is comparatively easy for students and youth to participate in demonstrations, surrounded largely by people like themselves. But in itself this will not train revolutionaries - people able to take a lead in any struggle that may come up for the next twenty years. For this systematic work with the working class is required.

Obviously it is not enough to link issues in a crude way. "3d off your wages" will not mobilise masses of workers over Vietnam. It will not, we have learnt, mobilise them against the wage freeze either.

But unless the new generation politicised by Vietnam can be initiated into the often prosaic and fragmentary class struggles at home, they will succumb to the long-term pressures of society and a great chance of building a revolutionary movement will have been lost.

Ian Birchall

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Signed articles do not necessarily represent editorial opinion.

Rotten ripe for socialism

Elsewhere in this issue one of our authors talks of the capitalist world "being rotten ripe for socialism". This proposition could scarcely have had a clearer confirmation than the recent financial crisis: all over the western world workers' jobs are in danger, cuts in living standards are imminent and all kind of social and economic dangers have come to the fore. Why? The answer is quite simple: modern capitalism is just as archaic and chaotic as it ever was. Despite the use of Keynesian methods, massive arms expenditure and increasing state intervention the essential contradictions of capitalism remain.

The form these contradictions express themselves in may have changed (continuous and unrelenting inflation instead of cyclical downturns of investment) but they are still there. Modern capitalism is, for instance, quite incapable of overcoming the contradictions between the growing productive forces and the restrictive barriers of the economically outmoded national state. The "answer" to this, the Common Market-type of structure, threatens to break down completely once one of the national capitalisms concerned has difficulties.

The difficulties in the sphere of international finance are brought to a head by something which has existed ever since the world capitalist market came into existence: the uneven development of capitalist economies. The strength of the German Mark is not a reflection of the willingness of German workers to toil away whilst their British equivalents engage in unofficial strikes. It is a symptom of a number of conjunctural factors which enabled the German economy to march forward at a much faster rate: the plentiful labour supply from the refugee camps and East Germany, which acted as a complete counter-pressure to full employment; the complete rebuilding of the German industrial machine because of war time destruction, which meant that the very latest tech-

niques could be applied without the problems of old-fashioned plants being a liability; the political factors which meant that the traditional workers organisations in Germany have been able to more readily control the German working class in the interests of capital; and the determination of U.S. imperialism to bolster Germany up as a barrier to the "spread of Communism".

These factors are temporary and it can be confidently predicted that having reached its height of expansion German capitalism will lag behind, say, Japanese or Italian capitalism in the not too distant future. Then the German papers will be full of stories of how much harder the Japanese or Italian workers toil than their lazy German readers.

The reactions of the Labour leaders to this crisis were very sad but very predictable. It just never occurred to them to take measures which would hasten a social transformation of Britain. The reaction of the Labour "lefts" in rallying round the Government in "its hour of need" is even sadder and, one must now say, just as predictable. Real socialists would be glad that capitalism is in difficulties - this makes it that much easier to explain to workers why it is necessary to carry forward anti-capitalist measures.

The British working class have been told more times than one can remember that they had to make sacrifices to get the country on its feet. They have, by and large, responded: they have put up with the wage freeze, the incomes policy and cuts in social spending. The result: British capitalism is still in trouble and they are asked to take more. The latest crisis and the attacks made on living standards must be used to explain to wider and wider sections of workers: Britain, in common with the rest of the capitalist world, is rotten ripe for socialism. The only way these attacks will cease is if you do the job of bringing that social change about.

John Maclean - Revolutionary

November 30th. this year marks the 45th. anniversary of the death of a great revolutionary - John Maclean. INTERNATIONAL regards itself as standing firmly in his tradition.

Maclean was probably the most influential marxist that the British working class movement ever produced. More than anyone else, he can be said to have been responsible for the mass revolutionary upsurge on the Clyde which followed the First World War.

Besides his struggle to bring the ideas of marxism to the workers of Scotland he gave an example of personal courage and dedication that provides an example for the new generation of revolutionaries.

John Maclean will best be remembered for his fight against the First World War. The vindictive treatment he received at the hands of a reactionary government broke his health, but never for a second weakened his resolve to struggle to the end. The greatness of his in-

ternationalist stand was specifically singled out for praise by Lenin, and he was appointed the first Soviet Consul in Britain.

It is unfortunate that until a short time ago Maclean was forgotten and ignored by all but a few people on the left, his name was used as an ikon, but there has been a dearth of factual material on his life, and practically none of his writings are available.

Now there has been a revival of interest, and a vigorous John Maclean Society has been organised in Scotland. INTERNATIONAL welcomes this development and wishes the society well. As its contribution to this revival INTERNATIONAL intends shortly to publish a pamphlet containing the text of Maclean's great speech at his 1918 sedition trial, in which he turned the court's accusations against the Government and the employers. We do this as a means of helping forward the revolutionary movement of today and our contribution towards keeping alive the memory of a great working class fighter.

THE OBI EGBUNA CAMPAIGN

Connie Harris

When Obi Egbuna appears in court on November 25th for the beginning of his trial, he and Pater Martin and Gideon Dolo will already have spent four months in Brixton Prison. Obi Egbuna has applied for bail four times. Each application has been refused. These three black supporters of Black Power were arrested on July 25 charged with uttering a writing threatening to kill police officers at Hyde Park. Two further charges involving conspiracy and incitement have since been added.

The trial is expected to take a week to ten days and will be an important one for socialists to follow, and particularly for the black immigrant communities. Socialists must not see the arrests and trial of Obi and his two co-defendants in isolation, but see them in the context of the ever-increasing victimisation of black immigrants. (The National Council of Civil Liberties is creating a register of complaints against the police and other officials with the help of 300 immigrant organisations).

A furore has been unleashed by all sections of the ruling class against Enoch Powell's most recent racist speech. Can it be that the gentleman sitting with the all-white representation in the House of Commons or the editorial boards of the capitalist press really believe that Powell's speech was wrong, both from a factual and ideological point of view? Do they believe that the ideas of white supremacy and other racist views expressed by Powell are wrong and that he is in a minority of one in this country? Not at all. Most papers saw fit to print this speech in full. Contrast this with the treatment given to militant left-wing speeches - a couple of sentences taken out of context and usually sandwiched between verbose, irrelevant remarks of journalists.) What Enoch Powell has put into words, is thought by many sections of the ruling class. But right now they do not believe it is in their interests to say so. Powell can be disowned for the time being but meanwhile he is being used as a vehicle for the most reactionary and racist views and serves the interests of the ruling class by appealing to the most backward and bigoted layers of society.

No matter what government is in power in a capitalist society, it seeks to keep the system intact by hitting out at the working class through anti-labour legislation, prices and incomes boards, it is useful to have a scapegoat to channel the discontent of the workers away from the class struggle.

"Divide and Rule" has always been the policy of the British ruling class. The ideology of the British Empire has left its scar on British working class movements; backwardness on race questions amongst some sections of the class has been strengthened by Wilson's government passing the Immigration Act, prosecuting Michael X and using the Race Act against the left.

The failure of the Labour Government to provide decent housing for the mass of the people, to prevent unemployment and cut backs in social services, to end the wage freeze while prices and profits soar, has aided big business in using racialism to damp down working class struggle.

Exploited twice over -- as workers in a capitalist society and as a minority in that society, the black immigrants have begun to understand the necessity to organise themselves in order to struggle against their exploitation. It is precisely because they understand this and are trying to organise themselves that their activities will not go unnoticed by the ruling class in society.

Michael X was one of the first leaders of black militants he has spent a year in gaol. Obi Egbuna who took on the leadership when Michael X was gaoled, is now up for trial on three serious criminal charges. To my mind, there is no doubt that much of the 'evidence' that will be presented by the prosecution will have little bearing on the actual charges. The intention will be to create an image that Obi and his two codefendants are extremists both in ideology and action. The point is well understood by all three of them - that is why they have disciplined themselves not to react to the many provocations during their detention in Brixton Prison.

How can socialists help to see that these three black militants get the fullest justice and that political and racial prejudices are not permitted to determine the outcome of this trial? A campaign for their defence must be organised - it is the responsibility of everyone who talks about the rights of minorities to give more than lip service to this ideal. Facts about the case must be publicised. Court proceedings must be closely watched. Actions in support of Obi, Gideon and Peter must be undertaken by all groups of the Labour movement and individuals who are opposed to racialism.

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY: *A giant step forward for Afro-Americans*

Bob Purdie

The Stars and Stripes, symbol of the world's mightiest imperialist power, unfurl and flutter out over the Olympic stadium, suddenly there is a swelling roar from the crowd, a babel of anger and approval, as two black gloved fists are raised in a salute of pride and defiance.

This incident, blazing from the front pages of the newspapers, brought home to millions of people in every continent the extent of the hatred of black Americans for the racist society which has oppressed them for so many bloody and weary decades. But more than that, it showed also the growing influence of an organisation which has been the recipient of more violent hatred, and more judicial vic-

timisation than any other radical movement in the post Second World War history of the United States, the Black Panther Party. The clenched fist in a black glove is their salute. More and more it can be seen in the ghettos of the big cities, along with the uniform of a black beret, black leather jacket, and a bullet on a chain worn round the neck.

An analysis of the Black Panthers is useful for marxists in this country since the Black Power movement here is in its infancy, and, by examining the experiences of the U.S. black struggle, we can draw some conclusions which will help us to have a correct attitude and give assistance to the struggle of black people here. In particular, such an examination is a good answer to those on the left who see nothing positive in the Black Power movement.

When contrasted to the first attempts to organise black people in the U.S. the Panthers are a very positive development. Less than a decade ago Afro-Americans mobilised on two levels, one political, which strove for a better deal inside American society (the N.A.A.C.P. and similar movements), the other, a religious one, which was for the rejection of U.S. society by black people (the Nation of Islam). Neither was a completely satisfactory instrument for the black struggle. By peaceful moral campaigning the N.A.A.C.P. was able to achieve the integration of small sections of middle-class blacks into the system, while conditions for the masses of ghetto poor got worse and worse. On the other hand, the Muslims achieved genuine results in overcoming the effects of demoralisation among black people by teaching them that they should be proud of being black, and that it was possible for black people to organise themselves without relying on white dogooders. Neither tactic could solve the long term needs of black people since neither had an analysis of the basic causes of the black people's oppression. The answer to this came from a leader of the Muslims, one of Elija Mohammed's most trusted aides, who left after a disagreement over the assassination of J.F. Kennedy.

During the short fifty weeks between his break from the Muslims and his death by an-assassin's bullet, Malcolm X did more than any man before or since to explain the reason for the black man's subject role in the nation he had helped to build. He had found the answer in Africa. Travelling there to find out about the black man's past, he discovered that his present in Africa was subjection by imperialism. Applying this lesson to America, he taught the black people the necessity of linking themselves with the world-wide fight against imperialism. His untimely death prevented him from building an organisation capable of doing this.

Drawing on Malcolm X's ideas, the experience of S.N.C.C. and the other black power organisations, the Panthers have come out as a clear cut political organisation with a programme of demands which deal with the immediate problems of the black community: demands for decent housing, for an end to the exploitation of the ghetto by profiteering white businessmen, for control by black people of their community, for control of education so that black children are taught the truth about their history and are not conditioned to accept an inferior status in society, and for an end to police brutality against black people. On this latter problem the Panthers have organised patrols of uniformed black militants who can step in and deal with the racist

cops any time they start to victimise black people, and it is this challenge to the power of the state more than anything else that has earned them the hatred of white establishment.

But above all the Panthers have come out for a socialist struggle against imperialism and capitalism, and for building alliances with other oppressed peoples within and without the U.S. Representatives of the Panthers have been warmly welcomed in Havana, and the Panthers are enthusiastic about the achievements of the Cuban revolution.

In a cool, disciplined, determined way the Black Panthers are setting about transforming the black communities into centres of struggle against all that is rotten in American society. It is their discipline above all which frightens the U.S. ruling class. The fact that the Panthers persuaded the black communities of Oakland not to riot on the night of Martin Luther King's murder is much more menacing than a dozen cities going up in flames, because it implies a discipline which could overturn them if it spreads widely enough.

The Black Power movement in Britain has far to go, but has learned a great deal already from the experience of the Afro-Americans. It would be a strengthening factor if the ideas of the Black Panther Party took a firm root here.

There are some political criticisms which supporters of INTERNATIONAL would make of the Panthers: their support for Fidel's mistaken line on the invasion of Czechoslovakia, their call for a United Nations sponsored plebiscite to determine the fate of the Afro-American people, and their election coalition with the middle-class, liberal Peace and Freedom Party. We have no difficulty, however, in supporting their courageous fight for the advancement of their black communities, and their placing of this struggle in the context of the fight of the colonial world against imperialism. An examination of the development of the black struggle in the U.S. can leave us with no doubt that the Black Panther Party represents a tremendous step forward for black Americans and for the world revolution.



"FREE HUEY!" Kathleen Cleaver addresses demonstration protesting from of Black Panther leader Huey Newton July 15 in Oakland. (See p. 8.)

The changing role of the University

Julian Atkinson

The initial role of the University in early capitalist society was obvious: it was one of acting as a nursery for a new bourgeois elite. It dealt with pure knowledge, progress in culture and the training of gentlemen who were able to fill any post with credit.

A contrary tendency was evident, however, from very early on. A straw in the wind is a letter from the physicist Playfair to the Educational Administrator Lord Tauton. It was written after the industrial Paris Exhibition of 1867, where British industry had failed lamentably in face of foreign opposition. "The one cause upon which there was most unanimity of conviction," Playfair wrote, "is that France, Russia, Austria, Belgium and Switzerland, possess good systems of industrial education for the masters of factories and workshops, and that England possesses none."

The process of welding the University into the economy was slow in Britain. The tempo was quicker in the U.S.A. and, by the turn of the century, Thorstein Veblen saw the university as a corporate structure in process of adaption into industrial society. He polemicised vigorously against "the conduct of businessmen" and their "perversion of scholarly values by the predatory ethics of business."

The second world war firmly established the correlation between economic progress and higher education: both as research and training establishments. The sociologist, Drucker, raised no eyebrows when he boldly stated: "the highly educated man has become the central resource of today's society, the supply of such men is a true measure of its economic, military and even of its political potential." The point was taken in the Robbins Report, where it was accepted that its fine and very liberal aims for education were all underpinned by the need to increase productivity.

It is instructive to examine the educational system of the U.S.A. In very broad terms, it is reasonable to accept that this system is a model that the British system will attempt to approach. They have carried through their explosive growth in higher education in a way that is just being initiated in Britain. In the U.S.A., the percentage of 18-21 year olds in higher education was 4% in 1900. This has risen to approximately 15% in the 1960's. The role of higher education as a nursery for a bourgeois elite has been overlaid by a far broader function: that of a mass training scheme for the emergent technological society.

One further set of statistics is necessary to complete the argument. This relates to the cost of education in the U.S.A. In 1900, the human capital value of the labour force was 22% of all productive capital. In 1957, this had risen to 42%. Education is now the major form of investment in the modern economy. It is this changing role of education that has been responsible for the wave of student protest in the advanced capitalist countries, for this process has brought with it a series of contradictions and political overheads.

The growth in higher education, especially in Brit-

ain, has to be worked for. After decades of deliberately curtailing educational opportunities for the working class, a mobilisation of this "pool of talent" has to be carried through. The old hierarchy of status in the educational system will be the necessary casualty in this process. (This explains the fondness of many social democrats for comprehensives and their antagonism to public schools.) A whole new democratic rhetoric of equality of opportunity will have to be sounded to destroy the deference of working class students and to make them at home in the educational system. In contradiction to this new fostered ethos comes the grading function of the University. Selection becomes increasingly resented by the students and the exam system is challenged. This contradiction is not easily resolvable for the "cooling-out function" of the University and the consequent drop-outs it produces is inherent in the class society the University serves.

A further problem that capitalism faces is the size of the bill for education. The unwillingness of capitalism to foot this cost leads to two results: there is a permanent under-production of skilled manpower; at every turn capitalism tries to force the student to finance his own education. This constant kite-flying for student loans has to be seen in this light. The latent approach, produced by the Fabian, Howard Gloucester, is for a progressive tax on all graduates. The economics and skimping are most obvious in colleges of education which suffer under the Cox and Box system. The net result of these strategies is, more and more, to impose a trade union consciousness among students.

The curricula of university courses similarly reflect the contradictions within the system. On the one hand, the economy demands more highly educated workers who are capable of creativity and personal initiative; on the other, capitalism is afraid of producing workers who will challenge the divisions of labour and the division of power. This is not an over-statement of the case, as consideration of the Cornmarket Careers Centre Survey shows. This survey found that 36% of firms would not employ student protesters. It was felt, particularly by small firms, that the concern could not absorb independent or outspoken personalities. The jobs available for graduates are not those of top management but rather of highly skilled workers. Trained and articulate men are produced for totally unsatisfying jobs. It is this awareness of the incompatibility of capitalism with human satisfaction that has entered the student consciousness.

The answer of capitalism to the threat of education is specialisation. The sciences are made crudely utilitarian and vocational, while the humanities are emasculated into abstract disciplines. The product hoped for is a specialist: an expert in his own field and ignorant in any other; a fragmented, non-social and non-political conscientious non-objector - theory is ignored in favour of empiricism, micro-analysis and methodology. And the students hate it and demand control over their own curricula.

As the universities increase in size and in function they are forced to adopt a further aim: the socialisation of their students. It has always been a job of colleges of education to "gentle the masses" and hence the stress on formal dinners, etc., where the

aspirants to middle-class values could be taught how to eat. The universities, with their widened entrance, now have to do the same. Discipline becomes an important watch word in training the students to accept the saddle of a class society. The students then fight back against petty restrictions for control of halls of residence and their union buildings etc. Thus a further contradiction is introduced into the educational system.

One further aspect of the new university and the new student militant remains to be explored. The struggle of the students is directly against neo-capital-

ist planning. They are the victims of the "generosity" of neo-capitalism's educational provision and, therefore, many activists are produced who are immunised with regard to neo-capitalist ideology. This is high-lighted when the orthodoxies of the labour movement, both social-democratic and stalinist, have surrendered to this ideology of "planning".

Isolated from the reformists large sections of the student militants grope their way to a revolutionary consciousness. The need for capitalism to produce skilled workers may lead to the production of skilled revolutionaries.

THE RSSF CONFERENCE

PERSPECTIVES FOR A REVOLUTIONARY STUDENT MOVEMENT

Murray Smith

Now that the second conference of the RSSF has taken place, let us try to assess what was achieved there, and where the revolutionary student movement goes from here.

First of all, the reformist element in British student politics (the advocates of reform within the system, of "participation") was not present in any significant force. That in itself is a healthy development. The conference was united on the point that students could not achieve their aims within the capitalist system, or without uniting with the working class to smash that system. Yet there was a clear split on two decisive, and linked, questions. Firstly, how can the mass of students be won to a revolutionary socialist position; and secondly, how do students unite with workers?

The question of how to develop a programme which can mobilise large numbers of students in opposition to the educational system, and to the whole system of capitalism, is the most crucial one for revolutionary students. A minority at the conference (somewhat less than one-third) put forward what was in my opinion a most un-marxist view, though they loudly proclaimed their marxism. Starting from the (correct) standpoint that student struggles are doomed to defeat unless linked to the struggle of the working class, they proceeded to condemn struggles for student demands as essentially reformist, and counterposed the perspective that students could be won to revolutionary politics by a combination of socialist propaganda and involvement in workers' struggles and anti-imperialist movements (e.g. Vietnam solidarity) that is, struggles of which they are not organically part.

The majority viewpoint, on the contrary, was that students can only be mobilised IN LARGE NUMBERS on demands related to their environment - demands for revolutionary change in the structure of higher education and its function in society, and, above all, control of their education. Such demands must be of a kind which can mobilise tens of thousands of students, but which cannot be granted within capitalism - that is, TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS. In the course of fighting for such demands, students can begin to

understand the nature of the education system and its role in capitalist society; and be won to a revolutionary socialist position. In the course of such a struggle, universities and colleges can become "red bases" - centres of opposition to the capitalist system, and from there, IN AN ORGANISED WAY, not just as individuals, students can unite with workers in anti-capitalist struggles.

The political manifesto adopted, while clearly committing RSSF to fight for the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement with workers' power, and to educate its members as revolutionary socialists, made it clear that RSSF's immediate perspective was to mobilise students on the Action Programme for student power adopted on the first day of the conference. The adoption of the Action Programme was the most important decision of the conference, and provides a framework within which RSSF can lend struggles in every educational institution involving really large numbers of students, and become a real mass movement. It incorporates the following six points:

- (1) all power to the general assembly of students, staff and workers - one man, one vote on the campus;
- (2) abolition of all exams and grading;
- (3) full democracy in access to higher education;
- (4) an end to bourgeois ideology - masquerading as education - in courses and lectures;
- (5) abolition of all inequality between institutions of higher education - against hierarchy and privilege;
- (6) break the authority of union bureaucracies - institute mass democracy.

The conference adopted a decentralised constitution. The main function of the national committee (entirely elected from the localities) will be to co-ordinate and provide information to the local sections. This was undoubtedly a correct decision at this time (though not an irreversible one, in my opinion). Given the present fairly weak state of most local organisations, any attempt to impose a political line from the centre could have led to serious fragmentation. The main task for revolutionary students now is to build mass bases in the localities on the basis of the action programme, so that the next RSSF conference in March, 1969, is representative of a large and viable revolutionary student movement. The prospects for building such a movement are excellent.

ASPECTS OF MARX

PAT JORDAN

The continued evolution of the Labour Government to the right has destroyed in most thinking people's minds the illusion that the Labour Party can be an instrument of social reform, let alone of socialism. The complete failure of the left wing of the Labour Party to prevent this evolution or even put up a serious fight against it has dealt a severe blow to the idea, held at one time by thousands of activists, that a mass left wing inside the Labour Party would emerge to become a focus for an anti-capitalist struggle. The trade union leaders have, by and large, become either accomplices in Wilson's endeavours to cut the standards of the British workers or have, at best, offered only partial and sectional opposition to the Government's right wing policies.

In a period when it should have made great gains, the Communist Party has declined and is racked by internal dissension. The maoist groups which left in response to its rightward evolution have - in the main - proven to be completely sterile. The largest non-social democratic, non-stalinist organisation on the left, the Socialist Labour League, has gone off, drunk with self-righteous sectarianism, into the wilderness. It seems to have set itself the target of becoming the W.H. Smith of the left. Thus, in a few years, all the major and traditional workers' organisations in Britain have become discredited in the eyes of most militants and activists.

This situation has demoralised and disoriented thousands of rank and file socialists and would have engendered a historic defeat for the British working class but for one factor: it coincided with an upsurge of youth militancy and the growth of a large anti-imperialist solidarity movement. This, in turn, can be said to be the reflection of the world revolutionary process within the boundaries of Britain.

This new movement is as yet unstructured, largely because it has developed outside the framework of the traditional workers' organisations, but it has certain very healthy features: it is profoundly anti-reformist (because of the experience of the Labour Government); it is anti-stalinist (because of the general crisis of stalinism and the failure of the CP to take the solidarity position and organise meaningful opposition to the Government's policies); and anti-sectarian (because it has been repelled by the antics of the SLL, maoists and certain other small groups). Large numbers of this new youth vanguard consider themselves revolutionaries - apart from a strong anarchist wing, nearly all the revolutionary minded youth are adherents of one or other school of marxism. There is a growing thirst for organisation, which in the first instance has been met mostly by people joining VSC. However, the limitations of VSC's single-issue nature soon becomes apparent.

The conjuncture of the discrediting of the traditional workers' organisations with the rise of this new youth vanguard presents those who

see the building of a revolutionary party as an urgent task with both huge possibilities and difficult problems.

It can be said that the objective conditions exist now for the building of such a party and that new forces needed for such a party are coming on the scene. On the other hand, there does not exist a marxist organisation with the authority for all these young revolutionaries to join. The question of marxist unity must be seen in this light.

TWO ASPECTS OF UNITY

There are two distinct sides to this question of unity which, whilst they are intrinsically linked in the totality of the process of building a revolutionary party, have features of their own and are best separated for purpose of discussion. They are the building of united action committees (to ensure unity in action before unity of organisation has been achieved) and the actual problem of building a united marxist revolutionary movement, the vanguard party.

The question of elaborating ways in which marxists can work together in united action committees is one imposed upon us by events. Ideally, the job of, say, defending the Vietnamese revolution in a country like Britain should be done through a workers' united front, consisting basically of the mass organisations of the working class. However, none of the mass organisations or, for that matter, the relatively large left organisations has lived up to its responsibilities. Thus the task has to be undertaken by small marxist groups. This duty cannot be dodged, not can it wait until full unity is achieved.

Under these circumstances, it is imperative for marxists to fight sectarianism and to create united front type organs of struggle. After having worked out a set of demands, which should be as simple as possible without giving an inch on principle, they should bring together all those who will work for this set of demands, regardless of other differences. Having assembled enough forces to ensure sufficient people for meaningful activity they are then in a position to move on to the next stage of putting pressure on the larger and traditional workers organisations by mass mobilisations. In this way whole organisations can be forced to change their political position.

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign is a model for this type of activity. First grouping together a number of small groups, then concentrating on mass mobilisations and, incidentally, on the way forcing many organisations to change their position) it now has the possibility of winning large sections of the Labour movement to the solidarity position. Needless to say, it could not have even begun this process had the marxists who initiated it demanded full programmatic agreement before united action. The very simplicity of its demands enabled VSC to embrace very diverse trends. This non-sectarian approach

COMMUNIST UNITY

made it possible to appeal to thousands of unorganised young people who were alienated from existing organisations.

"UNPRINCIPLED COMBINATIONS"

But, says a very learned expert on dialectics, this is an unprincipled combination; the VSC does not agree on the class nature of the Soviet Union; it even appeals to Liberals and left-wing Catholics. Doctor Slaughter who, despite his vast knowledge of dialectical reasoning (see his writings on Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks in LABOUR REVIEW) approaches all questions, like most sectarians, from the point of view of formal logic. He applies simple formulas regardless of time and circumstance. For him any agreement to work together by people with political differences is unprincipled.

It is to be wondered what Dr. Slaughter would have made of Marx's collaboration with Weston (an eccentric Owenite industrialist) and Ogden (in essence a mouthpiece for Liberal influences on the British workers' movement) had he been around in the days of the First International. Marx sat with these gentlemen on the General Council of that body for a long period. (See Documents of the First International, published by Lawrence and Wishart in five volumes). Or what our dialectical Cliff would have thought of Lenin's insistence upon working with closely with Father Gapon in the early months of 1905. This collaboration went as far as trying to arrange the shipment of arms to Russian workers and peasants in revolt. Father Gapon was known to be responsible for leaving the workers to be massacred on "Bloody Sunday", when he took them to present a petition to the Tsar.* Or to take a more recent example, what about Trotsky's collaboration with the bourgeois members of the Dewey Commission. We think that the history of the marxist movement is full of examples of Dr. Slaughter's "unprincipled combinations".

The theories that the SLL put forward to justify their non-participation in the VSC and the mass mobilisations are terribly similar to those put forward by the stalinist communist parties in the "third period". Trotsky wrote a whole book, GERMANY WHAT NEXT, polemicising against the theory of the "united front from below". The refusal of the German Communist Party to work for a united front with the German Social Democratic Party against Nazism materially helped the rise to power of Hitler - wrong ideas and theories can have a terrible consequence.

PROBLEMS OF BUILDING THE PARTY

However, the very success of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign has helped to create misunderstanding and confusion about the second aspect which I wish to cover: that of the actual regrouping of marxists and the building of a vanguard party. There are some people who think that it is possible to directly transfer the methods and the successes of the VSC in building a single-issue campaign, with a minimum

* See Krupskaya's "Memories of Lenin" (the early edition, before the stalinists rewrote it) for a very graphic account of this period

programme, into the field of building the vanguard party.

Most marxists in Britain accept the need and urgency of building such a party. Most of them, indeed, are disciples of Lenin, who made the greatest contribution to the theory of building the vanguard party. We should study what Lenin wrote on this subject and see to what extent it can be applied to present conditions in Britain.

The most common myth on the left about Lenin's approach to building the vanguard party is that he put forward a standard set of formulas to be applied in all situations. The truth is very different. The main characteristic of Lenin's approach was his flexibility and concrete application of basic ideas.

It was the same Lenin who was prepared to split the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1903 over a few words in the conditions of membership (see Lenin's Collected Works, volume 2) who in November of 1905 called for hundreds and thousands of workers to join the party. (See "The Reorganisation of the Party" Selected Works, volume 3.) He polemicised fiercely against the idea that the party would be watered down by hundreds of new members joining at that time. He argued for the dissolving of the Bolshevik faction and pointed out that workers were repelled by the split.

However, in 1922, under completely different circumstances, Lenin, in a note to Molotov about proposals for new conditions of membership of the party, argued for a probationary period of 18 months for workers unless they had worked in a large industrial enterprise for at least 10 years! His ideas about admitting peasants and Red Army men were even stricter - he suggested two years in their case. All others, he said should have a probation period of 3 years. (see Lenin's Selected Works, volume 9.)

Lenin insisted upon the necessity of splitting the international workers movement into two camps when the third international was formed, he waged war upon those who wanted to retain unity of the 2nd and 3rd internationals, such as the gentlemen of the so-called 2½ international. But this did not stop him from supporting the line of Trotsky's "Thesis on the United Front" written for the February, 1922, plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, which argued for united action.

This very brief and incomplete survey of some of the positions held by Lenin at various times give an indication of the richness of his theory and practice of the vanguard party.

However, there is one thread of thought which is common to everything Lenin wrote, said and did in relation to the vanguard party: the need for well-defined party principles, namely, programme, tactical resolutions, organisational firmness and experience, and discipline. Even when, in 1905, he called for hundreds and thousands of workers to be brought into the party he did so on the basis that these party principles had been hammered out and provided a framework around which the huge number of new members could be structured. His strictures about the conditions of party membership in 1922 were motivated by a fear that now the CPSU was the Government party thousands of opportunists would enter and undermine these party principles.

This approach of Lenin's is especially applicable

to our present situation. Those who wish to build the vanguard party in Britain today have the special problem of defending the theory of the Leninist party. This is because of the special features of the situation which I have outlined before. The revolutionary youth have many fine features: their hatred of social democracy and stalinism, their rejection of reformism and the parliamentary road to socialism, their internationalism and anti-sectarianism, to name but a few. However, a very high proportion of them have acquired one very mistaken idea: the equation of organisation and discipline with bureaucracy. There is mistrust of the very notion of any formal organisation at all, let alone the concept of a disciplined democratic centralist party.

This is very easy to understand: the revolutionary youth have through their own experience come to identify organisation and the call for discipline with the bureaucracy of stalinism and social democracy and the antics of the sectarian groups. This feeling must be understood and sympathised with. Any tendency for older marxists to merely lecture the young revolutionaries on this question will be counter-productive. In the last analysis only practice will finally deal a death blow to this theory.

One aspect of the democratic centralist party which must be explained time and time again is the right of tendencies to organise for the propagation of their views. This feature alone should go a long way to re-establish the authority and prestige of Bolshevik norms of organisation.

However, the very last thing we should do is to go along with these ideas or ignore them. That would be a perversion of the whole function of marxists who are endeavouring to lay the basis for building the revolutionary party.

The role of the vanguard party is to act as the memory of the class; to generalise from previous class experiences - defeats and victories - and to formulate these generalisations into a living body of theory to guide the class in new struggles. In the absence of a revolutionary party this duty, of necessity, falls to the marxist groups, despite their limitations. This duty is of extreme importance exactly when new and inexperienced forces are coming on the scene. Unless there is an instrument for this the class will be doomed to repeat the same old mistakes time and time again. That is why today the marxist groups must defend the theory of the vanguard party above all else in this milieu.

CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

We need to explain time and time again the basic character of the epoch we live in: that it is a period when the world is rotten ripe for socialism, when the alternative to socialism is nuclear disaster; that because of this it is an epoch of continuous crisis with revolutionary situations bursting upon us one after the other; and that the missing factor which has prevented these many revolutionary situations from being consummated is the absence of leadership, i.e., the revolutionary party.

We live in the era of a generalised crisis of leadership of the working class movement - France is the clearest possible example of this. All the conditions were present for a successful workers' revolt in that country earlier this year except one: the existence of leadership which could have given the French workers a revolutionary strategy for the sei-

zure of power.

But we need to define all this in more precise terms. Many will agree that we need a revolutionary party but do not necessarily mean a vanguard party.

It is not just a question of having an organisation to coordinate activities or to initiate large-scale campaigns. It is one of having a party, flexible in tactics but absolutely firm in organisation, which can, when a revolutionary situation occurs make a bid for power. The discussion-club type organisation would be paralysed in this situation. A vanguard party must be especially disciplined in a revolutionary situation; it must be remembered that it is exactly in such situations that the greatest differences about tactics will occur. A party unable to ensure united action despite these differences will not be able to lead a movement which will take power from the capitalist class.

A revolutionary party must have a sense of timing so that it acts as one man. It must have a sensitivity to the moods of the masses and have a delicate understanding of the relationship of class forces at any given time. Otherwise it will fall prey to errors both "right" and "left".

YEARS OF TRAINING

But these characteristics do not fall from the skies - nor do they come from reading books. They can only be achieved by a long process of training in methods and approach. They can only come with a continuous struggle against subjectivism and impressionism. That is why it is necessary for the small groups right from the very moment of their inception to struggle for these methods and incorporate them into their body of experience and tradition.

It is with all this in mind that we must view the actualities of the process of building the revolutionary movement in Britain today and the related problem of marxist unity in its fullest sense. Every move and proposal for unity must be measured by the yardstick: does it further the building of this type of organisation or would it hinder it? Attempts to sidestep this question are harmful. Endeavours to build very quickly by ignoring these questions will rebound upon those carrying out the experiment. Any proposal to take advantage of the existence of the large number of revolutionary youth by throwing aside the concept of having a clearly defined programme, firm organisational principles and a commitment to discipline is a step back and will prove a hindrance to the job of building a vanguard party. It might seem that temporary advantages will be gained but the inevitable outcome will be a period of splits and ideological disarray.

The time to open the party to hundreds and thousands is when large numbers of workers are being revolutionised and an organisation already exists in which these party principles are firmly established. That was the situation which existed when Lenin made his call in 1905. This is not the situation in Britain today.

The large numbers of revolutionary youth will come together in united action committees immediately. A good number of them will join one or other of the revolutionary groups. But those who counterpose the immediate fusion of existing organisations to the creation of instruments of unity in action are damaging both the prospects for united action and the possibilities of fusion in future.

The VSC has served (and will serve) an important but limited function in all this. The RSSF can serve a bigger one. Revolutionary marxists should work to create a liaison committee which could initiate further united action committees as need and opportunity arises. They should argue the case for the revolutionary party and thrash out a complete ideological basis for fusion which ensured the building of party principles. All this requires patience as well as a sense of urgency. One thing is very clear - it would be criminal if the modest gains made for

united action via the Vietnam work, etc., were wiped out by sectarianism of any kind.

Thousands of new revolutionaries have come on to the scene; there is tremendous interest in theory and organisation, there is a will to fight and win, and there is a general international situation which favours further radicalisation. If we stick to party principles the prospects of unity are very good.

LESSON of OCTOBER 27

Ernie Tate

The October 27th mobilisation against the Vietnam war has been the most successful in Britain until now. It was not only important in terms of size, in bringing into activity more people than ever before, and in reaching new layers of support for Vietnam protest activity, but it was a tremendous expression of solidarity with the Vietnamese revolutionaries. Although the organisers of the demonstration, the Ad Hoc Committee, hoped that between 50,000 and 100,000 would turn out, they were as surprised as anyone by its immensity. October 27 should be seen in the context of a mass radicalisation beginning in Britain, the first mass street action against the Labour Government.

Not everyone agrees with this assessment. At the November 8 National Council meeting of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, contrary to what one would have expected, not all who helped to organise the demonstration were so enthusiastic. Several actions taken at the poorly attended Council meeting indicate there is considerable confusion on the effectiveness of mass demonstrations. A resolution was carried, with a few minor amendments, which expressed sympathy with another,* emanating from Liverpool, which had expressed sharp criticism of the march organisers. In addition, there was strong support for organisational changes in the structure of VSC which, if implemented, would effectively transform VSC from a single-issue organisation, primarily concerned with Vietnam, into a multi-issue organisation. In my opinion, a fourth-rate version of the Committee of 100 or some type of political party (with an unspecified programme), the proposers not being at all clear what they envisage.

In themselves, these actions would be cause for alarm, but coming in conjunction with attempts to abandon the affiliation clause in the constitution whereby trade unions, etc., can come into VSC; and a proposed abandonment of the ad hoc committee technique for organising mass actions, used so successfully by VSC over the past year; this reveals a danger for VSC's existence. There is a possibility of it being bypassed and the valuable ground it has won on the Vietnam protest front being irrevocably lost.

But primarily, these moves indicate a very real sectarian blindness in assessing the recent mass action. Perhaps it is only "post-demonstration depression" suffered by people whose only political activity is around the Vietnam issue. For one reason or another

* The Liverpool resolution itself was not passed. See the latest VSC Bulletin for relevant texts.

they are unwilling to join any of the existing groups which make up VSC, but instead want to change VSC into something more suitable to their own individual requirements (again unstated). In the forthcoming issues of INTERNATIONAL we will be returning to this question in preparation for the coming national conference of VSC, but meanwhile it is necessary to mark out what we think was achieved on October 27th.

1) The most singularly striking feature of the October 27th demonstration was its sheer massiveness. Estimates are that it was well over 100,000. It was this characteristic which determined everything. Confronted with such a mass of humanity, it was impossible for the police to impose their will. Right up to the time of the demonstration, police officials stubbornly refused to acquiesce to requests to permit the full use of the streets without hindrance and not to break up the demonstration at traffic lights, etc. But on the day of the demonstration, the state was visibly forced to relent. The 7,000 police who were called in for the action, were in the main hidden from sight. True, the retreat by the police was done in typical British ruling class style, making a virtue out of necessity (what else should we expect?), but one had only to be on the demonstration to realise that everyone understood - especially the police - that if any attempt had been made to interfere with the march, there would have been active resistance. The demonstrators were on the streets, imposing their will, confident they couldn't be pushed around.

2) Programmatically the demonstration was very advanced. It called for the victory of the National Liberation Front and the Vietnamese revolution. In the past, the "official" peace movement and the Communist Party have maintained that these logans would isolate the Vietnam protest movement. The programme should also be especially noted by those who demagogically insist that there is no difference between the October 27th action and the Easter marches of CND. Can anyone imagine CND coming down four-square on the side of a revolution? On that fact alone, the march demonstrates that important changes are taking place in the pattern of British politics: Not since the Russian revolution has there been such a massive anti-imperialist opposition in the country.

3) The demonstration, although its largest social component was students, nevertheless was the largest "unofficial" working class demonstration to occur in Britain in a decade. It is only an estimation, but we judge that from 30-40 per cent. was working class, with the bulk being youth. There were also a considerable number of mature trade unionists out. Many voluntarily came forward on the day to help with the many practical tasks of organisation - without them, the whole affair would have been chaos at times.

what with the attempts by the Maoists of the British Vietnam Solidarity Front to divert the march and several provocations by ultra-right elements. Surely this latter factor alone must cast in the minds of all those who have maintained all along that it is impossible to obtain mass support on an issue which would not appear of immediate interest to workers, such as wage increases or rents. Will the argument now be that the issue is not that vital - so therefore it is of no significance?

4) The mobilisation became transformed from being just a Vietnam protest action into being a general anti-Labour Government, anti-capitalist manifestation. This was clearly seen in the multitude of slogans seen on the march. This was ensured by the combined role of the Government, the big business press and the police played in doing all in their power in the weeks leading up to the demonstration, to isolate the organisers and scare away potential support. All organs of the establishment were brought into play. All the major national newspapers; Callaghan, who spoke for the Government; the heads of the police; and every fourth rate little hack politician, made it as plain as day, that all citizens should avoid the demonstration and shouldn't even come to watch. Cars and vehicles entering London, driven by anyone who looked under thirty years of age were stopped and searched by the police: the message was clear: young people were suspect. Yet rather than isolate and make ineffective the demonstration, these measures only succeeded in having an opposite effect of gathering mass support. For many who came out, it was simply an expression of solidarity with the organisers over the right to demonstrate, a question posed because of the reaction of the authorities.

5) The demonstration was organised and led by a coalition of avowed Marxist organisations and individual revolutionaries, generally representing a broad spectrum of the extreme left in Britain, and who refused for one moment to conceal their identity. Unlike the CND, which was led by a bunch of preachers, etc., behind whom hid the Communist Party and other elements, this time everyone was out under his own name and banner. Basing themselves on the principle of non-exclusion, they sought to build a unity of all those who accepted the basic slogans of the march in an ad hoc committee, especially constructed for the single action. They managed for the first time in British politics to win a mass audience. Bearing in mind the right sense of proportion, this experience is similar to the May and June events in

Paris when the so-called "groupuscules" won a mass audience for their ideas in competition with the Communist Party.

6) The October 27th mobilisation shows that the hold of the mass organisations of the working class, especially the Labour Party, has begun to be loosened. This began last October 22nd and can be seen as the logical consequence of four years of betrayals. In previous periods, during the CND experience, for instance, many left leaders in the Labour Party found it advantageous to place themselves at its head and use it as a pressure for their parliamentary actions. In this instance, the parliamentary lefts were bypassed - instead of the title of MP being an asset in winning popular support, it is now a liability among the young militants because of its general association with betrayals. One can now safely say that there is now the beginnings of an extra-parliamentary opposition in the country.

7) Mass mobilisations as a weapon to be used by the working class, can assume, in the near future, its historical place in the class struggle. October 27th set a powerful example for all those sections of the working class who have grievances against the system. Mass action is a pre-condition for social revolution and the overthrow of capitalism. It reawakens in the working class a sense and realisation of its own strength and solidarity, and thereby the weakness of the ruling class and the capitalist state. If small leftist organisations with very small resources can succeed in pulling out masses of people against the Government, on what could be termed a relatively abstract question, and in addition impose their will and force the capitalist state to retreat, then what excuse can we accept from trade union bureaucrats, who with all their organisational and financial resources, do not struggle against the Government? Already the question is being asked in working class circles. At the last conference of the women's campaign for equal rights held in London, the October 27th action was referred to as an excellent model to help to achieve their ends.

In the days ahead, the need is not to fritter away the gains of October 27th in fragmented activities over diverse issues, but to concentrate all forces of the campaign in a drive to force the Government to allow representatives of the National Liberation Front into Britain, and force it to retreat from its complicity in the Vietnam war. Discussion must now begin on how that campaign will go forward, but it can only go forward if we understand the big victory that was achieved on October 27th.

A NEW MOOD AMONG TEACHERS?

Jane Jones

The teaching profession in England is not usually renowned for its militancy. On 16th November, 1968, it was announced that the membership of the N.U.T. had turned down affiliation to the T.U.C. in spite of a recommendation to do otherwise by their leadership. On the whole the image is one of 'old women of both sexes' dedicated, they believe to the pupils, or frighteningly cynical, with no understanding of the contradictions inherent in the system of education in this society. There does, however, seem to be a new mood among teachers, particularly among those who have recently come from colleges and universities. There is little information in the national press or even in the left wing press about teachers and their working conditions and pay, as distinct from educational questions. We felt, therefore, it would be worthwhile to consider some of the factors influencing teachers at present.

Firstly there is general discontent in the staff rooms because of Government cuts and their effect on staffing quotas and building programmes. All these obviously add to the strain of the job. Other possible factors creating tensions are authoritarian heads, and antiquated teaching methods of other staff. But there is, we believe, a second deeper reason for this discontent, often not understood by the teachers themselves: the fundamental contradiction between their aims as 'educators' and the demands of society for 'batches' of technocrats as well as 'the hewers of wood and drawers of water'. (We hope to submit an article on this theme later.)

During recent months general discontent has been exacerbated. There was a slight improvement in the conditions of work when the clause in the 1944 Education Act, which enabled teachers to be compelled to supervise pupils during lunch break, was repealed. There has been some confusion over this and many

teachers still feel duty-bound to do this arduous task. Secondly many authorities are economising by cutting down on part-time staff - possibly full-time too after the most recent announcements. It has been rumoured that some newly qualified teachers were unable to find jobs at the beginning of this academic year. The teachers know we don't have too many teachers.

Every two years, on average, a new pay award is negotiated for teachers. This is negotiated through the Burnham Committee, comprised of representatives from the local authorities and the various teachers unions, of which the N.U.T. is the largest and most comprehensive. One of the N.U.T.'s priorities is to raise the basic scale of payment from £800 p.a. to £1,500 p.a. up to £900 to £1,700, a rather large increase for the Prices and Incomes Board to stomach even if the local authorities would pay. Up to now they seem to be ignoring the political implications of this. At any stage either of the parties can declare that deadlock has been reached and appeal through the chair for arbitration. If the chairman agrees nominees are put forward from either side, and they sit with a Government appointed 'impartial' chairman. Acceptance of the award is binding.

Whatever criticisms, and there are many, there may be of the N.U.T. there is no doubt that all teachers should pay their levy immediately to their local association treasurer and encourage their 'colleagues' to do likewise. They should also campaign within their association for action, including special salaries meetings, and a Special Conference of the union early in the new year. It is an appalling situation, with so many socialists in teaching that they do not concern themselves with their own union. There is no doubt in our minds that with increasing cuts in public expenditure on education and the severe frustration among all teachers that this is a very important area of work.

If there is deadlock the only hope for an improved offer would seem to be for the teachers to refuse to take part in arbitration at the same time initiating some form of strike action to press their claim. Come what may, an action committee has already been set up by the Executive of the N.U.T. and they are considering strikes, perhaps a one day national strike followed by area strikes. To do this successfully the sustentation (strike) fund has to be built up, and a campaign is being organised for the payment of a voluntary levy of one day's pay from all members.

LONDON TENANTS ON THE MOVE

Alan Adair

Some 5,000 angry tenants marched from Lincoln's Inn Field to County Hall on November 19th to show their disgust with the rent rebate scheme and their opposition to rent increases imposed upon them by the Tory-controlled Greater London Council.

With the slogans "Not a Penny on the Rents" and "Down with Money Lenders" still ringing in their ears, delegations from numerous tenants associations petitioned Horace Cutler, chairman of the GLC Housing Committee, to demand a freeze on rent increases, which had been set in motion while Labour still had control of the council.

Like everything else, except wages, rents have skyrocketed over the last 12 months or so. If the GLC (the biggest municipal landlord in the world) has its way tenants will be paying much more than they do now for a roof over their heads.

The demonstration coincided with the current rent strike. The exact number who are withholding the increases is not known but spokesmen for the GLC put the figure at 10,000. Obviously there are many more than this involved. More than half the demonstrators were women - from young housewives to old age pensioners. For close to three hours they voiced their hostility to Cutler and the whole Tory policy towards housing. Many slogans were chanted, the main one being "Not a Penny on the Rents".

Earlier in the afternoon a smaller march and demonstration was conducted under the auspices of Region One of the Transport and General Workers Union. Busmen, dockers, marketmen and engineers were present. Only 200 or so unionists turned out as it was a delegated action and was called during working hours.

The tenants' movement reflects the growing radicalisation throughout the country and a general disillusionment with both Tory and Labour administrations.

It has much potential.

Seeing the handwriting on the wall, the EVENING NEWS of November 19th reported in a full-page spread that "...estate committee meetings once held in someone's front parlour are now being held in town halls and hotel ballrooms to accommodate the thousands of bitter protesting tenants. The call they rally to is mutiny -- "We will not pay --- we will not surrender".

Anxious to discredit the movement, the article raised the old "red scare" when it claimed that "communist conspirators have tried to marshal the rent rebels into making their rent protests a direct challenge to the Government and British way of life". Mrs. Helen Lowe, secretary of the GLC Tenants Action Committee is quoted to have replied "I am sure that there are a lot of small groups who would like to see it develop into trouble, but they are the ones who are likely to get clobbered."

There is a feeling in the committee that "we should leave politics alone". The fact that politics will not leave us alone tends to cut across this conservative point of view.

While council housing for those lucky enough to get such accommodation is hopelessly inadequate and expensive, a far bigger percentage of London's population is forced to live in privately-owned ghettos - often without a bathroom or indoor toilet. On top of this rents are far in excess of most council house ones.

The tenants associations, with increased members to give them more power, with a firm anti-capitalist policy (and therefore very political) and geared to militant action can set an important example to non-GLC tenants who are no doubt frustrated and bitter about their own "living" conditions, but do not see the possibility as yet to organise and fight back.

It will mean a big struggle if the tenants are to win their demands. It involves not only taking on the Tories and their reactionary friends in the labour movement but eventually the state machine. If the rent strike continues then eviction notices and court proceedings are sure to follow, despite Cutler's "promise" of no evictions.

Farmworkers demand £16, 40 hour week

Peter Ross and Bill Thompson

On November 16th. the biggest rally in London of agricultural workers since the 1930's took place; yet this demonstration was almost ignored by the socialist press. Nearly two thousand agricultural workers from all over England and Wales took part in this colourful demonstration, bringing with them their banners and placards. This demonstration is only part of an intensive campaign by the National Union of Agricultural and Allied workers for their demand of £16* basic wage and a 40 hour week. Even this minimal demand is £2 less than the average male industrial worker earns. With overtime, which is essential for him to make ends meet, the farm worker averages a 49 hour week and earns £15.5.0; whereas the industrial worker averages 3 hours less and earns over £22, thus farm workers are earning almost 50% less!

Added to this is the fact that agricultural workers are leaving the land at a rate of 20,000 a year, the vast majority not through redundancy but because of lousy wages and conditions. It is also becoming increasingly difficult to get school leavers to take up agricultural work, there now being half the number of farmworkers under 20 that there were in 1959. In fact the total full time work force has declined from 400,000 to 250,000 in the last nine years, yet wages as a proportion of the employers costs have declined in 20 years from 42% to 19%!

In monetary terms agriculture is Britain's biggest industry, yet it employs only 1% of the total working population, this being the lowest percentage in the world. About a quarter of our import bill is accounted for by food products amounting to £1,600 million and it is estimated that by 1972 increased agricultural production will have led to a further £220 million saving. What, however, does the farm worker get out of this? The answer is very little indeed; he still works in uncomfortable conditions for long hours and lousy wages while his boss reaps the benefits of increased profits.

Let us examine the position of the bosses. They have recently turned down the latest demands of the N.U.A.A.W. as they say they cannot afford

The sections and leaders of the labour movement that are in agreement with the aims of the tenants committees must not only JOIN the struggle but must be in the FOREFRONT of it. To be effective, the "Not a Penny on the Rent" movement must be linked with the fight against the wage freeze and the austerity programme carried on by the Wilson leadership on behalf of British big business.

such increases. They try to justify their position by saying that their workers have "free" cottages (in fact only 50% do) and free milk and eggs, etc.,. Many of the cottages are hardly fit for human habitation, as so many were built in the 19th. century they lack such amenities as bathrooms and indoor lavatories, in fact some even don't have piped water supply! As for the other "perks", they hardly amount to a few coppers a week and cannot be used as an excuse to justify low wages. The majority of farmers are comfortably well off, most can run two cars and can send their children to private schools, yet they can't pay a living wage to their employees.

The N.U.A.A.W. faces considerable difficulties in organising a highly dispersed membership, half of whom live in tied cottages and most of whom have an undue regard for their employers - moreover, though the union is organised in more than 3,000 branches many have no more than eight to ten members. Although 2,000 workers were on the march the speakers at their rally in Trafalgar Square were hardly inspiring; the N.U.A.A.W. General Secretary, Lord Collinson, a noted right winger and Cyril Plant, the General Secretary of the Inland Staff Association. Typically they have had no support whatever from the rest of the trade union movement. When the union's modest claim went before the T.U.C.'s Incomes Policy committee in July it made no objection to the claim going forward to the Agricultural Wages Board but it did not officially endorse it.

With no recent tradition of militant industrial action the agricultural workers need all the support and encouragement the left and other unions can give; so far there has been none. We feel it is the duty of all unionists to give what practical support they can by sending messages of solidarity and support to the N.U.A.A.W.

* As this article was being written it was announced that a 17/- increase in the basic wage had been granted bringing it up to £12.8.0 per week from February, but the working week still remains at 44 hours.



Editorial note: most of our contributors are willing to speak on the topics they write about, write c/o INTERNATIONAL if you are interested.

An occupational Health Service now

Geoff Richman

At the May 1968 conference of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, a member said "I am fed up with coming to meetings and being applauded as a worker or even as a trade unionist" - and he stuck his thumbs in imaginary braces over a beer-laden corporation - "I am a human being and I want to be listened to as a human being". To be a human being in contemporary terms is to demand the freedom to create and control one's own life, and to see that this freedom only arises through a collective, through common action. To imbue the working population with this consciousness is the primary aim of revolutionaries, for without this aspiration being present in large numbers of workers there can be no political struggle with a revolutionary content. If this change in consciousness is to be brought about, (amongst other areas of social life) it must be done at the point of production, in the factory, workplace or office. This task is separate from and may even be opposed to, the traditional trade union struggle of economic work, it is the content of what is meant by workers control.

This preamble is necessary in a discussion of occupational health so that we can be clear what we are trying to achieve. However necessary in functional terms (of saving lives and health) an occupational health service may be, if the campaign is to have a socialist content it must focus on the need to raise the question of control of their working lives amongst workers. And more, it must demonstrate that health itself is a social concept, it depends on the way people live in the organisation of society.

WORK IS DANGEROUS

First, we should look at the evidence for industrial illness. Accident rates have been rising steadily for years. In 1954 they were 22 per thousand employed, by 1963, 29 per thousand, a total of 204,648. In 1964 the figure went up to 268,468, 1965 to 293,717, in 1966 to 296,610, and the provisional figure for 1967 tops the 300,000 mark. This is in a population of 7,381,000 subject to the Factory Acts. The total accidents estimated from claims submitted to national insurance (now social security) for industrial injuries in 1963 was 845,000. There were 194,000 disabled people receiving benefit, and 2,110 death benefits granted. And even this is an under-estimate. A sample survey by the Factory Inspectorate SHOWED ONLY INTO NOTIFICATION 60% of accidents were in fact registered (compulsory if causing 3 days or more off work), and in the construction industry only 43%. Work places are dirty, dangerous and badly organised, and this is the prime cause of accidents. The inspectorate carried out detailed surveys in Halifax and in Stoke-on-Trent some years ago which proved this, and a recent reminder comes from the annual report of the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention (1968). In general the standard of hygiene, housekeeping, and first aid provision

was poor, especially in small factories. Of the injuries received 8% had no first aid at all. Many of the injuries were caused by lack of guards on machines or guards not in position, or failure to use protective clothing.

PREVENTION THE ANSWER

Yet the vast majority of accidents are obviously and easily preventable - by sticking to the rules and taking care. Large concerns which do so (e.g. Du Pont Construction - see Industrial Safety Aug. 1965) have almost accident free records, and the Factory Inspectorate Annual Reports give other examples. The responsibility for this attention to detail lies with management, and their failure is an aspect of the general inadequacy of management in British industry. Each lost time accident costs £300, so it is economic inefficiency to have high accident rates. Yet the Chief Inspector of Mines and Quarries (1964 Report) comments: "it would appear that far too many people hold the view that high rates of production cannot be obtained if the requirements of the rules and regulations are always observed. This outlook fosters the attitude that safety is a thing apart - real safety lies in getting every job, at all levels, done in the right way" (result, one miner in three is injured every year in coalmining.)

POLITICAL PROBLEMS

This touches on one of the major political problems. Since the organisation of a work place is a managerial prerogative, and this determines safety, to ask miners themselves to act on safety is a direct challenge to the power of management. It is also a challenge to workers to alter their present attitudes and feel that they have the right to make decisions on such matters. This is more than a traditional struggle over conditions, for it needs thought over the entire structure of a work place and not just particular aspects (tea breaks, lavatory facilities, etc.) and thus a higher degree of collective consciousness.

A second problem is also implied in the above discussion - why were guards not fitted, why was protective clothing not always worn? In many discussions with unions the point has been emphasised of how frequently in prevailing circumstances earnings conflict with safety requirements. Bonus systems and piece-rates tempt workers to ignore safety rules if by so doing they can work faster and earn more. The same is true of overtime which increases fatigue and is associated with higher accident, and neurosis, rates, or danger money which trades health for cash. We have to face up to these difficulties frankly and they emphasise the contradiction mentioned earlier, between a political and an economic content to a struggle.

This interesting article on a little-discussed subject will be continued in the next issue.

1968: A YEAR OF THE STRIKE

Mike Martin

It is now becoming clear that 1968 is becoming a high point of industrial strike activity in the post-war period. The figures for the first 8 months of the year indicate a rise of almost 50% in the number of days "lost" through strikes. Despite the postponement of the Engineering strike, the last four months of the year can be expected to continue the trend. At the time of writing strike action seems imminent by both building and postal workers whilst fire brigade union members are considering a ban on drill. Part of the increase in the numbers of days lost can be accounted for by the one day strike of engineers last May. However there have been big increases in the motor industry, and in metals. We should consider the reasons for this and some of the implications.

First of all, strike figures generally fluctuate from year to year and month to month, without any clearly discernible pattern; at the start of 1968 there was evidence of only a modest upturn in activity. There are however, general factors at work which suggest that the trend towards more strikes will continue.

Perhaps the single most important factor is that a whole generation of workers has grown up confident of its ability to hold on to what has been gained. They have not as yet suffered a decisive defeat. Thus, the aircraft industry (which is among the better paid industries, although there are important regional differences) shows a seven-fold increase in days lost, whereas the coal-mining industry shows an 80% decline. The contrast can be explained by the fact in the aircraft industry are a much higher proportion of younger workers than in mining, which was once the backbone of the labour movement, and is now declining in morale and in numbers. Another partial explanation of the declining strike activity in the pits is the introduction of a new system of payments, based on day rates, which does not lend itself to dispute. Arguments over piece rates have for long provided shop stewards with a valuable means of leverage.

This is not to say that British workers as a whole have not suffered important setbacks. Since the return of the Labour Government the real wages of British workers have declined by about 3 to 4% at least. So far the rising prices and rents, the incomes policy, and threat of legal sanctions against strikers, have not been met by a cohesive response.

The fact that these anti-working class measures are being backed by a Labour Government, ensure that, temporarily at least, workers are disarmed. Right-wing trade union officials could just sit tight and pretend nothing was wrong (or that they were helping the lower paid workers) The right-wing still retain a very powerful hold on the official movement, and one result of this will be that some of the most militant actions will occur among sectors which have the



weakest ties with the official movement. In France some time prior to the May events this feature was noticed when young workers, many of them completely lacking in experience of the official movement, were a vital element in a whole series of militant and at times violent, strikes and occupations. In Britain, we can cite the women at Fords, and last year's strike of bank staff and the incipient tenants movement and technicians as the beginning of a similar pattern in which hitherto ill-organised sections move into action often ahead of the traditionally well-organised sections.

In addition, the movement as a whole is compelled to adopt a more combative posture. Left wing currents within the trade unions give expression to a tendency towards confrontation on a consciously political level, between the Labour Government and organised workers. In short, workers at all levels are casting aside their reservations and getting down to the job of defending their livelihood. As yet the struggle is a partial one and still primarily economic, but the political implications grow steadily wider.

The role of socialists in this unfolding situation is fundamentally that of injecting a clear programme of transitional demands into the heat of the struggle to equip workers with ideas which raise the question of extending their organised power in industry. An essential concomitant of this is the creation of an organised force which would be capable of propagating such a programme, and of giving cohesion and coordination to the actual struggles of workers.

This raises a final point. Perhaps the most dramatic upsurge has been among students, who are not workers although many of them will become part of the growing body of skilled and strategically-placed white collar workers. They are not organised at the point of production yet a growing body of graduates is essential for the progress of capitalist production. They are perhaps more than anything else a barometer for the mood of a whole section of society - a growing section disillusioned by orthodox politics and ready to act to express their frustration. This section encompasses not only the students themselves but increasingly young workers, many of whom are becoming involved in industrial action and class action for the first time in their lives.

The fruits of this experience could radically alter the future of political life in Britain. What is required is a wider recognition of the importance of a programme backed by a clear understanding of the political concepts behind particular demands. Only with such an understanding can demands be relevant and effective as a means of furthering the struggle.