

WORKERS' ACTION

12 pages
15p

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STOP THE SOUTHALL FRAME-UP TRIALS -

Join the picket on Monday Dec. 17th

One of the most spectacularly savage acts of the SPG at Southall was their invasion of 6 Park View Buildings. They broke in and batoned everyone inside, including those already wounded and those who were treating them.

Thirty people needed hospital treatment. Among those arrested there are charged with assault (!) are black activists Terry Ward, Adrian McKay, John Knight and William Simon.

They go on trial at Barnet on Monday 17th. A new magistrate is expected to take over then.

There has been a slight drop in the conviction rate at Barnet since the BBC Open Door film of Southall and since some of the worst of the full-time magistrates moved on. These were men with army and police backgrounds, convicting at nearly twice the national average.

Thirteen victims of the frame-up trials are now in jail. All appeals so far heard at St Albans have been turned down, though the 14 year old boy convicted in West London juvenile court against the testimony of seven witnesses has won

his appeal at Kingston. A mass picket on Monday 17th December from 9.30am will press home the point that the police, not their victims, should be on trial. The trial of Ward, McKay, Knight and Simon could be a major turning point at Barnet. Join this important picket (Barnet High St, High Barnet tube).



SOUTHALL DEFENCE FUND

- 700 people were arrested on 23rd April; 342, mainly young Asians, were charged.
- 70 are likely to be jailed if the present trends continue.
- In cases heard so far very few defendants have received legal aid.
- Fines, costs and expenses are expected to exceed £100,000.

Enclose £ . for the Southall Defence Fund.
Name
Address
Send to: PO Box 151, London WC2.

TORIES TAKE OVER SMITH'S WAR

JUST AFTER the Patriotic Front had finally given way to ceaseless browbeating and ultimatums from the British Tory government, the racist regime in Salisbury celebrated the Zimbabwe/Rhodesia settlement in the way they found most suitable: by raids, backed by South African troops, into Zambia and Mozambique.

Not a word of criticism from the Tories. And that sums up the reality of the London settlement: the white supremacist regime, which had been driven nearer and nearer to defeat by the black liberation war, has been given the best deal it could possibly hope for the intervention of the British government.

NO CHANGE

That is the sort of settlement that British troops are going to Zimbabwe to prop up.

Are free elections remotely possible given the conditions agreed to provisionally in the London talks?

The British governor will have total executive and legislative power, including power over the armed forces. Given that the Tories back Muzorewa and Smith, that means no change.

The existing state apparatus — mainly staffed by whites — will remain intact. It includes the army, police, magistrates and civil service.

The present laws designed to prop up the repressive regime and ruthlessly stamp out opposition will stay unchanged, including the 'state of emergency', which, together with the martial law in force over three quarters of the coun-



Rhodesian army massacre in Mozambique — now Soames is in charge of operations

try, gives state officials draconian powers.

The liberation forces are to be gathered in 'assembly points'. The Rhodesian army is not likely to give itself up to such a manoeuvre, and even if it does it will not affect the armed police and auxiliaries.

AIR ATTACKS

No agreement has been reached to ground the Rhodesian air force. The liberation forces will be vulnerable to any attack the Rhodesians throw at them and their supporters in the cities and villages will still face police intimidation.

The arrangements for the election itself are thoroughly undemocratic. 20 seats are reserved for whites on-



Hands off the unions

See centre pages

Steel cuts: A triple alliance needed

THE British Steel Corporation is looking for 52,000 more victims; 52,000 volunteers for a life of poverty and demoralisation. That is the number of jobs they intend to cut from the steel industry. If this jobs massacre isn't stopped, thousands of miners — some 7,000 in Wales alone — and hundreds of railway workers will be threatened with the sack too.

Bill Sirs of the ISTC, the steel industry's biggest union, says the union will strike on January 2nd to force BSC to improve its pay offer. But the ISTC isn't calling a strike to stop a third of the industry's workforce being axed! Nothing reveals better the paralysis of the trade union bureaucracy in the face of unemployment.

In practice, not fighting the sackings not only leaves a third of the workforce in the lurch, but it means pulling out the plug on the pay battle too.

Publicity about huge cash handouts to steelworkers accepting voluntary redundancy has had a big effect so far, undermining the struggle at Shotton and threatening the determination of the workers at Corby. But press reports that the Corby fight is all over are untrue. They reflect largely the faint-heartedness of the local union leaders.

The urgency of the threats to the steelworkers, the miners and the railworkers demands that they establish an alliance to fight the jobs massacre. If the trade union leaders won't build that alliance and won't lead a real fight then the rank and file will have to do it themselves.

■ No sackings! No 'voluntary redundancies'! Keep every job!

■ Cut the hours, not the jobs — worksharing without loss of pay!

■ For a triple alliance to stop the jobs massacre!

More on the steel crisis p.8

Fund Drive

Only £20 received this week (from Manchester) towards our £200 December target. Send contributions to Fund, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD

Christmas

Workers' Action will miss two issues — those that would have been dated Dec. 22 and Dec. 29 — over the Christmas/New Year break. For Jan. 5 the Workers' Action staff will be helping put out the January Socialist Organiser. WA 163 will therefore be dated January 12, 1980.

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ZIMBABWE

Continued from P.1

against the expropriation of white-owned lands and property without massive compensation and even then only if agreed to by white owners. The only exception is land left unused for five years which can be compulsorily bought but again only with full compensation. These provisions mean that the PF will have to pay up for the deserted farms taken over in the struggle and now in the hands of the peasants.

They will give no answer to the problems of Zimbabwe's peasants and would make any future Zimbabwe government take on vast debts to a small minority.

These are not just clauses on paper. The intact Muzorewa-Smith army and state apparatus, backed up by South Africa, which already has forces in Rhodesia and has threatened to intervene if racist privilege in Rhodesia is seriously threatened, is there as a material guarantee.

Under these conditions, it is likely that the Patriotic Front will be denied a majority. Then the armed struggle may continue — under much more difficult conditions, with sanctions lifted, the Patriotic Front isolated politically and its forces open to attack.

The Patriotic Front has accepted this deal under pressure from the 'front-line' African states, which, in their turn, have been under huge pressure from Rhodesia, from South Africa and from imperialism. The middle-class leadership of the Patriotic Front could not take the alternative of denouncing these machinations and appealing for the independent mobilisation of the workers and peasants.



The struggle against white-supremacist privilege in Zimbabwe is inseparable from the social emancipation of the African peasantry from the misery caused by the expropriation of the better half of Zimbabwe's land by the white 3% of the population. It is inseparable too from the liberation of the black workers from the migrant labour system and super-exploitation.

But now, if the struggle for land continues, the PF leaders will have to suppress the movement in order to keep in line with the London agreements. If the struggles against the repressive state apparatus continues, the PF will have to side with the repression.

In Zimbabwe this prospect underlines the need for the independent organisation of the black working class, as the only force capable of leading the struggle against the white-supremacist system through to its end by an offensive against imperialism and capitalism.

In Britain, our first task is to denounce and oppose the role of British troops in Zimbabwe. They are not there as liberators. They are there to defend white privilege and imperialist interests.

BOB FINE
GRAHAM BURT



Nkomo bludgeoned
at Lancaster House

Starve a Cambodian for Christmas, says The People

JOHN Pilger's articles on Cambodia in the Daily Mirror in September produced a wave of shock and sympathy for a people devastated by a million US bomb craters and left in ruins by the psychotic Pol Pot regime.

His reports exposed the power-politics of the British government and the UN aid organisations which were stalling and quibbling about relief when up to two and a half million people were facing starvation. The US government, which bears the guilt for Cambodia's tragedy, and its allies were out to make Vietnam pay for its 'aggression' in toppling the Pol Pot regime, so aid to dying children was denied in case Vietnam might benefit.

While the governments of the civilised western world kept Cambodia on a string, ordinary working people dug into their pockets to send what

help they could. The children's TV programme BluePeter put out an appeal for £100,000, and has so far received £2 million. Now it is set to raise another million.

The British press, who so love a heartwarming story, preferred not to report that Leyland workers at Bathgate in Scotland put in two unpaid hours' work each to assemble trucks for Cambodian relief. And now the Sunday People has decided that it's all gone too far. On December 9th it declared: 'Not a penny more for Blue Peter fund'.

After a sickly comment that the Cambodia fund had 'touched the nation's generous heart and pocket', it goes on with a sickening racist and nationalist rant about 'our own people', saying 'there is a danger that charities here at home, including many that help our own deprived child-

ren, will be hard hit in the run-up to Christmas'. And it speculated that kids in Dr. Barnados might go short of their Christmas presents if people didn't stop sending their money for the famine in Cambodia. 'Charity can begin abroad. But surely at Christmas there must also be a place for charity at home'.

For a paper which supports the cuts policies of a British government hell-bent on making 'our own deprived children' make do with less, The People's comments look especially sick.

But there is no contradiction: papers like the Sunday People specialise in channelling demands for decent services into harmless charity. It's just that sometimes the mask of concern slips to show the bloodsuckers' fangs underneath.



Haughey: a reputation he doesn't deserve

JACK LYNCH has resigned and been replaced as Irish Prime Minister by Charles Haughey, Minister of Health for the last two and a half years.

Haughey has the reputation of being a strong 'Republican', which he won in 1970 when, as Finance Minister, he was charged (and acquitted) of using £100,000 of government money to smuggle arms for the newly-founded Provisionals.

This reputation helped him to win the support of Fianna Fail backbenchers in the election for the party's leader. Although none of the Cabinet voted for him, he won the election by 44 votes to 38 for George Colley, the Finance Minister. Lynch was becoming unpopular with his own back-

benchers because he did not pay enough lip-service to — let alone show active support for — Fianna Fail's Republican past and its aim of a United Ireland.

Yet Haughey's Republican reputation is not well deserved. In 1961, as Minister of Justice, he interned IRA men. In his first public statement as Prime Minister he condemned the IRA.

He was also responsible earlier this year for a Bill restricting contraception to 'bona fide family planning purposes'.

But Fianna Fail hope that Haughey will provide a new image which will revitalise their flagging fortunes. For the thirteen years that Lynch led the party (for nine as Prime Minister), he always tried to avoid hard decisions. His approach

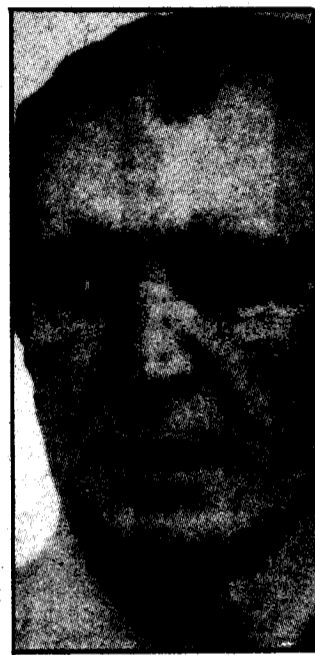
has recently led to a serious decline in Fianna Fail's electoral fortunes. As well as catastrophic results in the Euro-elections, Fianna Fail has also suffered a spectacular reverse in two recent by-elections in Cork, Lynch's home base. This was probably the final blow to his authority in the party.

The Cork by-elections give some indication of the general trends in politics in the South. Of the 24,133 votes lost by Fianna Fail, compared with the last General Election, very few have gone to the largest opposition party, the right wing Fine Gael. There were nearly 22,000 extra abstentions, while the Labour Party picked up 2394 votes and Sinn Fein the Workers' Party (political wing of the Officials) gained 6442.

Having changed their leaders, Fianna Fail are trying to rally their demoralised and waning supporters. From November until their conference in February, they will be holding a series of rallies and organisational conferences, where Haughey will try to present a new Fianna Fail image.

While Haughey is committed to Fianna Fail's 1975 policy of the peaceful reunification of Ireland, it is doubtful whether he will make more than a few gestures in the direction of opposition to British policy in the North. The danger lies in Haughey being able to harness Republican feeling, and disillusionment with Lynch, to the capitalist, pro-imperialist policies of Fianna Fail.

MIKE FOLEY



Charles Haughey

Mick Woods talked to a Relatives Action Committee member from Belfast

POWs' relatives plan all-Ireland conference

■ Why was the RAC set up?

□ It was set up two and a half years ago, specifically to fight the criminalisation of Republican prisoners. In Long Kesh now you have men in the compounds with political status who committed their

'crimes' before the Brits withdrew political status; and men on the blanket in the H Blocks who are denied political status and branded as criminals although their actions and motivations were identical.

■ Some women's groups here see the RAC as a women's organisation. Would you agree with that view?

□ No, the RACs are organisations of all relatives and sympathetic members of the public. If it seems like women predominate in the RAC it is because ... well, say we go downtown to picket the BEA offices... women are much less likely to be arrested on a picket or blocking a road than men are.

■ Surely the Armagh gaol picket disproves that?

□ The women arrested on that picket are likely to get off

with a fine. Women who are gaoled are charged with such things as membership of Cumann m'Bann or gun-running, or possession of arms — not petty offences like obstruction.

So in the activities we do, like demos, leafleting, blocking roads and protests like that, women come to the fore.

It isn't that the men are at work, either. Only two out of ten men in West Belfast are working steadily. All work goes to the Protestant areas where we can't go. The incident at Carry Duff (on the outskirts of Belfast, where Protestant para-militaries drove Catholic workers off a building site) shows that. Out of 6000 at Harland and Wolff, only 200 are Catholics and most of them are employed by outside contractors.

■ What are the RACs' plans for future campaigning?

□ Following our 'Smash H Block' conference last month, which was a great success, we're going down to Dublin for an all-Ireland conference, where we want to set up an all-Ireland committee. We are posing the H-Block issue on humanitarian grounds and not on the basis of supporting the armed struggle. But people will have to agree with the RAC's four demands on political status.

■ What are the prospects for support in the south?

□ Very good. We have very extensive trade union support in the south. And we know the value of international support. That's what forced the Brits to abandon internment, and now international opinion is strongly behind the

men in H-Block.

■ How do you see the 'American dimension'?

□ Jack Lynch, John Hume of the SDLP and Princess Margaret have all gone over there to try to undercut our support, but there's no sign of them all stopping the valuable flow of money from Irish Northern Aid. But you have to be careful. Kennedy for instance wants a united Ireland, but peacefully, which is impossible. We can't rely on politicians like that.

This conference that Atkins has tried to set up is a flop because they're fishing for a middle ground, but the only people they've hooked are Paisley and his DUP. Although Paisley does represent Protestant opinion, half a million Catholics won't allow themselves to be forgotten.

TROOPS OUT FOR TUC DEBATE IN 1980?

THE TROOPS OUT Movement conference on the weekend of December 8th/9th faced important decisions about perspectives for further work and how the TOM (previously called UTOM) could best be organised to take up the tasks of winning support.

Some of the problems were laid out by John Lloyd in the perspectives document presented to the conference. Although TOM has some 40 branches 'it hasn't established a national identity' and there are problems both with structure and 'the diversity of attitudes regarding strategy and political analysis'.

These differences are on whether one should relate to the labour movement or concentrate on influencing liberal public opinion by submerging TOM in broad campaigns for

withdrawal, putting into cold storage TOM's demand for immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

This position was put by Ciaran Driver in the opening address to the conference, where he stated that the slogan of Troops Out Now was a hindrance because it focused on the time-scale for withdrawal rather than the more general democratic arguments which seem more important for liberals.

The trouble is that the liberal position can easily shade into good advice to the government, instead of a militant campaigning stance which insists that British troops have no right to be in Ireland and are part of Ireland's problem rather than a solution that hasn't worked very well. The difference is one between

policies and principles.

Both the SWP and the IMG also argued for TOM to submerge itself in the 'Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland', the main supporters of which are the Young Liberals and various prominent personalities and MPs. There was talk of this being an 'Irish ANL', and the SWP even proposed an intervention at the Liberal Party conference as part of their 'labour movement' orientation.

On the Sunday it was proposed that a Charter for Political Status should be the centre of TOM's campaigning on Irish political prisoners in order to gain the support of prominent figures. But other than saying that such a charter would play down the solidarity aspect, the SWP and IMG failed to say what political content it would

have. The idea was rejected.

The problem was not their desire to participate in broader movements, but the idea of doing it on an inadequate political basis in the hope that this will be a short cut to building a mass movement. It also leads to downgrading of the work at rank and file level that is desperately needed in the labour movement.

Such work was proposed in a successful resolution from Edinburgh UTOM calling for more work in the labour movement centred on getting a debate at the 1980 TUC and setting up a Labour Party Troops Out Committee.

The other main debate was on an internal structure for the TOM. Should its officers be chosen for their administrative and technical abilities, or be elected at conference on a

political basis to provide central political cohesion for TOM's day to day work.

Non-aligned activists tended to the former view, expressing dislike of 'political groups'. But conference decided opted for political leadership in a steering committee elected from conference.

Though the conference failed to give clear priority to the slow, unglamorous job of building support at the grassroots of the labour movement, TOM will now take up a number of initiatives (pickets in support of prisoners in British jails, and the measures in the Edinburgh resolution) which should be supported by all activists in the labour movement who oppose Britain's military occupation of northern Ireland.

STAN CROOKE

Why the miners voted no to action

THE SECRETARY of a major Nottinghamshire NUM branch talked to Workers' Action about the result of the miners' ballot, which showed a 51% majority for accepting the Coal Board's 20% offer.

□□ What do you think the result of the ballot showed?

■ It went as we predicted: about 50-50, basically because of the ploy at national level. The Executive were willing to go for 25%, and not the conference decision of £140 [for face-workers].

The miners thought, is it worth all the sacrifice for 5%?

There has been a change in the labour force — a lot of old militants have gone with the early retirement scheme, and people with no mining background have come in.

□□ Why did Scargill and the Left go for 25%?

■ The right wing thought they could achieve 25%, and the Left thought that if they won it, it would be in the right direction. But it was their fault to think that the miners would have a long struggle for 5%.



Arthur Scargill

□□ Has the incentive bonus scheme cut across militancy on the basic rate?

■ That has added its weight as well. Some miners are getting £50 a week bonus on top of the basic rate, though in Scotland some pits with difficult seams to work are on £2. Also, that meant with Christmas coming up you could lose a lot of money.

Mind you, the pits with high bonuses are not necessarily the less militant ones — some in Yorkshire are on £60 a week.

□□ What do you think will happen next year?

■ Looking at the steel strike that's coming now, looking at the future, at BL and so forth, we will be called upon to support one another.

□□ Thatcher and her crew obviously thought the result of the vote was crucial because the miners are seen as having a vanguard role. Do you think there is the same anti-Tory feeling among miners now as there was under Heath?

■ No, for the simple reason that if you have no fight against wage control while Labour is in, you are not going to get it when the Tories are in. Since the Tories have got in, I have had a mass of people contracting out of the political levy, whereas before there wasn't a single one.

At the moment, the Tories have a good game — they have us at sixes and sevens. But the way I see it, there is no way in which the Tories can get the economy right. Give them two years, and we could have a revolution.

ACCEPT our offer — or we'll close the whole lot down. That the message of Tory Britain to more and more workers.

In BL, it's the bosses' answer in every dispute now. At Chrysler Linwood, it was the threat used to get 1500 sackings accepted. It was used against the Stoke and Ryton strikes too. In shipbuilding, it is a constant menace.

The bosses have chosen their ploy well. Often workers have no answer. The record of struggles against job cuts recently is not good.

The battle is not over in steel, nor in BL, but the collapse of Shotton's resistance and the vote to approve the Edwardes plan were a bad start. Singers has gone. Shipbuilding cutbacks have gone through.

Just around the time of the general election, struggles against closure folded at two traditionally well-organised factories, Dunlop Speke and Vickers Scotswood.

Will

This dismal record is not due to sheer lack of fighting spirit. In 1977 and 1978 strike figures went up sharply from their low levels of 1975 and 1976. Apart from the Ford strike, there were not the same sort of rousing victories as the miners' in 1972; but the bakers' strike, the firemen's strike, and the public service workers' strike last winter were not defeats either.

The unions involved have generally come out more militant and better organised. And in the first ten months of this year, there have already been 27 million strike-days: more than in 1972 (24 million), more than in any complete year since 1926. 4.2 million workers have taken part in strikes.

Even against closures, many workers have shown a real will to fight. Factory occupations against closure — the latest is at Meccano, in Liverpool — have become almost commonplace now, while they were unheard of before 1971.

The problem lies not so much at the level of fighting spirit, but of political answers. A fight against closure needs a lot more political answers than a fight for more pay.

Nationalisation as an answer has long been discredited. Getting another capitalist buyer for the factory is obviously a feeble, last-ditch answer. Workers'

How to meet the Tory threats

control in the form of cooperatives has been tried in several courageous experiments — and wrecked by the ruthless logic of the capitalist market.

The socialist answer of nationalisation without compensation and under workers control makes no sense as a single-factory answer to closure, but only as a starting point for a generalised political struggle. And that generalised political struggle has not seemed possible.

The shorter working week is widely supported. But for a fight for the shorter working week to be effective against unemployment, thousands of workers who are not yet faced with sackings and closures must see the general, class-wide struggle to cut hours, not jobs, as an immediate priority — not something to be put in the claim and then dropped for a bit more pay. Raising the fighting spirit which exists to a generalised, political level is once again the problem.

The obstacle to developing the political answers is the current leadership and structure of the labour movement. The mainstream leaders argue that cuts, unemployment, and austerity are unavoidable, 'to get us through the crisis', and the best that workers can hope for is mild Labour cuts rather than harsh Tory cuts. The established left's alternative is a mind-rotting bureaucrat-

ic nonsense of import controls, price controls, and a siege economy. Trade union struggles are generally kept in a separate compartment from politics — and often cynically sold out by the union leaders.

Brighton conference's democratic reforms create new opportunities for politically re-orienting and restructuring the labour movement. But there is a long way to go in that battle. Meanwhile, what are the Tories planning?

They have no general incomes policy, and they have let some comparatively large wage rises go by, but they have given stark ultimatums to British Steel (effectively, no pay rise at all), BL (only 5% — and that with 85 pages of strings), and council workers (the councils only get

Stirrings

The militant struggles of the '70s have clashed many times with this leadership. But replacing the leadership is much more difficult than clashing with it or even than



defying it at high points of struggle. The difficulty is increased because many good militants think it best to stick to organising in the factory and not 'waste their time' on outside politics.

The stirrings in the Labour Party opened up by the

enough money to cover a 9% rise). Instead of an across-the-board measure like the Industrial Relations Act, they have proposed a much more pragmatic, piecemeal anti-union Bill.

It seems that the lesson they have learned from the Tory administration of 1970-

WAGES: WHAT WE NEED

AFTER THE £6 limit was imposed in August 1975, real wages slumped by about 10% over two years. Over the last two years that loss has more or less been made up.

But in the seven major capitalist countries taken together, wages will rise less than consumer prices in 1979 — something that did not happen for all those countries taken together in the slump years of 1974, '75, and '76.

In Britain, inflation is currently running at about 17% a year. The Treasury predicts [optimistically] that it will be 14% over the next year. But

that is unlikely unless the Government increases taxes severely or brings in very drastic cuts.

It is doubtful whether even the 17% figure is realistic, given the cuts. The Child Poverty Action Group estimates that the net effect of the cuts and the Tory tax changes for a family with two children on £60 to £80 a week gross will be £12 loss — or about 16%.

These figures show that even rises like the Ford workers' 21.5% [£15-plus] probably will not maintain living standards over the next year. Remember, a rise of 21.5%

[for example] on gross pay means much less than 21.5% on take-home pay, because of what income tax takes.

As well as demanding substantial straight wage increases this year — the Ford workers' £15 should be a minimum — we should demand ongoing protection against inflation: £1 pay rise for every 1% rise in the cost of living. And we should demand that the labour movement organises its own working-class cost of living index, taking full account of the impact of cuts and Tory tax changes on the lower-paid rather than dissolving into general averages.

BL: a new leadership needed

SOMETHING OF a lull seems to have settled over BL in the aftermath of the AUEW Executive's sabotage of the strikes to defend Derek Robinson. But it can only be a very short-lived lull.

Several different but inter-linked issues are looming on the horizon, and major struggles are certain to break out when BL workers return from their Christmas holiday. On the annual wage review, the company are refusing to budge from their insulting 5% offer. It seems quite possible that they will end negotiations and simply put the 5% into wage packets after Christmas.

Similarly, they seem set on the course of imposing the 85 page document (containing sweeping attacks on shop floor conditions and stewards' powers), regardless of union opposition, and using the 7-to-1 vote for the Ed-

wardes plan as their mandate. It was significant that the two main plants to follow Longbridge into indefinite strike action in defence of Robinson were Canley and Castle Bromwich — both of which face closure under the Edwardes plan. Stewards from both plants say that the issue of Robinson's sacking kindled a new spirit in the membership, suggesting that even now a fight is possible against closures.

Central

And of course the Robinson victimisation is still a major cause of bitterness on the shop floor that will not easily go away, despite the farcical union inquiry now taking place.

The New Year must see a renewed campaign for all-

out strike action to beat back the management offensive on all fronts. Despite the massive demoralisation that followed the Black Tuesday sell-out, rank and file organisation in BL remains unbroken. The wage claim and the 85 page document will probably be the central issues around which to organise further strike action, but starting from those, all the other issues can be drawn in for a battle against the Edwardes plan.

The IGWU, which is still opposed on paper to the Edwardes plan, has announced that it will get a report from management consultants on the plan, and drop its opposition if the report is favourable. TGWU members must remind their leaders that their job is to defend workers' interests, not to assess the quality of management plans. They should main-

tain their opposition to the Edwardes plan, and start making it an active opposition.

Grave

The lessons of the Robinson sacking must be driven home very clearly. As one BL militant said, 'It gives me no pleasure to point this out, but Robinson dug his own grave. The years of participation, of joint appeals for continuous production, and of going along with rationalisation plans, weakened the organisation to the point where the company had the confidence to do what it did.

'Robinson had served his purpose and was no further use to them'.

In the coming battles, the shop stewards' movement in BL must be rebuilt — but not

74 is this: don't issue a general challenge to the whole working class and leave yourself a sitting duck for the first strong section of workers to take on. Choose your targets and hit them hard. Let the stronger groups of workers go by for now. Isolate them and hit them later.

This is a dangerous strategy, made more dangerous by the political weakness of the labour movement in the fight against closures. BL has obviously been chosen as a test case. And the victimisation of steelworker militants in Sheffield show that Derek Robinson's sacking was a test case too.

Superimposed on the Tory Government's plan is the looming economic crisis. Since the US economy definitely turned down this summer, the world economy has not slumped as drastically as seemed possible. US industrial production fell 6% between July and September, but many other advanced capitalist countries are still on the up.

However, especially with the shock given to the world credit system by the USA's seizure of Iranian assets, a drastic slump is still possible. And Britain has hardly even recovered from the 1974-75 world recession. The latest figures for manufacturing industry production are only 2.8% up on the slump level of 1975.

Slump

Some militants almost look forward to a slump, thinking that when workers see what Toryism really means, then a big fightback will begin. It need not be like that! One of the major reasons behind the collapse of industrial militancy in 1975 and 1976 was the economic crisis — and the fact that workers saw no general political alternative to the 'social contract'.

A slump can just as well have a depressing effect on militancy.

Political weakness inevitably undermines fighting spirit. We have no guarantees of victory — and no guarantees that defeat will not be devastating.

Our task is to rearm the labour movement politically, which is inseparable from restructuring, reviving and democratising it organisationally. The continuing strength and fighting spirit of the working class is our great asset: the anti-Tory struggles already underway are the foundry for the re-arming.

COLIN FOSTER
STEPHEN CORBISHLEY

in the mould that Robinson set. We need an organisation that puts its members jobs, conditions and wages first, not the 'viability of the company' and the 'well-being of the nation's industrial base'.

Finally, of course, the actions of Duffy and the AUEW Executive must never be forgotten. These scabs must be booted out now. Any AUEW member with any trade union principles at all must push for his or her branch to demand the removal of the Executive Council and a new ballot, as provided for under Rule 15 Clause 5.

With the sort of fight we are facing in BL (and also against the Tories' anti-union laws) we simply cannot afford to tolerate union leaders like Duffy any longer.

ALAN CHERRETT

USA's imperialist record: and now new threats Hands off Iran!

by JAMES DAVIES

WHETHER the anti-imperialist mood raging in Iran, in Libya and elsewhere is the fruit of a cynically directed campaign or not, it shows how deep the well of hatred of imperialism is among the masses of the Muslim world. Not without justice. The poverty and oppression these people suffer is in large part a result of imperialism's domination of their countries.

Tiny

Iran itself was the liquid treasury of the British Empire — from here and from Iraq Britain drew stupendous oil wealth in exchange for tiny royalties. In 1951, a liberal-nationalist government came to power on a platform of demanding the Shah's withdrawal from politics and the nationalisation of the British-owned oil industry in Iran.

Mass mobilisations forced the Shah to give up control

links with Iran. But the objection was short-sighted. For in 1953 the nationalist government of Mossadegh was overthrown by US-armed and trained troops.

As one general told a Congress Committee,

Successive US presidents backed the Shah.

"Iran under the great leadership of the Shah is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world"

— Jimmy Carter

"When we have this kind of man, the chances for peace grow"

— Richard Nixon.

ing mobs to various scenes of action where 'Down to Mossadegh' was to be shouted proudly displayed their dollar bills".

Fortune magazine thought the whole affair a perfect model of foreign intervention.

"I envy the way you deal with your students... Pay no attention to our liberals' griping"

— Richard Nixon.

"He concentrates in his plans and dreams for Iran the hopes and aspirations of his people"

— Dwight Eisenhower.

"When this crisis came on and the thing was about to collapse, we violated our normal criteria and among other things we did, we provided the army immediately on an emergency basis, blankets, boots, uniforms, electric generators, and medical supplies that permitted and created an atmosphere in which they could support the Shah..."

"The guns they had in their hands, the trucks they

ion. It proved "that a clandestine outfit need not take open command of a coup or revolution. The intelligent way to control events is to recruit the right people, drill them carefully, and manoeuvre them into the right spots".

For solving 'the Iranian crisis' for imperialism, the US demanded a huge price. Its oil companies — in particular Gulf and Standard Oil of New Jersey — took a 40%

century, the US propped up the Shah, supplied his armies, trained his torturers, and tied Iran to its interests through aid, trade and investment schemes. US imperialism also made Iran a base for its missiles aimed into the Soviet Union. Britain's withdrawal from the Arabian (Persian) Gulf left Iran with the role of policing the oil centres of the Middle East and its shipping routes, making them safe for imperialism. The cost of this role to Iran was staggering.

From 1952 to 1957, Iran got £133.9 million in grants for military purposes and total military assistance from 1952 to 1960 was nearly \$700 million. As time went on, Iran's military expenditure — Britain and France profited from this, though not nearly as much as US imperialism — soared. So 'favoured' was Iran that it received new US arms ahead of America's NATO allies. Saudi Arabian and Iranian arms orders between 1970 and 1975 jointly totalled \$11.6 billion — fourteen times the amount spent over the preceding twenty years.

With the equipment came the manpower. After it sold Iran the F14 fighters, Grumman, the US arms company, arranged to deploy 2,000 engineers and technicians in Iran and on Iran's bases, and the Bell Helicopter Co. had some 1500 'retired' US Army officers serving with the Iranian Sky Cavalry Brigade.

Aid

Economically, Iran was also extremely dependent on imperialism. The balance of trade was in serious deficit and financed by aid and borrowing abroad. The aid and loans were used partly to finance investment, partly on expensive showcases like a new airport for Tehran, and partly to line the pockets of the Shah, the court hangers-on, and the top state functionaries.

For its own good, the US in 1961 had to insist on an internal reform by the Shah to stop the grossest corruption.

With the rise in oil prices and the industrial growth that came from non-oil investment, Iran achieved a limited independence from the twists and turns of American foreign policy. Still, this shift did not fundamentally alter the relationship between Iran and imperialism.

share in the business previously monopolised by Britain. So revealing were the details of this agreement of the piratical nature of US imperialism and the slavish subordination to it of certain prominent Iranians that Secretary of State John Foster Dulles explained to Congress, "making them public would adversely affect the foreign relations of the United States".

Over the next quarter of a



Rubbish being moved from the US Embassy in Teheran

of the army and flee to Rome. Britain's reaction to the 'threat' to 'its' oil was to refuse to negotiate with the new government, to isolate Iran internationally and strangle it economically. Gunboats were sent to blockade the oil-ports of southern Iran, and Britain called on all other countries to support a world-wide boycott of Iranian oil.

At first Britain criticised the US for retaining military

rode in, the armoured cars that they drove through the streets... were all furnished through the military defence assistance programme... Had it not been for this programme, a government unfriendly to the US would probably now be in power".

Behind the scenes, the CIA financed street mobs to riot and terrorise supporters of Mossadegh. One report states: "Bus and taxi drivers who transported the yellow

How the West plunders the oilfields

OIL IS the magnet that draws all the imperialist powers towards the Middle East, particularly the Persian Gulf. The drive to secure supplies has led to the US and Britain politically and militarily propping up reactionary regimes in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and smaller states such as Oman.

For many years, the oil companies simply bled the producers. Prices were based on the cost of American oil, which was high. The cost of producing oil in the Middle East was, according to the Chase Manhattan Bank, less than a tenth of the US cost. The royalties paid were minimal and remained tightly in the hands

of small elites in the oil states. The rest went to the oil companies.

The monopolies' stranglehold led to the formation of OPEC, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, in 1960. By 1973, the advanced capitalist countries were much more dependent on Middle East oil, and OPEC took the chance to increase prices and take a larger share of the revenues.

Before long, however, the imperialist powers saw that the increase in oil revenues might permit further profiteering and the maintenance of dependence in a new form. A lot of the oil money —

whether spent on investment or on consumption (mostly for the circles round the ruling families) — flowed straight back to the US and Western Europe. The oil states' imports soared, most coming from imperialist countries (74% in 1976: 13.7% US, 12.4% West Germany, 10% France, 10% Japan...)

One British construction engineer said, "A lot of money is being poured down drains... These countries are developing their own system for recycling petrodollars: spend, spend, and spend some more. The oil money is coming back to companies like ours". To the extent that the oil states

carry out a limited industrialisation, it is highly dependent on imported capital goods and know-how.

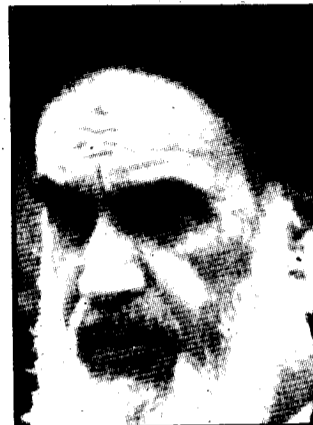
Raising oil prices can provide no long-term solution for the producers as long as their regimes remain locked into the world imperialist system. Though they are no longer robbed as before, the burden of the price rises does not fall on the oil monopolies. Only the overthrow of the reactionary regimes in the Gulf and the Middle East, and the creation of a socialist federation, can open the way to real development for the peoples of the area.

CLASHES IN TABRIZ

THE REVOLT in Azerbaijan seems to have been defeated. While reports are still unclear, the main place taken by the anti-Khomeini rebels, the broadcasting station in Tabriz, is back in the hands of Khomeini supporters.

The events developed rapidly after an attempt on the life of ayatollah Shariat Madari, the leader of the Azerbaijani Turks and the senior figure of Iranian Shi'ite Islam. The attempt, in which five people were killed, triggered off huge demonstrations and a general strike.

The demonstrators blamed the attack on Shariat Madari



Khomeini, under pressure — but from whom?

in the holy city of Qom on ayatollah Khalkhali, a devoted — and deranged — follower of ayatollah Khomeini.

The next day the radio station was taken without a shot having been fired. The occupiers called for autonomy for Azerbaijan and "an end to the dictatorship institutionalised by the new constitution".

Soon the broadcasting station was retaken by pro-Khomeini Guards.

Ayatollah Shariat Madari has long been at loggerheads with ayatollah Khomeini over how Iran is to be ruled. Shariat Madari has always been in favour of a conservative but bourgeois-constitutional regime, and he criticised the setting up of the Council of Experts as a betrayal of the promise to set up a Constituent Assembly. Lately, as the broadcast reflected, he has been bitterly critical of the

clause in the new constitution giving supreme authority to Khomeini as 'Vilayet-e Faghi'. He has in the past also criticised many of Khomeini's daily abuses of democratic rights.

But when the Iranian left denounced him, to quote Le Monde, as one of "the defenders of big capital... even more reactionary than the constitution they claim they want to alter", they have in mind that Shariat Madari is closer to the pro-western forces — to US imperialism, to ex-Prime Minister Bakhtiar and others — than any other major figure in current Iranian politics.

No doubt the left sees in Shariat Madari's stance nothing but a cynical opportunism: after opposing the Council of Experts, he only called for abstention in the elections on the day after Bakhtiar's Paris broadcast; his strongest opposition to the constitutional proposals comes just as Iran is coming under the greatest pressure from the United States.

Certainly the call for Azerbaijani autonomy does not reflect a consistent fight for democratic rights. There has been no Azerbaijani national movement for a very long time, and the Azeris opposed the autonomy demands of the Kurds earlier in the year. Shariat Madari himself disavowed the autonomy demand on Friday (7th).

If the movement in Tabriz were a mass movement for democratic rights, it should be supported irrespective of its leadership and irrespective of its timing. Certainly if a democratic movement should appear now, it would be important in breaking up the pack-ice of religious obscurantism and cynical demagoguery; it could provide an important opening for the struggle for a Constituent Assembly and against the new constitution.

From the little confused evidence available, the Tabriz events represent a good deal less than this — in fact, they may be no more than an incident in Shariat Madari's struggle to realign Iran with imperialism. However, the Khomeini supporters' demand for the dissolution of Shariat Madari's Muslim People's Republican Party should be roundly denounced.

Words and deeds

"THE EXPERIENCE so far of all revolutions, the French, the Bolshevik and the Iranian among others, has shown that the clergy, the reactionaries of every kind, deck themselves out in the garb of democracy the better to assure the triumph of the counter-revolution". With these words, ayatollah Taher Ahmadzade of Mashhad implicitly branded ayatollah Shariat Madari, the figure behind the Tabriz rising, as the spearhead of the democratic counter-revolution.

The broad historical generalisation is right... except for one thing: the democratic counter-revolution — successfully carried out by the Ebert government in Germany in 1919, by the Soares government in Portugal in 1975 — is directed against the most radical and progressive trends of the revolution. In Iran, the Khomeini regime is neither radical nor progressive from a social point of view. It has been dominated by political reactionaries and obscurantist anti-democrats.

If, despite his pro-imperialist stance, ayatollah Shariat Madari can get a following in Iran, it is because he opposes — at least verbally — the bloody and terroristic assault by the Khomeini regime on the democratic rights won by the anti-Shah movement or demanded as a result of that movement.

Khomeini has replaced the systematic clinical brutality of the Shah's police state with the no less bloody capriciousness

of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards. Although there has been a certain limited relaxation of press censorship recently, the Tehran regime remains a destroyer of democratic rights and an enemy of working class organisation.

It was quick enough to take special shipments of munitions from the US for its murderous drive against the Kurds in August. And now when the Khomeini government is denouncing imperialism loudly, its drive is not to do anything to end the misery into which Iran's working people have been forced by the imperialist exploitation and lopsided development of their country. On the contrary: the 'anti-imperialist' campaign is clearly designed to divert attention from Iran's social problems and the Khomeini government's failure to do anything about them.

Khomeini's 'anti-imperialism' is directed against some innocent hostages, [probably] a few CIA agents — and against the left, the oppressed nationalities, women demanding equality, and anti-Khomeini forces of any sort, all of which are or have been denounced as tools of the US. Democracy is likewise denounced as western. 12 Trotskyists in Iran are still in jail for their politics.

At the same time as opposing any imperialist moves against Iran, we must be ready to defend the Left and all democratic opposition movements in Iran against Khomeini.

More power for Scottish police... ...and how they use it now

by Nick Dorn

A large picket outside India Buildings in Edinburgh's High Street will back up GOUGS DUFFY when he goes

on trial on February 13th accused of resisting arrest and assaulting the police. Here he talks to Workers' Action

■ ■ What are you to be tried for?

□ □ I'm being tried for assaulting police, resisting arrest violently and in breach of the peace.

■ ■ What happened?

□ □ I went down to the town centre and hung around the record shop in Rose Street talking to a few friends.

Two policemen came up and said 'move off the pavement'. I went to move and one says: 'Hey, come here, I'm going to kick the fuck out of you'. I say 'what for' and he says 'for sneering. Come round the corner'. I say 'Fair enough'.

Next thing is he runs me against the wall and hits me in the mouth.

My mouth started bleeding and I lost my head and hit him back. Then his mate with the truncheon knocks me on the head. They're both kicking the fuck out of me on the ground. They pulled my arms up from my stomach, right up my back to my neck. One took one arm, and one took the other. They separated them as if they were trying to break my wrists and then pushed me up.

My face was black and blue, my lips were burst, my nose was bleeding.

About 200 people saw me like that in Rose Street and not one of them said anything. But I've got some witnesses.

■ ■ What happened in the police station?

□ □ They took me through to the back, up against a wall and started kicking me. PCs Copeland and Cairns dragged me into a wee room, sat me on the floor and hit me on the head. I told them I'd had concussion before, but they kept on hitting me. Then I lost my head again, and six more came in a started battering me.

After that they were interrogating me with two detectives and a constable and one said: 'Next time you're in Rose Street or anywhere in the centre of town, you're sure as fuck dead. If we catch you through in that back room again, you'll never see the light again'.

When I got to the Royal Infirmary I still had no right to a phone call. They handcuffed me to a bed for four hours and I needed a toilet all through

that and they wouldn't let me go even when the nurses asked them. Then when I was getting out they still handcuffed me to chairs in the waiting room.

■ ■ Why did they pick on you? Who were they looking for?

□ □ It's happening all the time. It's mostly punk rockers as if it were retaliation. The police are forever picking them up, mostly in Rose Street. You don't see them pick up the rich people.

■ ■ What'll you do next?

□ □ They've gone too far this time. I was in hospital four hours, and there is a social worker's report on the state I was in. I'm going to charge them with assault on me. I didn't resist arrest and I've got legal aid. I got photos of my face afterwards. I think we should get posters made and have a demo against police violence.

Lots of people would come, not just the punks, not just blacks and anti-nazis, mods and trendies... people would come from Glasgow and Dundee. We should keep it going even if I get off.

CIVIL RIGHTS of Scottish people who come into contact with the police will be greatly reduced under the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill, expected to be introduced in Parliament within the next few weeks.

Introduction of the Bill in Scotland in the near future is intended to pre-empt discussion of and opposition to the report of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure in England and Wales, expected in 1980. Given the current climate of 'law and order' politics, the indications are that civil rights throughout the UK will be dramatically reduced: police 'evidence' to the Royal Commission is attempting to persuade it to recommend even wider powers than the Scottish Bill allows.

The Tories plan to introduce a similar or tougher Bill in the present parliamentary session, and have stated that 'the time for debate is past'.

The origins of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure lie, ironically, in liberal concern over current abuses of police power. Suspects' rights

(i.e., the rights of anybody so regarded by the police) rest upon the 1912 Judges' Rules. But these are guidelines, not statutory or enforceable rights, and the 1977 Fisher Report found that some of the rights, such as the use of a telephone, are "not observed" in the metropolitan police area. Indeed, police officers serving on the inquiry were themselves unaware of or misinformed about the Rules. The Devlin Report subsequently recommended statutory safeguards for the accused.

will mark improvement on present procedures. Tories are reportedly uncomfortable at the publicity given to the extended police powers, at the expense of the less contentious changes.

The dangers flowing from the Scottish Bill and from similar legislation for England and Wales are considerable. The legislation would legitimise current police practices, and if the new powers were stretched as much as the old, then civil rights of suspects would virtually disappear.

This would no doubt be defended on the basis of 'making the streets safe', but the opposite would be the reality for inner city working class. At present, little stands between such legislation and the statute book.

The Campaign to Stop the Scottish Criminal Justice Bill held a conference in Edinburgh recently to publicise what is known of the Bill. They stress that it is important to raise the subject in the English press — it will be much more difficult to fight the Royal Commission's recommendations when Scotland has already set a precedent.

Stiffer

The swing to law and order politics has made these liberal-inspired inquiries into vehicles for further attacks on the working class. For example, the Thompson Report which led to the 1978 Scottish Bill, neatly inverted Fisher's criticisms of the police's erosion of suspects' rights by complaining that the public was becoming too aware of its rights on arrest!

The Scottish Bill, which fell with the Labour administration, went a long way towards meeting police and political demands for greater police powers. It provided for a state of temporary arrest or detention for four hours without charge; for a general power of stop and search; and for the power to stop and detain anybody suspected of having any information about a possible offence.

In the Tory Bill, the four hour detention is probably lengthened to six hours, in line with a Tory amendment to the Labour Bill. Powers of detention may be extended to include detention in private, as well as public places. The rights to challenge jurors and to prosecute the police for wrongful arrest are also likely to be lost. New provisions for 'football hooligans', generally stiffer punishment, and powers to build more and tougher detention centres are expected.

The Bill also includes about 90 other legal provisions, some of which, like the speeding up of the appeals procedure and the ban on reporting of children's names in incest cases,

Lobby

The Campaign urges activists to write to their MPs. Most Labour MPs are likely to support the Bill, as it is much like their own, but some backbenchers are determined to oppose this attempt as they opposed the last. But the concern about shortage of police, which prompted concern over limited powers, should now be over, since the generously increased police pay has attracted a large number of new recruits.

The Campaign is holding another conference in January, and the Scottish TUC also plans to hold a conference on the Bill early in the year. It is essential that the issue is raised now in labour parties and trade unions, and that the campaign is taken up in England and Wales before it is too late.



The Campaign can be contacted at 58 Broughton St., Edinburgh.

Edinburgh Pentlands sent this resolution to the Scottish Council of the Labour Party

'Conference opposes the proposed Criminal Justice [Scotland] Bill and

■ notes that the provisions of the Bill are likely to be very similar to those published by the last Labour government in their Criminal Justice [Scotland] Bill of October 1978, except that the Tory government has stated that their version will be 'more ambitious'.

■ Recognises that the Bill as published by the last Labour government would have constituted a far reaching infringement of civil rights in Scotland in that it provided for the police to be empowered

a) to detain persons the police considered 'suspect' at a police station for up to four hours or at any place 'other than a police station' without charge, without the right to withhold name, address, and explanation of behaviour, and without automatic right to inform relatives or a solicitor; b) to search clothing or baggage without the need for a warrant; and c) to detain witnesses and any other persons that the police

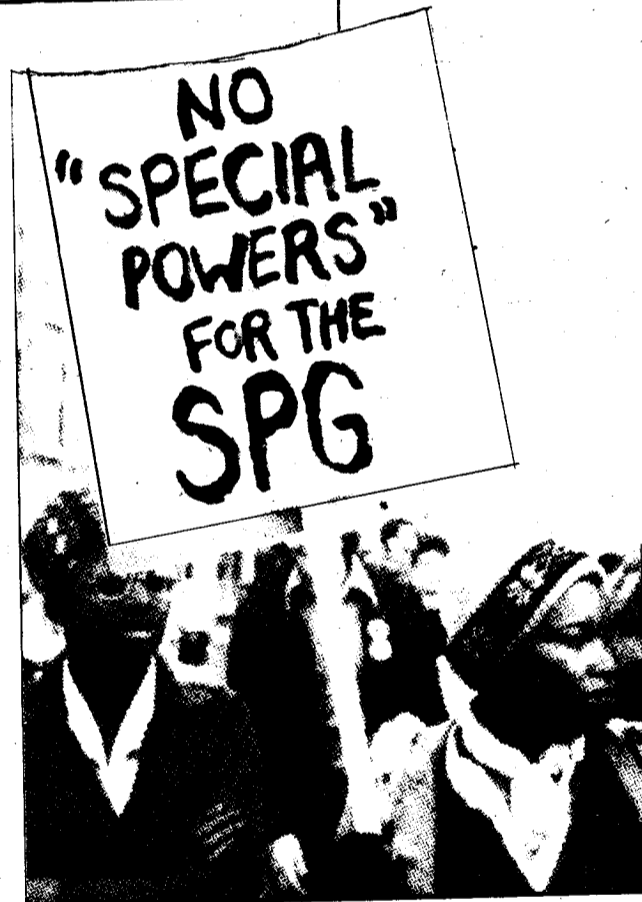
regard as having information relating to suspected offences;

■ further recognises that: a) these police powers are similar to, and indeed go beyond, those enjoyed by the police in England under the much-criticised 'sus' laws;

b) that the provisions for detention of 'witnesses' could be used in conjunction with existing law, particularly on obstruction and breach of peace, against pickets and demonstrators; and c) that the Bill provides no right of appeal nor remedy save civil action in the courts for damages.

Conference instructs the executive of the Scottish Council of the Labour Party to organise, in conjunction with the Scottish TUC:

a) a campaign of information and publicity against the proposed Bill and against the irregular and semi-legal police practices which the Bill is an attempt to legalise; and b) to organise a demonstration following the publication of the Bill.



Deporting babies: all in a day's work for Whitelaw



AFSOR AND SAIFUL ALLAM were given a seven-day reprieve from deportation on Wednesday December 5th when they were due to be put on a plane back to Bangladesh. The deportation order was made because they didn't have proper entry clearance documents when they arrived in the country the week before.

A normal, everyday occurrence in racist Britain. But Afzor is two years old and his brother Saiful is just 11 months old.

Their father Jaban Ali lived in Britain for 11 years between 1965 and 1976, when he went back to Bangladesh to look after his seriously ill mother.

When he went to register the birth of his son on his passport, it was confiscated by the British High Commission.

Oldham MP Michael Meacher has pledged support for the kids, and Manchester

Law Centre is leading the fight against deportation.

Another case of racist bureaucracy is that of the children of Anwara Ditta of Rochdale. Though 25-year-old Anwara is British born, she was sent to live in Pakistan when she was nine. She married there, and in 1975 returned to England leaving her three children in Pakistan until she could bring them to a secure home in Britain. But the children have been repeatedly refused entry. They were seen with their grandmother in 1976 and two years later the immigration authorities refused entry. The case was re-opened, further inquiries made, and again this year entry was refused on the grounds that the entry clearance officer was not satisfied that the children were related to their parents.

Anwara Ditta is British and her case makes the meaning of the 1971 Immigration Act very

clear. It is not nationality or citizenship that count, but colour. Would a white British woman have to go through this red tape and humiliation to get her kids back?

Anwara and the Friends of Said Bibi (an 80-year old, partially blind and deaf widow who is also threatened with deportation) can be contacted via Rochdale CRE (Rochdale 31491).

The number of cases of blatant racist harassment coming to light in the Manchester area (Abdul Aziz, Nasira Begum, Said Bibi, Anwara Ditta and now the Alam kids) has caused local anti-racist militants to form the Greater Manchester Coordinating Committee Against the Immigration Laws. This has been active in organising support for victims of the immigration laws, and can be contacted c/o 595 Stockport Road, Longsight, Manchester 12.

JOINING mass pickets like Grunwicks ... organising flying pickets ... picketing your employers' other factories, his depots, his suppliers, his customers ... or just giving support to pickets at a neighbouring factory: all these could land you a spell in jail if the Tories get their way.

Under the new Employment Bill, you can lawfully picket only at your own place of work. Exceptions are provided only for union officials, for unemployed workers picketing their old workplaces in an effort to get their jobs back, and workers like lorry drivers who may picket at their employers' depot (but not at the places where they normally collect and deliver).

What's more, if you picket 'unlawfully', the firm you are picketing can sue you for huge damages on the grounds of the loss of business which the picketing causes them.

The immediate hitting power of these clauses, in themselves, should not be exaggerated. The police will not be empowered to arrest 'unlawful' pickets straight off. The firm involved will have to get a High Court writ to stop the picketing, after which the pickets can be arrested for contempt of court.

In many cases this can be done already under present laws. During the recent Vauxhall dispute, for example, the courts granted a writ to stop picketing at Harwich docks, and another to stop picketing at Vauxhall showrooms. But in the first



Hands off the

What the Bill says



Jeers, brute strength and persuasion, w

case the police were unable to find the trade unionists named in the writ and thus could not use it; in the second case, the strikers simply announced that they would picket different showrooms from those named in the writ.

For immediate action the police will still have to rely, as they do at present, on charges of obstruction, intimidation, threatening

behaviour, assault or conspiracy.

The purpose of the new law is to sew up the present haphazard legal restrictions on picketing, to prepare for a really determined press and police offensive against picketing, and to frighten the trade union leaders off.

The Tories reckon that sympathy strikes and blacking have been sufficiently outlawed by recent

court cases. But they have made it clear that if the Law Lords decide in favour of the National Union of Journalists in a case currently in front of them, then a new clause will be added to the Bill. The way the law works could hardly be made clearer: the Tories hope that the supposedly impartial Law Lords will do their job for them, but if the 'impartiality' goes the wrong way

then they will set it straight in Parliament.

Rather than having a catch-all law like the Industrial Relations Act, which provided an easy focus for trade union opposition, it seems that this time the Tories prefer to do things piecemeal. The Employment Bill will be backed up by court decisions, by direct union-bashing exercises as at British Leyland,

and by special policies like the recent Government circular on NHS workers' disputes.

The circular says:
 Volunteers or agency staff should be used as strikebreakers.
 Workers blacking particular jobs or working to rule should be suspended without pay.
 Workers who refuse to cross picket lines should

have their pay
 Pickets show the use of any other facilities premises.

The other
 Employment B important than picketing.
 money will be secret ballots in an attempt to the direct
 mass meetings.

1. THE UNION LEADERS

Retreat before the battle

IN the spring of 1972, in the first important case under the Industrial Relations Act, the TGWU was fined £5,000 because of blacking action by Liverpool dockers.

In line with TUC policy of non-cooperation with the Act, the TGWU refused to pay the fine. But it did nothing else. It issued no call to action — except a call to the dockers to give up the blacking. In due course an extra £50,000 fine was imposed.

The trade union leaders panicked. TUC general Secretary Vic Feather appeared on TV wringing his hands and moaning that he had had no idea that the National Industrial Relations Court would have the powers of a High Court. The TGWU backed down and paid up.

FEAR

That sums up the trade union leaders' whole philosophy about fighting Tory anti-union laws. They oppose these laws. They specially oppose any measures which would squeeze out their role as bargainers or tie their hands. But when it comes to a real battle between the state and the working class they are paralysed by fear — cringing fear of the state and the ruling class, and, even more so, self-serving fear of the workers' mobilisations which can blow them out of their bureaucratic niches.

Up to 1971, the union leaders had been campaigning against anti-union laws quite hard, by their standards. Under the Labour government they stopped *In Place of Strife*. That was mostly done by twisting of

arms in the corridors of power. The Heath government's brusqueness outraged the union leaders. The TUC called marches and rallies; the AUEW called one-day strikes.

Soon, however, the union leaders realised, to their horror, that the Tories were not going to be stopped by mere protests, and that the rank and file took seriously the calls to *Kill the Bill*. From then on, the union leaders' aim was to smooth down the struggles somehow. At varying speeds, they retreated from their initial intransigence.

With the Thatcher government, they have retreated even before the battle begins.

In February this year the TUC adopted its own 'Guidelines' to curb militancy. The *Guidelines* called for 'ballots (not mass meetings) to be held where a strike is contemplated'. In strikes, there should be 'arrangements... for the maintenance... of supplies and services essential to the health or safety of the community'.

They went on: 'Unions should in general, and save in exceptional circumstances, confine picketing to premises of the parties to the dispute or the premises of suppliers and customers of those parties'. And the *Guidelines* agreed that pickets should be kept small. 'The police may regard a large body of workers as obstructing entry to premises or as intimidation towards those who wish to enter. And trade unions need to be aware that it can sometimes be difficult to control a large group of pickets'.

Len Murray is still only suggesting that the TUC might withdraw this Code if the Tories go ahead with the Bill.

Even against the Industrial Relations Act, rank and file initiative was decisive. The back of the Industrial Relations Act was broken by the mass strike movement against the jailing of five dockers' pickets under the Act in July 1972 — an almost entirely unofficial movement.

RANKS

Rank and file initiative will be even more important this time, and we can expect even less help from the official trade union hierarchy. The TUC has suggested that there will be a rally in February and a day of action (not strike) in March, against the cuts and the anti-union Bill. And that is all.

So we must:
 Win our trade union branches, shop stewards' committees, district committees, and trades councils to the *Rank and File Code of Practice* adopted by over 1000 trade union delegates at the *Defend the Unions* conference this June.
 Enforce the Code of Practice against and despite the Tories and the police.

R&F code of practice

- 1 No crossing of picket lines.
- 2 For the building, and defence of, 100 per cent closed shop. For sanctions against any individuals breaking closed shop
- 3 For full rank and file discussion and decision making by traditional democratic procedures — no enforced secret ballots
- 4 Pickets to be positioned at whatever locations necessary to win the dispute and in sufficient numbers to ensure that

Well-organised mass pickets can and must enforce the right to picket. If there are seven on a picket line, the police can say that more than six is too many. It's not so easy to say 700 or 7000 are too many — especially when those 7000 are well organised to defend each and every one of their number against attack by scabs or police.

Widespread, escalating solidarity action can enforce the right to sympathetic action, while isolated, timid actions can be picked off by High Court writs.

Assert the right of workers' self defence, the principle of workers' law and order as against the bosses' law and order. Pickets must not be left passive and helpless when the SPG lay into them, as they have done recently at Harwich and at the Rose-dale factory in Cardiff.

Demand the disbanding of all SPG-style forces.

Demand that the TUC withdraw its Code of Practice, breaks off talks with the Tories, adopts a policy of unconditional support of workers in struggle victimised by the Tories, and starts now to organise rallies, workplace and factory gate meetings, demonstrations and one-day strikes to mobilise the movement against the Bill.

picket lines are observed. Strikes to be run by elected strike committees

- 5 All appeals for blacking and financial assistance for disputes to be carried out wherever practicable.
- 6 Support calls made by strike committees for mass and sympathy pickets.
- 7 No settlement of disputes without full report backs to, and decision making by, the members concerned.

...and what they'll do

2. THE TORIES

Learning from 1970-74

"I AM a hawk and not a kamikaze pilot", said right-winger Norman Tebbit at the 1977 Tory conference. "We are right to disavow any heavy-handed legislation".

And another speaker said: "We do not want to return to the hostility and bitterness which was seen in the 1970-74 period. We do not want to go through the humiliation of an Official Solicitor."

And indeed the Tories' new anti-union laws have much less of a blunderbuss approach than the Industrial Relations Act. Whether that can or should save the Tories from the hostility and bitterness seen in 1970-1974 is another matter.

What the Tories have understood is that for them it is no good passing laws crippling trade union strength on paper unless they have the power on the streets and in the factories to make them reality.

Streets

This time, they intend to be more cautious on paper — and more ruthless on the streets and in the factories.

The Industrial Relations Act stated that all bodies wishing to be exempt from

taxation (as trade unions' funds are) and from certain penalties under law would have to register. The register included both employers' and workers' organisations. If an organisation did not register, then it was not considered to be a trade union within the definition of the Bill.

But while registration gave the union the customary immunities from taxation and certain kinds of prosecution, it also gave the state the right to alter a union's rule book. The TUC decided that member unions should not register and should also boycott the National Industrial Relations Court set up under the Act. As a result, the unions were not legally recognised as unions — and their legal position was back to where it was after the Taff Vale judgement.

The Act also made so-called 'unfair industrial practices' unlawful. Some of these were unfair only if carried out by an unregistered body, and some were unfair in any case. It was an unfair industrial practice to induce or threaten to induce a breach of contract, whether a contract of employment or a commercial contract, only if you were an unregistered organisation. Yet some practices, like blacking and many other

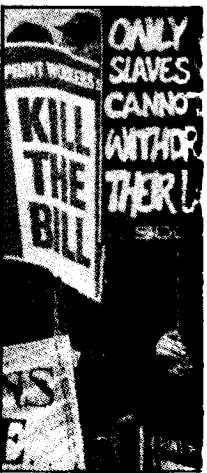
typical solidarities, were ruled out by the Act.

The Act made periods and compulsory if demanded, all collective binding in law contrary was specified.

But the class did not go across law books. Instead, limited, the scope of picketing was extended between 1974. Flying pickets, and pickets were used on a scale for the first decades.

Hawk

That experience that Tory unionists be beaten. But it shows that it can be easily or not. This time the Tories are more insidious, carefully devised, to be hawks with kamikaze pilots.



Unions!



... need them all

opped. d be denied canteens or on NHS uses in the ll the one on Government provided for the unions, undermine democracy of The Govern-

ment will issue Codes of Practice on industrial relations which will not be legally binding as such, but will be admissible as evidence in court. The closed shop will be limited. Workers will be able to get exemption not only on the grounds of 'conscience' but also of 'deeply held personal conviction' (whatever that means). New closed shops

will need 80% support in a secret ballot. Industrial action to compel workers at a different workplace to join a particular union will become unlawful. The Bill also contains clauses which are not directly to do with trade union rights, but which amend the Labour Government's Employment Protection Act. (Thus the name Employment Bill).

Small firms will get special protection against claims for unfair dismissal. If a worker is sacked for not being a member of a union, he can sue the union as well as the employer for unfair dismissal. Women workers will have to give more written notice to establish their right to return to their jobs after maternity leave. Also, they can be offered

a 'suitable alternative' instead of their old job; and in firms with less than six employees they lose their rights altogether.

Government arbitration over trade union recognition will be abolished. And Section 11 of the Employment Protection Act, allowing wage claims to bring workers up to the 'general level' of comparable jobs, will be abolished.

No doubt the Government has made its Bill so piecemeal and diffuse in order to soften opposition to it. The Engineering Employers' Federation, a hard-line bosses' organisation, has already complained about the new provisions on the closed shop and the abolition of arbitration over trade union recognition. It is quite possible that the Government will amend the Bill while it is going through Parliament — and they will use this to try to draw the trade unions into discussion on the details of the Bill and away from outright opposition to it.

We should insist on outright opposition. The whole Bill — the most dangerous clauses as well as the ones which change very little in the existing law — is anti-union and anti-working class. We have nothing to gain from trying to haggle with the bosses' state over 'fair' rules for the class struggle. We are out to break the bosses' wealth and power, not to shore it up. All we have to demand from the Tory Government is: Hands off our unions!

NUT CONFERENCE SAYS 'NO FIGHT' BUT

THE REAL TEST IS TO COME

DELEGATES leaving for home after the NUT special conference on the cuts on Sat 8th may well have wondered what had been achieved. 1000 delegates came to Blackpool, at a cost to the Union of £50,000; the only motion for debate, from the Executive, was overwhelmingly passed after only 6 out of 46 amendments were debated and all were defeated.

The conference was called in response to the unprecedented attack on public spending by the Tory government, and the very real threat of teachers being sacked in many areas next year.

Yet it emerged right from the beginning that the Executive had no idea how to fight. They were unsure of how conference would react. They were in fact divided on having the Conference at all. Appealing for unity and 'the need for frank speaking', they successfully urged conference not to open its proceedings to the public and press.

ests of that tiny percentage who own and control the economy, and of the trade union and labour movement. It's their profits versus our living standards and services.

"We cannot avoid recognising that our battle is a political fight. We cannot be drawn into any arguments about what else to cut instead of education. We must oppose all cuts in social services. Furthermore we must not accept councils passing on the cuts from central government by raising rents and rates.

"The Tories will not be diverted from their intention to reduce public spending massively by any vague public opinion. They can only be forced to retreat, or out of office, by the industrial action of teachers, together with the rest of the labour movement."

The first strengthening amendment called on the Executive to organise a one day national strike, to pledge support for the TUC's day of action and if necessary combine the union's action with it. This was defeated, after Executive speakers complained that the union's sustentation fund was very low... and that the union must concentrate its resources on local action against redundancies!

Another amendment, from Lambeth, called on the union to take a position against all cuts in the social services and pledge support for the struggle of other public sector unions. The amendment said that united action with other trade unionists and parents is necessary to defend education provisions including school meals and transport. Dick North and Vanessa Wiseman described the fight against the cuts in Lambeth and the united action taken there. This amendment too was defeated. Executive speakers argued that we must be 'realistic' and defend our own members first and that cuts must happen(elsewhere?)

Cuts

General Secretary Fred Jarvis reported to the conference the extent of the cuts. He pointed out that because of inflation, the 3% cuts this year and the 5% cuts next year in fact have a catastrophic effect. By basing cash limits on a maximum 13% inflation (while the local authorities estimate it to be at least 17%), the cuts are equivalent to reducing the central government contribution to the Rate Support Grant from 61% to 58%. "Cash limits and the RSG... are major targets for union campaigning activity."

The cuts will mean 18,000 fewer jobs and bring the first threat of sackings. Jarvis called the cuts "folly in sheer economic terms", though he insisted that the union "is not affiliated or aligned politically" and its criterion is what each government does for education.

"Our major task is with the public — many of our members have voted for this government", but the struggle still "transcends party political considerations". Finally he let slip the leadership's impotence by saying, "effective leadership is needed in the localities. It can't all be done by Hamilton House (the union HQ)". This after the union leaders have over the years pushed through draconian rules to curb local autonomy and strangle local initiatives!

In contrast to the union leadership's line of political "neutrality", mobilising "public opinion" and proffering good advice to the Tory government about "investment in the education service... essential to ensure national recovery and a prosperous future", Workers' Action supporters argued in a leaflet given out at conference:

Of course any government knows that cuts do increase unemployment, destroy public services and reduce demand. But state spending comes out of profits... and the government's main concern is with the profitability of British industry. And who owns and controls British industry? Certainly not the majority of people who simply work for a meagre wage. Once we accept the "national interest" and the "country's economic problems" as our problems then we have to accept "solutions" like cuts. (Hopefully somewhere other than education?). There is no national interest. We have the conflicting inter-

Vague

All this hypocrisy by the Executive about concentrating our fight to defend jobs was exposed when the next two amendments came up. The first one called for "withdrawal of members from schools... in order to protect the total number of jobs in an authority", and the second one "instructs the Executive to support and encourage the withdrawal of labour by all members in any LEA where a member is made redundant." Both amendments were defeated. Executive members again arguing about being realistic and needing flexibility. The second of these amendments was finally defeated by a card vote of 151,000 to 87,000. No further amendments were taken and the Union has nothing better than a vague document against the cuts which leaves the Executive a free hand to back out of a fight.

The real test for the militants is still to come. Although we have won nothing on paper, our arguments were heard. Delegates were uneasy about the Clegg report on teachers' salaries not reporting on time before Jan. 1st 1980, and in the coming months the Executive will have to seriously face up to the cuts. Militants have an urgent task to fight on both cuts and salaries between now and the Easter annual conference.

CHEUNG SIU-MING
Lambeth delegate

3. THE LAW COURTS

Remaking the law

THE BASIC 'right to picket' in British law was established in the 'Conspiracy and Protection of Property' Act of 1875.

Trade union action was given legal protection against charges of criminal conspiracy. And pickets were entitled to 'attend at or near a place to obtain or communicate information'.

After this right had been whittled down in various court judgements, it was restated by the 1906 Trades Dispute Act, passed by a Liberal government under working class pressure.

Over the last 20 years, and especially over the last five, judge-made law has whittled down workers' rights again.

In 1960 the 'right' of the police to control pickets was established in a judgement where a worker was convicted for trying to join two others picketing a factory gate after a police constable had decided two pickets were 'enough'.

This rule was recently enforced by the police in the Garners' dispute, insisting that pickets be limited to six.

In 1966 Lord Widgery ruled in the Tynan case that it was a 'nuisance' under common law for pickets to try to 'seal off the highway' in order to talk to drivers going into a workplace.

PAPER

The Industrial Relations Act removed — on paper — virtually all legal protection for picketing between 1971 and 1974. But even in those years the most serious and lasting blows to pickets' rights were judge-made law.

In the Broome case (1974) the House of Lords ruled that it was unlawful for pickets to stop a lorry to talk to the

driver. And the ancient catch-all conspiracy law was revived to deal with building workers' flying pickets in the Shrewsbury case (1973-4).

In 1975 a court judgement against protestors who had picketed Prebbles Estate Agents in Islington established that there was no right to picket outside of industrial disputes.

And judges developed new interpretations of the law on the issue of what constituted 'furtherance of a trade dispute' — the so-called 'golden formula' for when trade unionists are protected (under the 1906 Act) against breach-of-contract law.

This affected not only picketing but also blacking and sympathy strikes.

In 1977 the BBC got an injunction stopping the Association of Broadcasting Staffs from blacking the transmission of the 1977 Cup Final to South Africa. This, said the Court, was not a 'trade dispute', and so did not qualify for protection under trade disputes law.

When seamen stopped the Camilla M from sailing from Glasgow because the Greek and Indian crew weren't being paid enough, the High Court stopped them too. That wasn't a trade dispute either.

In two later cases the judges made up yet more rules to suit the bosses. Solidarity strikes were declared illegal because they are not 'in furtherance' of a trade dispute, merely 'in consequence' of it. The court also said that even if the workers and the union thought they were furthering a trade dispute, the Court could rule that they weren't.

On top of that, it said that moral support of a trade dispute didn't count as being 'in furtherance' of it. Solid-

arity action was only moral support, not practical support! The crowning case was the prosecution of picket Reg Fall during the lorry drivers' strike early this year. When he picketed a firm in Purfleet, that wasn't 'in furtherance' of the strike, said the judge. Or even if it was: "There must be a presumption that Parliament does not intend to legislate to bring about its own destruction".

In layman's language: I know it's a trade dispute, but this is going too far. And I'm not having it!

The Law Lords are now about to give judgement on a key case for 'blacking'. During the provincial journalists' strike last winter, the National Union of Journalists instructed members to black Press Association copy. Express Newspapers took legal action against the union, arguing that the blacking was not covered by being 'in furtherance of a trade dispute'. The Appeal Court backed the Express, and then the case went to the Lords.

RULE

This history shows how much a mockery the Tories' talk of 'restoring the balance' and the 'rule of democracy' is. The bosses are not satis-

fied with the whip hand over the working class which their wealth and concentrated power give them.

Every time that workers, through the very limited channels of democracy open to them via Parliament, enforce some minimal protection for trade union action, the judges, aged upper-crust reactionaries to a man, set about twisting the laws to destroy that protection. Over the last few years, under a Labour government, they have already introduced about 90% of the content of the Tories' union-bashing Bill.

In the fight against the Tories' Bill, we must demand that the next Labour Government not only repeals the Bill, but introduces a new law establishing unambiguously the protection of trade union action against breach-of-contract law.

We must explain that Tory law is bosses' class law. And we must point out that Parliamentary changes will always be limited, for bitterly anti-working class state forces, the police and the judges, control the interpretation of the law in practice. A serious fight to defend trade union rights leads logically to asserting workers' law and order against bosses' law and order, and thus to a fight to break up and replace the bosses', police and the bosses' legal system.



Docks picket arrested in July 1972

by JOHN CUNNINGHAM

YOU can always tell someone by the company they keep.

Bill Sirs, general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC, the union for production workers in the steel industry) takes yachting holidays with executives of the British Steel Corporation and recently made Prince Charles the favoured guest at the ISTC conference. Not bad going for a humble lad from Hartlepool.

The ISTC has hardly ever led any industrial action. Of the very few disputes it has been involved in, two of the major ones were inter-union disputes.

Bill Sirs has not lifted a finger to help thousands of steel workers who have been made redundant by BSC's shut-downs and 'rationalisations'.

Murky

If Sirs were an individual exception it would be bad enough. But his predecessor Dai Davies had all his characteristics, except perhaps Sirs' big mouth. If we go back into the murky annals of trade union scabbery we find that Arthur Pugh, as gen. sec. of ISTC's forerunner Bisakta, played a notorious role in the calling off of the General Strike in 1926. Pugh at this time was chairman of the TUC.

The philosophy of Sirs, if he can claim to have one, is that of class collaboration — he really and sincerely believes that there is a community of interests between the steel barons of BSC and the workers. What is good for one is also good for the other.

The extent of this collaboration was quite baldly stated in the March 1977 number of the AUEW journal, where Sirs writes: 'since 1967 we have negotiated some 50,000 jobs out of the industry with little or no difficulties'. That cold figure of 50,000 represents the price paid by the working class for Sirs' policies.

Bill Sirs' brand of scabbery rests on years of class collaboration by the ISTC/Bisakta.

In 1937, a government report on the industry noted 'a remarkable absence of stoppages arising from industrial disputes. We are greatly impressed by the evidence before us as to the friendly relations existing in the industry and of the realisation by the representatives of the workers of the difficulties with which the employers have had to contend since the Great War.'

Bisakta was involved only very reluctantly in the General Strike of 1926. Earlier, steelworkers in South Wales who played a part in the Minority Movement (a militant rank and file organisation initially set up by the early Communist Party) were expelled from the union. And in the big industrial upheavals after the first World War, steel workers played virtually no role.

Radical

This lack of any tradition of militancy is particularly striking when you compare British steelworkers with their counterparts in the USA and France.

Why is this? There seem to be all the factors in the steel industry for a radical, class conscious tradition. The work is dangerous, dirty, noisy, much of it shift work, and the pay isn't brilliant. Most steel works are, like mines, community centred, giving the

The heritage that weighs down on steelmen's union

workers an extra bond. Why then the low response?

Until the end of the 19th century, steelworks operated under a 'contract' system, where a skilled man on a job was given a lump sum by the employers and would then hire labourers himself, supervise them and pay them out of his own pocket. The skilled workers saw production as a cooperative endeavour where they were equal partners with the mill owners.

iron union, as it was then) was the Friendly Society of Ironfounders, which started life in 1805. Another union, the Iron and Steel Workers of Great Britain (AISW) was started up in 1862.

Smelters

In the late 1880s the underhands (the unskilled men who worked under the contractors) began to organise in the British Steel Smelt-

ed and the contract system eventually passed away. But what remained was a hierarchy within the workforce, the more skilled retaining their positions and many of their privileges.

A piece work system based on tonnage replaced the contract and this complex arrangement gave rise very early on to the setting up of joint wage boards (again very much in the tradition of contractors and employers under the old system). The sliding

tonnage rates, an issue settled by the joint wage boards.

Much of this set-up survives to this day, though there is now national bargaining (in BSC) where previously national agreements were of little importance.

Seniority in the mill is still a big factor. Most steel workers operate in teams; the head of each team — the 'top man' or 'first man' — is usually the most skilled and senior of the team. The top man acts as a charge-hand/foreman, apart from which supervision is minimal. Under the top man there is a hierarchy of jobs ending in the basic labourers (the 'shit end'). A steelworker moves up the ladder in the course of his working life.

Boards

The skilled men at the top are usually also the union representatives since they know all the jobs (having done them at some time in their lives) and the rates, and they have the experience.

Obviously the combination of foremen doubling as union reps together with the stress on seniority makes for a very conservative local union leadership, and arising out of this and the whole complex system of regional and national negotiation (evolved from the joint wage boards) an equally conservative regional and national leadership.

Although technological changes have shaken up the seniority system, its hang-

over is still very present in the steel industry and is a severe drawback to the development of a fightback.

Not surprisingly, the ISTC is totally undemocratic. Only in recent years has the leadership even consented to hold national conferences.

At the last national conference, held in June, proposals for reforming the union were kicked out after Sirs had launched a vicious and demagogic attack on 'politically motivated wreckers'.

The proposals Sirs found so abhorrent were:

- Annual delegate conference to be policy-making.
- All full time officials to be elected, not appointed.
- For the abolition of trade sections in the union as divisive and anti-democratic.
- Executive council seats to be allocated proportionately to the membership of each division.

Rank and file steelworkers should support and fight for these demands for democratisation of their union if any fight is to be mounted in face of BSC's plans.

Bleak

Without such a fight, the future looks bleak for the steelworkers' union. An already declining membership will be cut even further by the next round of closures. Nor will this be improved by merger with the management 'union' SIMA (Steel Industry Management Association) which Sirs favours. A merger under present circumstances would only strengthen the conservative collaborator elements in the ISTC and make the much needed task of reform even harder.

The present structure and leadership of ISTC is the greatest obstacle to a fightback in the steel industry today. It may be the case that the only way to resolve the situation is a shakeup similar in scale to that which erupted in the docks in the mid-'50s and led to the formation of the breakaway 'blue' union, the NASD. Though socialists should not advocate such a policy, it cannot be ruled out as a possibility.

Certainly what is most definitely needed is for the rank and file to assert their control over the union and kick Sirs and his motley rabble out and adopt a fighting policy against the BSC redundancies.



John Hodge (left) became Lloyd George's trusted Minister of Labour. What does Bill Sirs expect?



A sliding scale was also operated whereby wages were fixed to the price of steel on the market. By pegging prices to the fluctuations of the market the employer was virtually excluded from determination of wage rates.

When a particular job or order arrived at a mill, a team of contractors (ie skilled men) would often negotiate and consult with the employers on the rate for the job. The employer would simply agree to a certain amount based on the current price of steel and it would then be up to the contractors to divide the money out between the unskilled men.

This system could not last. As production became more intense and steelworks grew in size and complexity, the contract system became a hindrance to production. In the USA, where a similar system operated, it was swept away by crushing the union that supported it — the Amalgamated Iron, Steel and Tin Workers. The employers' attitude to the contract system was summed up by J.H. Bridge, the company historian of the Carnegie Corporation, when he wrote: 'The method of apportioning work, of regulating the turns, of altering the machinery, in short every detail of working the great plant, was subjected to the interference of some busybody representing the Amalgamated Association'.

In Britain it was not necessary to smash the unions to be rid of the contract system. It was phased out by an alliance of the owners and unskilled workers. But in this process many of the old features survived. The first steel union (or

ers Union. The BSSU, not surprisingly, met opposition from the AISW, who saw their privileged position being challenged.

Contract

John Hodge, leader of the BSSU, saw that he could get the employers on his side, as they both wanted, for different reasons, to end the contract system.

An agreement was reach-

scale was also retained from the old system — much of the wages were made up of tonnage payments based on the price of steel on the market.

Thus the biggest portion of a steelworker's wage was determined by factors outside the mill, over which he had no control at all. Union representatives were quickly assimilated into the negotiating and arbitration machinery as most disputes that arose were on questions of

Steel jobs slaughter goes on and on

THE NEWS that British Steel Corporation losses over the first six months of 1979 have amounted to over £145 million, and are expected to be even higher in the last six months, means that we can expect even more redundancies to be announced shortly. Bob Scholey, BSC's chief executive, has already hinted at another 30,000 jobs he wants to see lost, on top of the 20,000 already disappearing as a result of announced closures within the last few months — mainly at Corby and Shotton.

The current BSC workforce is about 182,000: 152,000 directly involved in steelmaking. The current closures will reduce this to 132,000, and BSC's further pruning will take the figure to around 100,000.

On top of this blow for steelworkers, manual workers in the industry have been offered a pay rise of a derisory 2½% to 3½%.

It should be apparent now, even to Bill Sirs (general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation), that no plant is safe — certainly no bulk steel plant. Even the modern and expensively re-equipped plants at Ravenscraig and Teeside are now being considered for closure.

In Sheffield, traditionally regarded as a 'safe' area because of the predominance of the special steels industry (the only sector showing anything like profitability), 400 redundancies have been announced at the River Don works. At a mass meeting there on the 29th November, the workers voted to accept the redundancies, adding only that they must be on a voluntary basis and that acceptance is conditional on BSC putting money into the plant, in particular into the forging section.

This is precisely the sort of response that does steelworkers no good at all. In this particular case, BSC had already announced months

ago that they aimed to make the plant viable by 1981 and that the 400 sackings were part of the deal.

BSC probably does not want to continue forging operations at the Don works. Forging is one of the sector's hardest hit by the world recession, and BSC is unlikely to want to shore up what it sees as a dead duck. It is probably the ruling class' industrial strategy to concentrate forging operations in the private sector of the steel industry, particularly at Sheffield's Firth Brown works just down the road from the River Don, where a huge financial investment in the most modern forging equipment in the world (the Austrian-designed GFM or continuous forging system) is now coming on line.

The amount of capital required to modernise the Don's forge is so great that BSC would certainly not want to know, given its current financial predicament.

In 1972, when redund-

ancies were announced at the River Don works, the workers staged a work-in — finding inspiration from the example of the Upper Clyde shipbuilders. While there was much wrong with the idea, in particular the daft notion of selling flags in Sheffield to buy a new furnace(!), at least the workers wanted to fight, to put up some sort of resistance. It now appears that even this drive has gone.

BSC must be told to its face that enough is enough. Any attempt by bosses to shut any section down must be met with industrial action — occupations and sympathy strikes in other works, with the demand of work-sharing with no loss of pay, a reduction in the working week, and early retirement. The old BSC trick of buying redundancies with what seems like large sums of money must be met by the union implementing a policy of no coverage for any job made vacant.

JOHN CUNNINGHAM

Nicaragua needs aid. But who in Nicaragua should we send aid to?

Nicaragua: what sort of solidarity?

Comrades,

I would like to ask for some clarification about your article 'Against US-sponsored intrigue and pressure - Solidarity with Nicaragua'.

Your articles about the revolution in Nicaragua and the debate between different Trotskyist organisations on this question have included substantial information, thus giving a clear enough picture of developments both favourable and unfavourable to the interests of the Nicaraguan people.

On the one hand, we have seen the immense democratic rights they have gained with the downfall of Somoza, but at the same time some of these are being denied to trade

union and political activists. It is clear that the USA and social democratic governments of Europe are measuring their aid according to the National Reconstruction Government's ability to put a brake on the revolution.

Therefore, the Nicaraguan people desperately need all the solidarity they can get from their brothers and sisters around the world to continue developing their revolution until they obtain total emancipation from both the imperialists and capitalists like Robelo and Chamorro. This of course means (your article says so) that if, for example, the danger of direct intervention by either National Guardsmen or US marines arises, we

must unconditionally defend Nicaragua from such attacks.

Today, the main enemy is the democratic counter-revolution. US imperialism, the bourgeoisies of Panama, Costa Rica etc and Fidel Castro have agreed that the way to stop the revolutionary process is with the National Reconstruction government.

We must define what sort of solidarity best serves the interests of the revolution. It is clear that what is endangering the development of the mass mobilisation, as well as the rights already gained by the Nicaraguan people, is the 'reconstruction' of the bourgeois state. This is what the National Reconstruction government and FSLN leadership are striving for.

The solidarity of the British working class must therefore be with the workers and poor of Nicaragua and not with the bourgeois government. The National Reconstruction government uses all the aid it gets as best serves its interests so I would like to propose that aid be sent to the Sandinista TUC, the trade unions, peasants' cooperatives, etc. The best service we can do to the Nicaraguan revolution and the working class internationally is to clarify as much as possible the need for class independence.

Unfortunately, the Nicaragua Coordinating Committee states in its programme that solidarity and support are given to the National Recon-

struction government. This has been a condition for membership in the Committee which has restricted the involvement of organisations.

The Nicaraguan people need all the solidarity they can get, so if a specific organisation wants to insist on the need for the workers and peasants in Nicaragua to set up their own government excluding the bourgeois ministers, why should its solidarity be conditioned?

Also we are interested in getting as many people as possible informed and pre-occupied with what is happening in Nicaragua. But essentially, we want to stress the fact that a class collaborationist government like the one in Nicaragua does not want to do away with the main problem ailing the workers and poor: their exploitation and oppression.

We want the workers in Nicaragua to know that our solidarity is with them. We want to tell the British working class that class independence is what we are fighting for.

Why don't we propose to the Nicaragua Coordinating Committee, to the CoHSE and NUPE members, the Socialist Medical Association etc., that the aid be sent directly to their equivalents in Nicaragua, to the Sandinista TUC? Thus our collaboration will have the political content we want to give it.

MONICA
PST Argentine

REPLY: We agree that it is politically better [where one has a choice] to direct aid to the Sandinista trade unions [though, since the Sandinistas completely support the government, the difference may not be very great in practical results]. Comrade Monica's correction is right. We hope that she will also agree that as well as solidarity with the Nicaraguan workers against the bourgeois government of National Reconstruction, we also need to organise solidarity with Nicaragua as it is, under bourgeois and petty bourgeois leadership, against imperialism. That means also supporting demands for aid [or reparations] to Nicaragua as it is.

The present government in Nicaragua must be overthrown - but by the revolutionary mobilisation of the workers and peasants of Nicaragua, not by being starved of foreign aid.

True, the US government now sees pressure on the government of National Reconstruction as the best way to save capitalist interests in Nicaragua (though Castro also supports the government, his motives, intentions and interests are not the same as the USA's!). But even now, the US very likely has other intrigues at work, and it is doling out aid in small, cautious doses.

Sooner or later it will try to foster open counter revolution. We must start agitating against this danger now.



TRIBUNAL UPHOLDS ANTI-GAY SACKING

IN a crucial test case taken to an industrial tribunal, the sacking of John Saunders, a gay worker in a Scottish youth camp, has been upheld.

The reason for the sacking was Saunders' sexual orientation, and although the tribunal accepted that Saunders was attracted to adults, not children, and that a psychiatrist of international standing testified that he could be no 'risk' to kids, it decided that Saunders' employers were reasonable to assume the risk [on the basis of 'looking at the newspapers and that sort of thing', as they admitted] and therefore to sack him. It thus implied that even disagreeing with the employers' reasons for a sacking is not sufficient to find in favour of the victimised employee.

There had been no complaints about Saunders' sexuality from teachers, parents or staff at the camp, and he has never been prosecuted

for a sexual offence. It is thought that Saunders was sacked after a tip-off from the local police, to whom Saunders had recently reported being mugged by someone he met in a gay bar in Stirling.

Derek Ogg, lawyer for Saunders and a leading member of the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group, stated that 'it makes a mockery of the Employment Protection Act - and has implications way beyond gay rights. This will affect all trade unionists too because the decision says that as long as employers think something is fair, then it is accepted as fair - no matter that it can be shown to be unreasonable, prejudiced and ignorant.'

John Saunders is taking his case to the Employment Appeals Tribunal, with the full support of the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group. He should have the full support of the left too.

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REVIEW

Feminism: the next 30 years?

by MANDY WILLIAMS

ZOE Fairbairns' novel *Benefits* opens in the late '70s, in a Britain suffering from an 'oil crisis', and with feminists variously involved in consciousness raising and in fights over abortion rights and over the payment of child benefit direct to mothers instead of in reduced taxation for working men.

These two issues foreshadow the attacks women will face over the next thirty years: state control of fertility by restricted access to contraception or to the freedom to conceive, and by the selective payment of child benefit to women on the condition that they conform to a rigid and patriarchal view of their role. The novel follows several women through three decades, with a fascinating intertwining of their personal lives with their political development and relation to organised feminism.

Lost

The fight over child benefit is lost: the better organised trade unions win reduced taxation, though of course only the wealthiest gain significantly. But ten years later the direct payment of child benefit to mothers is granted by a state concerned by the falling birthrate among all but immigrant and the worst-off working class women.

Women are paid weekly Benefit to stay at home, look after their children, and keep house, and all other benefits are withdrawn as unnecessary: women's return to the home has left sufficient employment for men, and private insurance and housebound women between them are expected to cater for the sick and elderly.

Employers are not slow to exploit the situation: childless men's wages are cut as they have no-one to support; fathers' because their wives are paid Benefit. And bored, housebound women are ex-

ploited as homeworkers.

The ideology backing up the economic changes is provided by a political party called Family, which calls on women to fulfil their 'biological destiny' and traditional role as mothers, and on the state to value women's natural role as 'nurturers'. 'Motherhood ... was not a misfortune to be insured against; it was a natural service to be paid for'.

Family's reactionary policies gain considerable support among women (and men), under the guise of respecting a mother's true worth, but in reality women's status is undermined and their place as domestic servants firmly established.

This is emphasised as organised feminists find themselves busy providing refuges and care for increasing numbers of battered and raped women, who suffer both from their husbands - who expect a better standard of life for having a state-paid full-time housekeeper - and from organised male gangs who reinforce Family's ideology by attacking women who step out of line.

Then payment of Benefit is made selective - it is withdrawn from women who do not conform to the state's criteria of suitability for motherhood, mainly black women, and feminists who choose to live and raise their children in all-women communes. These women are forcibly fitted with IUD contraceptive devices and sent abroad to learn better mothering in service to wealthy families.

Later still, contraceptives are added to the drinking water, and only model Family women are selected to receive the antidote. Illicitly pregnant mothers are given no maternal care and receive no Benefit.

But the whole experiment goes horribly wrong at this point, and Britain is left with a sterile female population and no antidote.

Yet progress comes out of the disaster. Free of the captivity to bear children, women

become free of the state's manipulations and start to develop more ambitious and more complex demands, though mainly in the personal sphere.

Zoe Fairbairns, an active feminist herself, has clear criticisms of the feminist movement - of its unwritten orthodoxy and oppressiveness for some women; of its leanings towards consciousness-raising to adjust women to their fate without fighting and with little relation to working class women's experience; of its disorganisation and rejection of leadership.

And yet she sees the elements in all of these things which contribute to the movement's strength - the communes for those practising lifestyle politics become temporary or permanent refuges and creches, and sources of free medical and social care for women who would otherwise receive none.

The isolated protest actions, even though mostly unsuccessful, have considerable resonance among more conventional (and even Family) women. (At Sunday lunchtime, feminists tour Family streets shouting through the letter-boxes - 'When's Mum's day off then?')

Tools

But until the end of the book the feminists' protests are always defensive, and their demands, made singly of a capitalist state which is assumed or hoped to be acting in good faith, are turned into tools for their oppression. Benefit itself is the clearest example.

And Family is able to relate (though dishonestly) to mothers who have been alienated by the women's movement's alleged view that child-rearing is a waste of time, and that mothers should just be demanding more state care.

Though she never states it clearly, Zoe Fairbairns implies that one of the main reasons for the successive defeats of the women's movement is the

lack of a clear policy uniting their demands and giving them direction. The same thing lets them down when they draw women into struggle on a certain issue - once it is over, women leave, little the wiser.

In one major protest against proposed population control experiments, to be imposed on women, Family women and feminists unite. But unable to formulate even minimum demands, or to coordinate the struggle nationally, the protest loses the support of Family women at the government's first promise of a concession. When the government reneges on the promise, there is no organised response again, only individual resistance.

Class

While she clearly eschews an anti-male perspective, she fails to relate to class struggle: there is hardly any reference to it over the thirty years of state repression and anti-working class policies. Working class struggle is treated as an optional extra in resisting and attacking the state, and a parallel struggle to the fight for women's liberation - not as the only way that their liberation will be won. And the repressive policies of the state simply descend from on high, without any visible origin in definite class struggles and class interests.

But *Benefits* makes fascinating reading, for Zoe Fairbairns' particular sensitivity to the issues raised, and to women's responses, in the western and in the Third world where some population control programmes already operate under the guidance of and in the interests of imperialism.

She highlights many of the weaknesses and strengths of the existing women's movement, particularly its individualism and confinement to partial demands with no overall policy or fight, but fails to relate to the class struggle which unites and directs these demands towards the overthrow of capitalism.

Nicaragua: reforging Trotskyism

THE SPLIT in the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) — an international organisation of revolutionary socialists, claiming to base themselves on Trotskyism — at the beginning of October did not, as supporters of that tendency believe, deal a blow at the work of building a world wide revolutionary working-class party. On the contrary, it cleared obstacles to this essential work in so far as it shattered or at least seriously damaged the claim by the USFI that it is itself the Fourth International, with the authority of the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

To pretend that what needs to be done is already done is to act against doing it. In fact, for much of its existence the USFI has been a rotten political bloc consisting of tendencies with massive and crippling political differences. In summer 1975, a leader of one of those tendencies, the late Joseph Hansen, said that the differences that then existed on the Portuguese Revolution would place different currents within the USFI on opposite sides of the barricades! And he was quite right.

Today the US Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), which is politically linked to the USFI though, because of reactionary US laws, not formally a member, pursues a policy of total subordination to the Nicaraguan Sandinista Front and to the bourgeois government of National Reconstruction, supporting that government even in repression against Trotskyists. The majority of the USFI, including the British IMG, are a great deal closer to our definition of the Government of National Reconstruction as a capitalist government. Yet they maintain a rotten bloc with the SWP, which publicly does what it likes on Nicaragua. In Nicaragua its supporters are attempting to integrate themselves into the Sandinista Front on a basis of total political subordination to the Sandinista leadership which installed and sustains the bourgeois Government of National Reconstruction.

The split of the Bolshevik Faction and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, which took away almost the entire Latin American membership of the USFI and sizable chunks of support in Europe, including a quarter of the LCR in France, opened the possibility of a new discussion of the political problems which underlie the organisational fragmentation which has characterised the Trotskyist movement on a world scale for 30 years.

For that reason, when we debated with the IMG on Nicaragua, a spokesman for WA announced (WA159) that we would be supporting the call for an open conference of the Trotskyists throughout the world which those who broke with the United Secretariat had put out. The call for an open conference included a call to the USFI to participate and, implicitly, to abandon the pretence that it is itself the Fourth International.

At the end of October a Parity Commission was set up by the Bolshevik Faction, the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, and the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI): an international tendency whose leading section is the French OCI, set up in 1972 in the wake of the 1971 split of the so-called International Committee of the Fourth International into segments led by the British SLL on the one hand, the OCI on the other). The OCRFI had also been involved in the call for an open conference.

Representatives of the Editorial Board of *Workers' Act*

therefore entered into discussions with the Parity Commission about the preparation of an open conference. We prepared comments on the Declaration of the Parity Commission.

Now, however, it seems that the three tendencies involved in the Parity Commission are moving towards a rapid fusion, round 'Theses' which are currently in preparation. The Parity Commission is much more tightly structured than a mere conference organising committee. OCI leader Stéphane Just commented recently (*Informations Ouvrières* 925): "As regards the Parity Committee, here and now the documents adopted in common... situate themselves entirely on the principles and the programme of the Fourth International, they are of perfect clarity. This is already a clear and solid basis, which... should permit common political actions as from now". And Andreas Delgado of the Bolshevik Faction described the Parity Commission as "the new leadership of the Fourth International" (IO926).

Of course, the comrades involved know their own politics; but the pace of this development is indeed surprising. Only in September Stéphane Just said that the OCI had "enormous differences" with the Bolshevik Faction (quoted, *La Vérité* 589). Indeed, the currents involved have been in organisational opposition to each other for 16 years. They have had sharp differences on major issues: on Cuba, on Portugal, on Angola, on the Middle East, on their attitude to Stalinism... on Nicaragua itself, until very recently. Some differences have been rapidly resolved. Pierre Lambert of the OCI recently explained (IO 926) that he had been wrong since the early 1960s in denying that Cuba was a workers' state. "For some comrades, this was a workers' state. I posed the problem a little differently. Of course, for me, Cuba was a workers' and peasants' government. But I considered that in the situation of collapse that had taken place in Cuba, the nature of the state could not be determined. In that sense, I made a parallel with the Committee of Public Safety of 1793-4 [in France], which was an error since there cannot be a state which is neither workers' nor bourgeois..."

We find it impossible to believe that the political requisites for regenerating and reconstructing the Fourth International can be properly established in this fashion and at such a speed. Such a fusion will have to be based to a serious extent on diplomatic artefacts — and unity on that basis can only obstruct the work of achieving real political unity.

Fusion of the three currents in the Parity Commission will inevitably deal a major blow to the prospects for an open conference — for effectively it will 'sew up' in advance much of what such a conference and its preparatory discussion should deal with (unless the USFI should participate: but that is unlikely, and one of the effects of fusion would be to let the USFI off the hook to a serious extent). The course towards fusion and a smaller conference means accepting in advance that the maximum outcome of the present crisis is the creation of an alternative pole to the USFI, with some organisational credibility but with the same lack of sound foundations as the USFI itself — in other words, a return to a situation like before the old 'International Committee' broke up in 1971. That will be much less than seems objectively possible, and much less than should be aimed for. Above all it is much less than is politically necessary and indispensable.

Parity Commission Declaration (excerpts)

THE DECLARATION opens by noting the USFI's support for the Sandinistas' expulsion of the Simon Bolivar Brigade, a formation led by the Bolshevik Faction. It cites the October statement by a USFI delegation supporting the expulsion, the United Secretariat's resolution on activity in Central America, the USFI's cautious criticism of the expulsion, and the statement made by the Bolshevik Faction and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency to the United Secretariat meeting on October 1st. All these documents were printed in WA 153. The Declaration continues:

THE OCI, the LTT and the BF believe that political clarity is indispensable for the struggle to build sections of the FI. They have no intention of concealing the fact that deep disagreements exist between them, political disagreements of which several arise from the splintering and dislocation of the Fourth International since liquidationist revisionism tried to destroy it. The OCI, the LTT and the BF retain their own political physiognomies and their own political positions, but they consider it their obligation to defend the fundamental positions of the Trotskyist movement (which can only base itself on the foundation of the FI and its programme, its method and its political continuity), against any revisionist and liquidationist move.

Together they declare:

The crisis of the FI is taking on a new dimension. The political function of the FI consists in struggling under all circumstances for the class independence of the proletariat, for its revolutionary mobilisation against the bourgeoisie, against imperialism, against all exploiters and all oppressors. Thus it must struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of the parasitic and counter-revolutionary bureaucracies in the countries where capital has been expropriated, which are the best allies of imperialism and of the various bourgeoisies against the proletariat and the exploited masses in the countries where the capitalist mode of production is maintained. The FI fights to sweep from the head of the workers' movement and the masses the bureaucratic, reformist and centrist leaderships which are directly or indirectly supported by the parasitic bureaucracies, in particular, but not only, the Kremlin bureaucracy. The Fourth International's political functions and programme are not abstract formulas. The class independence of the proletariat can only be assured through the struggle to build sections of the FI and to build the International on the basis of its programme. 'The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International', and its method...

The revisionism which began with Pablo is nothing other than renunciation of the class independence of the proletariat, the subordination of the proletariat to the Stalinist apparatus, to bourgeois agencies inside the proletariat, and to petty bourgeois leaderships...

According to circumstances, revisionism inside the FI has been able to take the form of adaptation to opportunist, guerrillaist, or ultra-left currents. However, in general it leads to capitulation in the last analysis to the Stalinist bureaucracy as the pivot of the world arsenal of counter-revolution and of peaceful

coexistence with imperialism. It is thus that the revisionism which began with Pablo developed, leading the FI since 1951-53 to various crises.

Today the liquidationist revisionism of the FI takes on a new dimension, while it is the leadership of the SWP which is now in the front line of an offensive of revision and destruction of the positions of the Fourth International in face of the Nicaraguan revolution...

The attack against the Simon Bolivar Brigade was only the starting point for an attempt to prevent the building of any Fourth Internationalist organisation in Nicaragua, and to impose subordination to the petty bourgeois leadership of the Sandinista Front, which put the bourgeois so-called 'National Reconstruction' government in place and which supports it, this being in the last analysis to the benefit of imperialism. Here it is very strictly a matter of the application of Castro's policy, acting in common agreement with the Kremlin bureaucracy. Here is how he characterises this policy himself:

"I repeat that we're glad that the US and other countries are to help Nicaragua. What's more, we're ready to enter an emulation campaign to see who can do the most for Nicaragua. We invite the US, we invite all the countries of Latin America, we invite all the countries of Europe, the countries of the Third World, our sister socialist nations, everybody, to take part in an emulation campaign to help Nicaragua..."

Who can doubt that Castro is proposing a common front to the USA and to the states of Latin America, a counter-revolutionary campaign of emulation to strangle the revolution in Nicaragua? For what other involvement can US imperialism and the governments of Latin America have? It is a matter of emulation in support for the bourgeois government 'of national reconstruction' whose task is to reconstruct the bourgeois state which the revolution has volatilised in Nicaragua...

Attempts are being made to cover such a big capitulation by utilising a theoretical hypothesis of the founding programme of the Fourth International:

"One cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.), the petty bourgeois parties, including the Stalinists, may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie"

Exceptional circumstances (war, crash, and collapse of whole sections of bourgeois society, revolutionary offensive of the masses) have obliged parties coming from the international apparatus of the Kremlin bureaucracy, or a petty bourgeois current like Castroism, to go further than they wanted on the road of a break with the bourgeoisie: why cannot the same thing happen much more easily in Nicaragua where there is a revolutionary petty bourgeois leadership? Indeed, one cannot exclude the possibility that under the pressure of the masses the FSLN might be obliged to go further than it wishes in its struggle against the bourgeoisie and imperialism, but that is not the political problem today in Nicaragua. The political, not the theor-

etical, problem is that the FSLN is practising a policy of class conciliation and support for the government of national reconstruction, the centre of the counter-revolution in that country...

The proletarian revolution in Nicaragua and the positions to be adopted in relation to it concretise today all the questions which must be discussed, and to which clear replies must be given. It must be said, and there must be no doubt about it: the revolution in Nicaragua and the positions taken in relation to it are at the centre of the problems which are under discussion or which have to be resolved. The revolution permits no dissimulation: it separates off revisionism from Trotskyism. The discussion of these problems cannot be developed and brought to a conclusion by exclusions and ultimatums. The political discussion should be taken up again as soon as possible, be really developed and lead in short order to a principled agreement which is the condition for any reunification, reorganisation, refounding or reconstruction of the Fourth International (the term to be used is not an a priori condition), regrouping those movements world-wide which are justified in avowing themselves Trotskyist

In these conditions, conscious of the extreme gravity of the situation created by the U.Sec. resolution which threatens to abort a discussion begun a few weeks ago, we invite all the organisations basing themselves on the Fourth International, its programme, its method and its foundation in 1938, to create the conditions for a real and deep discussion. Only in this way will we be able to clearly delimit which tendencies and positions are revisionist and thus incompatible with belonging to the Fourth International, and which they are who defend the principles and should reorganise the Fourth International.

Only the most serious, democratically organised, and exhaustive discussion can oust revisionism and finish it off. It is a matter of the defence of the Fourth International, its programme, its conquests, and its continuity, and its reconstruction or reorganisation as rapidly as possible.

That is why, conscious of our responsibilities, and conscious of the gravity of the moment for the international and national organisations basing themselves on the Fourth International and for the future of the Fourth International, we propose that the OCRFI, the BF and the LTT should make a common call to all the organisations basing themselves on the founding programme of the Fourth International, and basing themselves on its foundation in 1938 and its reconstruction in 1943-6, its continuity despite its dislocation in 1951-53 under the effect of Pabloite revisionism, to prepare and hold an open conference to discuss and give answers to these problems with the objective of reunifying or reconstructing the whole world Trotskyist movement as delimited above on the basis of principles.

The U.Sec. obviously has its place in the preparation and the holding of such a conference.

In order to prepare this conference politically and organisationally, the OCRFI, the BF and the LTT will constitute a parity commission.

WA's reply (excerpts)

After explaining the basis on which we approached the parity commission — agreement on opposition to the liquidationist line of the USFI in Nicaragua, agreement on the need for an open conference, the reply continues:

We have a different assessment of the history of the Fourth International after Trotsky. It is not sufficient to describe the past three decades in terms of organisational fragmentation provoked by the liquidationist politics in the early '50s of the tendency then led by Michel Pablo. The political crisis triggered off by the Nicaraguan revolution has its immediate roots in the inadequate and incomplete character of the previous analyses of the Cuban revolution. The U.Sec. considers that Cuba is a workers' state and that it has no need of a political revolution. Evidently the U.Sec. is relating to Nicaragua with a passive expectation of seeing the Cuban experience repeated: for ourselves, even if we were convinced that Nicaragua would repeat the Cuban experience, the problem would remain of the completion of the revolution, of the direct power of workers' councils. It can hardly be argued, however, that the confusion within the Trotskyist movement on the Cuban revolution — confusion which continues today, 20 years after the revolution — is not also in part the responsibility of those who constituted the post-1963 International Committee. We believe that a political regeneration, on the basis of a discussion to resolve the political crisis which is at the root of the organisational fragmentation of the past three decades, is the essential condition for any process of reconstruction or reorganisation of the Fourth International...

The declaration identifies Castro, in our opinion, too completely with the Kremlin. It is not at all obvious that Castro wants to strangle the revolution in Nicaragua. Of course, if the revolution does not advance, if it marks time, if a professional army is consolidated, then the counter-revolution will be able to triumph, and all those, including Castro, who consciously or not obstruct the consolidation of the revolution, are preparing this outcome. But that is not the same as the Kremlin, which has cynically strangled revolutions time and time again. Castro has made many political adaptations in the last ten years (to the Peruvian military and now to the Panamanian, etc.) He has not, as far as we know, done anything which could identify him with the Kremlin as the hangman of the revolution.

The declaration's references to the continuity of the Fourth International seems to us to be likely to cause confusion. Given that the parity commission includes forces which were in organisational opposition for 16 years, the declaration cannot mean that there has been an organisational continuity, or at least a unilateral organisational continuity. The continuity is in the programme and the struggle to build organisations in the working class which fight for that programme. For decades that struggle has been carried on in conditions of fragmentation of the Trotskyist movement... The references to continuity thus have a needlessly exclusive character...

Some aspects of the organisation of the conference are not clear to us, and we raise them here so that the parity commission can comment. There may be a contradiction between the declared aim of an open conference and the measures already taken by the parity commission.

The membership of the parity commission is already limited. Only one further full member is possible (the U.Sec. — which is however unlikely to respond positively in the immediate future). New adherents can only be accepted with the unanimous agreement of the three components of the commission. The rules of functioning of the commission already constitute quite a tight organisational framework...

For ourselves, we believe that it is of great importance for the world Trotskyist movement that the possibilities of political clarification opened by the Nicaraguan revolution are grasped in an active way — and that can only be done, in our opinion, by the organisation of a broad conference, open to all the forces basing themselves on the Trotskyist programme and prepared by a full and democratic discussion in the coming months.

Money Power

This article is the third of a four-part series in the Magazine Section, giving a brief introduction to some of the ideas of Marxism, and their importance for the struggle for socialism. It explains why money, "the god among commodities", is all-powerful under capitalism.

The final article in the series, to be published in the new year, will deal with why capitalism is doomed.

All the quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from Marx and Engels.

Something which all the 'bourgeois socialists', reformists and Stalinists have in common is that their vision of socialism is still a society dominated by commodities and money.

For Marxists, as Trotsky wrote: "State compulsion, like money compulsion, is an inheritance from the class society which is incapable of defining the relations of man to man except in the form of fetishes, churchly or secular, after appointing to defend them the most alarming of all fetishes, the state, with a great knife between its teeth. In a communist society, the state and money will disappear. Their gradual dying away ought consequently to begin under socialism... [However] Money cannot be arbitrarily 'abolished', nor the state, and the old family 'liquidated'. They have to exhaust their historic mission, evaporate, and fall away. The death blow to money fetishism will be struck only upon that stage when the steady growth of social wealth has made us bipeds forget our miserly attitude towards every excess minutes of labour, and our humiliating fear about the size of our ration. Having lost its ability to bring happiness or trample men in the dust, money will turn into a mere book-keeping receipts for the convenience of statisticians..."

Marx analysed commodities and money in great detail. The importance of this analysis is:

- 1 To give a proper scientific foundation to the theory of exploitation which we have mentioned.
- 2 To show that all the basic features of capitalism flow logically from the simple relationships of exchange of commodities, once that exchange becomes the dominant orientation of production; and thus that a criticism of capitalism must also question these basic commodity relationships. Also, to show that those basic commodity relationships were not natural but the product of a specific stage of human development.
- 3 To show how ordinary bourgeois thinking is inextricably confused and riddled with illusions by taking commodity relationships as natural.

In communist society it will be simply, "From each according to his or her abilities, to each according to his or her needs". Under a workers' state, in transition from capitalism to communism, money will play a restricted role. The means of production are not bought and sold (and some basic necessities may be distributed free), but until enough of everything is produced for everyone and a general spirit of social solidarity is developed, workers receive wages and buy food, clothing and other consumer goods accordingly.

But under capitalism, money is all-powerful. It can buy everything; or lack of it can crush the brightest hopes.

"It transforms fidelity into infidelity, love into hate, hate into love, virtue into vice, vice into virtue, servant into master, master into servant, idiocy into intelligence, and intelligence into idiocy." It is "the god among commodities".

Bourgeois thinking reflects this. It is not that money is con-

sidered valuable because it can be exchanged for the products of human labour; the products of human labour are considered valuable because they can be exchanged for money — because they are 'worth' £100, £1000, or however much. Sometimes one even speaks of people as 'worth a million'.

In previous societies people generally worked until they had produced enough to live on — then stopped. In many societies the desire to be richer than other people was looked on as weird and immoral. But in capitalist society money represents everything desirable society can offer — and it arouses a general greed for wealth in the form of money, even among the working class.

How does money come to dominate society in this way? Consider a society where commodity production (production for exchange) is only developed in the form of barter. Suppose I grow potatoes, and I swap my extra potatoes, above what I need for myself, for other things.

Then I will judge the value of all other commodities in terms of potatoes. A coat is equivalent to ten pounds of potatoes, say; a knife, five pounds. If I want to know the value of something, I will ask, "How many pounds of potatoes?"

My neighbour who breeds sheep will judge values in terms of sheep. Another neighbour who is a cobbler will judge values in terms of shoes.

This becomes chaotic and impossible if exchange develops beyond a certain point. Suppose a traveller arrives in our village and wants to sell things. Then he will have to quote all his prices in potatoes for me, in sheep for the sheep farmer, and shoes for the cobbler. Moreover, what if the sheep farmer wants to buy something from the traveller, but the traveller does not want any sheep?

There is social need for one commodity to be recognised as the general measure of value: money. Abstract labour is the basic measure of value: but by its very nature abstract labour cannot be directly equated with particular concrete labours. The reduction of different particular labours to equate them with different amounts of general abstract labour is done via equating the products of labour with one special commodity, singled out to be the general external measure of value. Historically, the first money-commodities are usually the most common form of wealth in the particular society: cattle or slaves. As exchange develops more, the precious metals become the money-commodities because they embody a large value in a small and easily-carried amount; because they don't decay, wear out or die; and because they can be easily divided into exact quantities.

Now if I am growing potatoes, I won't judge the value of other commodities in terms of so many pounds of potatoes; on the contrary, I will judge the value of my potatoes in terms of so many ounces of another, special, commodity: gold.

And the domination of money goes even further under capitalism. If a capitalist invests his money in potato-farming, the actual production of potatoes is a matter of complete indifference to him. His aim is to 'make' money — that is, to expand capital, whose most characteristic form is money. Spurred on by competition, the profit-making drive is insatiable. "Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets..."

"Use-values must therefore never be treated as the immediate aim of the capitalist; nor must the profit on any single transaction. His aim is rather the unceasing movement of profit-making. This boundless drive for enrichment, this passionate chase after value, is common to the capitalist and the miser; but while the miser is merely a capitalist gone mad, the capitalist is a rational miser..."

More and more, the real active forces in the economic system seem to be things — the commodities themselves, which exchange in definite proportions because of some mystical property in them. The economic system based on commodity exchange is a system which is not under conscious human control.

It seems (and it is partly true) that human beings are simply the helpless guardians of these commodities. Although if looked at historically, commodity exchange is a specific set of social relations between people, in capitalist society it seems (and to an extent it is actually true) that commodity exchange is a set of social relations between things. It appears as something in the nature of things.

And thus the specific social attitudes drummed into people by commodity exchange appear to be human nature: greed for personal wealth, competitiveness, ambition, selfishness, and individualism. Technology, social productiveness, social wealth all become weapons in the hands of the capitalist for the greater exploitation of the worker; and that seems natural too. It is all beyond conscious human control. People feel lonely and isolated, and they imagine it is because of big cities or high-rise flats or their own individual inadequacies, rather than because the capitalist economy works to make people competitive and isolated.

Commodity and money relations also cover up exploitation. For the worker it seems as logical that the capitalist pays him a fair wage as that he pays the shopkeeper a fair price for a pound of potatoes.

After finishing his analysis of commodities and money in parts 1 and 2 of 'Capital' volume I, and before going on to analyse the labour process and exploitation, Marx writes: "The sphere of circulation of commodity exchange, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham [Bentham was a well-known bourgeois philosopher]. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, let us say of labour power, are determined only by their own free will. They contract as free persons, who are equal before the law. Their contract is the final result in which their joint will finds a common legal expression. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to his own advantage..."

When we leave this sphere of simple circulation or the exchange of commodities, which provides the 'free-trader vulgaris' [i.e. the ordinary bourgeois democrat] with his views, his concepts and the standard by which he judges the society of capital and wage labour, a certain change takes place, or so it appears, in the physiognomy of our dramatis personae. He who was previously the money-owner now strides out in front as a capitalist; the possessor of labour power follows as his worker. The one smirks self-importantly and is intent on business; the other is timid and holds back, like someone who has brought his own hide to market and now has nothing else to expect but — a tanning..."

Here too the conclusions are of political importance. Bourgeois 'human nature' is far from being eternal. Bourgeois concepts of human rights, freedom and democracy are not the only ones given by nature. The working class can develop other values. Under capitalism it does so only partially and occasionally, because "the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class". But in a revolution the working class changes not only social relations but also its own ideas.

"Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, an alteration is necessary which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew..."

"The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations, no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas."

Why are these bits of paper so important in present-day society? Marx showed why — and how money-fetishism will be ended



Workers' ACTION

12 pages
15p

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STOP THE SOUTHALL FRAME-UP TRIALS -

Join the picket on Monday Dec. 17th

One of the most spectacularly savage acts of the SPG at Southall was their invasion of 6 Park View Buildings. They broke in and batoned everyone inside, including those already wounded and those who were treating them.

Thirty people needed hospital treatment. Among those arrested there are charged with assault (!) are black activists Terry Ward, Adrian McKay, John Knight and William Simon.

They go on trial at Barnet on Monday 17th. A new magistrate is expected to take over then.

There has been a slight drop in the conviction rate at Barnet since the BBC Open Door film of Southall and since some of the worst of the full-time magistrates moved on. These were men with army and police backgrounds, convicting at nearly twice the national average.

Thirteen victims of the frame-up trials are now in jail. All appeals so far heard at St Albans have been turned down, though the 14 year old boy convicted in West London juvenile court against the testimony of seven witnesses has won

his appeal at Kingston. A mass picket on Monday 17th December from 9.30am will press home the point that the police, not their victims, should be on trial. The trial of Ward, McKay, Knight and Simon could be a major turning point at Barnet. Join this important picket (Barnet High St, High Barnet tube).



SOUTHALL DEFENCE FUND

- 700 people were arrested on 23rd April: 342, mainly young Asians, were charged.
- 70 are likely to be jailed if the present trends continue.
- In cases heard so far very few defendants have received legal aid.
- Fines, costs and expenses are expected to exceed £100,000.

I enclose £ . . . for the Southall Defence Fund.
Name
Address
Send to: PO Box 51, London WC2.

TORIES TAKE OVER SMITH'S WAR

JUST AFTER the Patriotic Front had finally given way to ceaseless browbeating and ultimatums from the British Tory government, the racist regime in Salisbury celebrated the Zimbabwe/Rhodesia settlement in the way they found most suitable: by raids, backed by South African troops, into Zambia and Mozambique.

Not a word of criticism from the Tories. And that sums up the reality of the London settlement: the white supremacist regime, which had been driven nearer and nearer to defeat by the black liberation war, has been given the best deal it could possibly hope for the intervention of the British government.

NO CHANGE

That is the sort of settlement that British troops are going to Zimbabwe to prop up.

Are free elections remotely possible given the conditions agreed to provisionally in the London talks?

The British governor will have total executive and legislative power, including power over the armed forces. Given that the Tories back Muzorewa and Smith, that means no change.

The existing state apparatus - mainly staffed by whites - will remain intact. It includes the army, police, magistrates and civil service.

The present laws designed to prop up the repressive regime and ruthlessly stamp out opposition will stay unchanged, including the 'state of emergency', which, together with the martial law in force over three quarters of the coun-



Rhodesian army massacre in Mozambique - now Soames is in charge of operations

try, gives state officials draconian powers.

The liberation forces are to be gathered in 'assembly points'. The Rhodesian army is not likely to give itself up to such a manoeuvre, and even if it does it will not affect the armed police and auxiliaries.

AIR ATTACKS

No agreement has been reached to ground the Rhodesian air force. The liberation forces will be vulnerable to any attack the Rhodesians throw at them and their supporters in the cities and villages will still face police intimidation.

The arrangements for the election itself are thoroughly undemocratic. 20 seats are reserved for whites on-

ly. Refugees in Zambia and Mozambique (practically as many as the whole white population) are excluded from voting as cross-border movements will be halted. No registration of voters will take place. The election could be called at any time, allowing the Patriotic Front no time to build up electoral support.

The white monopoly of the radio and press will stay. Even if the Patriotic Front jumps all the hurdles and is elected to 'power', the constitution will deny it any real hold. It has built-in 'safeguards' including not just disproportionate white representation but also guaranteeing

continued p.2

Hands off the unions
See centre pages

Steel cuts: A triple alliance needed

THE British Steel Corporation is looking for 52,000 more victims; 52,000 volunteers for a life of poverty and demoralisation. That is the number of jobs they intend to cut from the steel industry. If this jobs massacre isn't stopped, thousands of miners - some 7,000 in Wales alone - and hundreds of railway workers will be threatened with the sack too.

Bill Sims of the ISTC, the steel industry's biggest union, says the union will strike on January 2nd to force BSC to improve its pay offer. But the ISTC isn't calling a strike to stop a third of the industry's workforce being axed! Nothing reveals better the paralysis of the trade union bureaucracy in the face of unemployment.

In practice, not fighting the sackings not only leaves a third of the workforce in the lurch, but it means pulling out the plug on the pay battle too.

Publicity about huge cash handouts to steelworkers accepting voluntary redundancy has had a big effect so far, undermining the struggle at Shotton and threatening the determination of the workers at Corby. But press reports that the Corby fight is all over are untrue. They reflect largely the faint-heartedness of the local union leaders.

The urgency of the threats to the steelworkers, the miners and the railworkers demands that they establish an alliance to fight the jobs massacre. If the trade union leaders won't build that alliance and won't lead a real fight then the rank and file will have to do it themselves.

- No sackings! No 'voluntary redundancies'! Keep every job!
- Cut the hours, not the jobs - worksharing without loss of pay!
- For a triple alliance to stop the jobs massacre!

More on the steel crisis p.8

Fund Drive

Only £20 received this week (from Manchester) towards our £200 December target. Send contributions to Fund, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD

Christmas

Workers' Action will miss two issues - those that would have been dated Dec. 22 and Dec. 29 - over the Christmas/New Year break. For Jan. 5 the Workers' Action staff will be helping put out the January Socialist Organiser. WA 163 will therefore be dated January 12, 1980.