

# Red Weekly

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# PHONEY 'IRA PLOT' AIMS TO BLOCK 'TROOPS OUT'

Wilson's scare story about an IRA 'take over' of Belfast has 'For the British Market' stamped all over it.

Few people in Ireland, and none in Belfast, will believe that the IRA would plan a dangerous and wasteful operation of the kind described.

Even a spokesman for the Loyalist Ulster Defence Association has branded the story as an SAS concoction. As the *Irish Press* has pointed out, the revelations 'occur' very conveniently with the Government's attempts to get the Sunningdale Agreement ratified.

There could be some factual basis for the story. Possibly the Army has captured documents outlining contingency plans for a 'Doomsday' situation, in which the British Army pulls out, followed by a massive loyalist attack on the catholic ghettos.

Last summer, during the worst phase of the sectarian murders, there was a great deal of speculation about this in Belfast. It was thought that the British Army could be pulled out of Belfast and Derry long enough to allow a pogrom to sweep over the catholic areas. This would eliminate the Republican challenge to the British Government.

In such a situation the IRA would be

boosted by mass recruitment, and there would be unity between Officials and Provisionals in resisting the onslaught.

It was this danger that led the Republicans, a few months ago, to negotiate with the UDA and other loyalist organisations. Far from planning to attack Protestant areas, the Republicans have seemed to overestimate the degree of compromise that could be achieved with them.

Reports in British newspapers have not indicated the borderline between evidence and speculation in Wilson's story. Irish newspapers, which based their reports on an Army press conference in Belfast, bring this out more plainly. Significantly, the Army's only direct quotation from the 'documents' refer to defensive plans.

The prominence given to this story contrasts dramatically with coverage of a statement by William Craig, made on Free State radio on Sunday. He said that the current loyalist murder campaign against innocent catholics was 'understandable' and 'excusable.' Such an attitude by a prominent Unionist politician backs up Republican fears of a 'Doomsday' situation.

Labour MP Dennis Skinner put his finger on the reason for the scare. He asked Wilson in Parliament: 'Will the discovery get the troops out of Ireland sooner rather than later?'

Wilson's reply included the telling phrase: '...there is no question of withdrawing the troops until the problems they have been dealing with have been solved.'

Wilson's trickery is strikingly similar to his 'politically motivated men' scare during the 1966 seamen's strike.

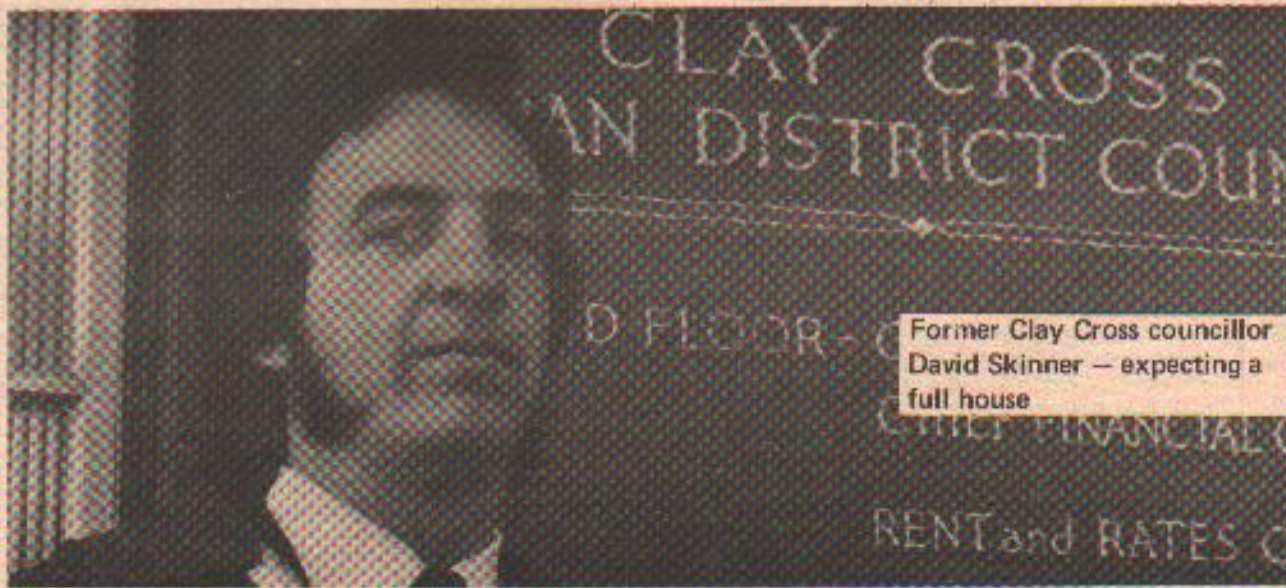
The British working class should defeat such methods by building a mass movement demanding an end to the whole squalid Irish operation, and the withdrawal of the troops NOW!

## BIG SUPPORT FOR CLAY CROSS CONFERENCE

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE called by Clay Cross constituency Labour Party for London on 8 June is meeting with a big response in the labour movement.

Former Clay Cross councillor David Skinner, involved in the organisation of the conference, told *Red Weekly*: 'Every conceivable organisation has applied for credentials. We are expecting a full house, and have issued something like 300 credentials in the first week alone.'

Organisations sending delegates include local Labour Parties, trades councils, trade union branches, shop stewards committees, and tenants associations. Among the trade union bodies represented will be the Preston and Chesterfield Trades Councils, and branches of the TGWU, NUPE, ASTMS, the NUM, and GMWU.



Former Clay Cross councillor David Skinner — expecting a full house

The conference will open with a discussion of the Clay Cross struggle and the fight to defend those victim-

ised in that struggle. The afternoon session will take up the questions of solidarity with Chile, the fight to

free the trade unionists jailed in the Shrewsbury frame-up trials, and the fight of the Engineers against the

National Industrial Relations Court.

This conference will be a major gathering of those in the forefront of the struggle against the capitalist offensive who are dissatisfied with Labour's sell-out policies on all the crucial questions facing the working class.

It will offer an important opportunity to work out a fighting programme for the labour movement, and to take the steps necessary to carry that programme into action.

For these reasons *Red Weekly* will be providing regular coverage on the lead-up to the conference in the coming weeks. We will also be contributing to the debate on the way forward for the workers' movement, in preparation for the discussions that will take place at the conference itself.

For further information or credentials contact: Charlie Bunting, 7 Lynam Close, Danesmoor, Clay Cross (tel. 0246 862756).

# Unions demand enquiry into Labour corruption

The TGWU and the Boilermakers Union in the North East have both called for an enquiry by the labour movement into the web of corruption associated with Poulson, Andrew Cunningham and T. Dan Smith.

This call reflects deep local doubts in the North East about the Royal Commission on corruption which has been announced by the Labour Government.

The Royal Commission will have only the most limited powers of investigation and its deliberations will spin out over months, and even years. At the end of all this it will be unable to do more than make recommendations.

But the most serious objection to leaving it to a Royal Commission is that corruption of leading figures in the labour movement must be the concern of the working class itself. For that reason the move by the TGWU and the Boilermakers is very welcome.

## MORTAL THREAT

So far the reaction of the Labour and trade union leadership to the evidence of flagrant corruption has only served to aggravate this mortal threat to the integrity of the labour movement. Andrew Cunningham, long-time associate of Poulson, was allowed to serve out his time on the

Labour Party National Executive Committee long after his connections were public knowledge. Not only have Cunningham's activities passed without censure, but the former Deputy Leader, Lord George Brown, appeared at his trial to give him a glowing character reference.

The entire hierarchy of the Labour Party has defended the business connection between the present Deputy Leader, Edward Short, and T. Dan Smith, despite the evidence that Short consistently used his influence to defend Smith from corruption charges.

The one man in the North East who fought this cancerous growth, the MP for Blyth, Eddie Milne, was first blocked by every means available and then expelled from the Party.

This stance of the Labour leadership proves fuel for Labour's Parliamentary opponents and their capitalist backers. Even more seriously it strikes at the very root of Labour as a party materially independent of the capitalist class. It can only further encourage the corrupt exploitation by Labour representatives of positions to which they have been elected or appointed.

It is revealing that the Labour leaders, always so eager to lead a witch-hunt against militants, are so

accommodating to Poulson's sorry retinue in the labour movement. And it is worthy of note that these social-democratic mis-leaders, who have no belief in the capacity of the working class to create its own solutions to the economic and social crisis, are prepared to swallow whole the 'miracles' promised by phony 'tycoons' like T. Dan Smith.

Right wing social democracy is totally opposed to independent working class action, and is thus often at a loss to discover a way to get this done. Maverick capitalists or technocrats like Robert Maxwell or T. Dan Smith are thus the perfect complement to a copper-bottomed bureaucrat like Andrew Cunningham.

A workers' enquiry into these questions should lay the basis for expelling from the movement all the accomplices of Cunningham and Smith. It should also propose measures to make Labour representatives really accountable to their supporters.

Above all it must be made clear that defence of the workers' movement against the insidious menace of corruption should on no account be left to the agencies of bourgeois law and order. Such bodies have no interest in a vigorous and independent working class movement, but are only too eager to extend their hold over the organised workers' movement.

# Foot rejects NALGO pleas

MICHAEL FOOT has managed to put himself back on NALGO's rather slender hook.

Replying to the TUC's initiative on behalf of the union's London Weighting claim he has made it clear that nothing can be done before the Pay Board report is issued at the end of June. All he could allow as an interim agreement would be a deal within Phase 3 limits granting about £50 in Inner London and £26 in Outer London.

Even the recently scaled-down demands of the union are being treated with contempt by the Government, who are not yet confronted with a determined fight by the NALGO leadership.

## BUREAUCRATS INABILITY

Last Monday's meeting of the NALGO Executive showed the complete inability of the bureaucrats to work out a decisive plan of action after Foot's latest refusal. The NEC agreed to increase selective strike action, bringing in about 600 local government and electricity workers in Hammersmith, Hillingdon, Kensington, Lewisham, Merton, Newham, Redbridge, Richmond, Wandsworth, LEB and CEGB branches. However Tower Hamlets and Hackney branches have not yet been brought out on total strike, in spite of demands from the branch memberships.

It seems likely that the NEC will follow up this piece of ineptitude by calling Islington branch back to work. A meeting of the Emergency Committee is scheduled for Friday 17 May when Isling-

ton's position is to be 'reviewed'.

The bureaucrats plead that the cost of keeping Islington out and the expense of bringing in other branches is excessive, since all workers are on full strike pay. But this excuse is just a smokescreen for the real fear of the bureaucracy.

They are afraid that Islington is becoming the real leadership of the struggle and that the addition of two more branches ready to play a full time organising role would pose an acute threat to the cringing 'official' leadership. As a member of the Islington strike committee said 'They'll be trying to bring us back, they're too afraid of what we're doing'.

This attempt at sabotage of the campaign must be met by a massive response from the London NALGO membership, demanding that Islington be kept out, and that Tower Hamlets and Hackney branches are brought out immediately. Large scale strike action—as the most effective way that the struggle can be carried forward—must be initiated in all areas. On the basis of this an effective rank and file leadership can be built wherever action is going forward. This leadership can take over the campaign from the bureaucrats, and start to make links in action with other workers challenging Labour's operation of Phase 3.

ALAN BENNETT

Details are not yet finalised of a picket of NALGO House on Friday, but for information on this and to give messages of support, ring Islington Strike Committee: 226 5441.

# National Front rally banned in Birmingham

Anti-fascists in Birmingham have forced the Council to ban a National Front rally due to take place in the city's Digbeth Hall on 17 May.

As reported in last week's *Red Weekly* a co-ordinating committee was set up to unite trade unionists, immigrant workers, and left-wingers on the initiative of the Birmingham Campaign Against Racism. They called for a demonstration outside the hall, and for trade unionists to demand that the Labour-controlled Council stop the meeting.

The committee received a good response. The AUEW branch covering the GKN Tractors and Transmission factory, whose management includes a National

Front candidate, gave support. They sent the leaflet issued by the committee to the Area office for distribution throughout the area. The Birmingham NUS also gave support.

After the decision to ban the NF, Councillor Barton said: 'We believed the meeting could have led to public disorder. There could have been protests leading to demonstrations and so on... A great cross-section of people in Birmingham had protested about the organisation holding the meeting.'

The National Front is angry at the ban, and plans to sue the Council; but the anti-fascists have shown again that they can stop fascists from getting a platform in Birmingham.

R. TANNER

# Teachers' leaders postpone action

A referendum on action over the £350 London Allowance claim was organised by the National Union of Teachers last week.

Despite the failure of the NUT leadership to campaign amongst the membership, and the unevenness in militancy between teachers in Inner London and those in the outlying areas, 43% of the votes were cast for strike action.

The NUT Executive are using the outcome of the referendum as an excuse for not organising any action, although the potential support for a militant struggle has been demonstrated by the strike of 15,000 teachers on 29 April, and the recent spate of unofficial action.

The Executive have postponed any decision until 23 May. With the Pay Board due to report on 18 June, it seems certain that they will adopt a 'wait-and-see' attitude.

Unfortunately, the IS dominated Rank-and-File group is tail-ending the Executive, and have refused to do anything until after their public meeting on 7 June. They seem to be set on their usual tactic of waiting until the Executive sells out, so that they can 'expose' them afterwards.

But militants must act now. They should organise a strike and mass lobby of the NUT Action Committee at Hamilton House on 23 May. Those schools supporting this should send out delegates to win support from other schools.

Union meetings in schools should decide how and by whom exams will be covered that day, and vote on extended strike action, whether or not it is official.

If a dozen or more of the larger and more militant schools were to take such action, they would quickly draw in broad support. Local strike committees, and an all-London committee, should be set up to co-ordinate the action and ensure that the leadership is firmly in the hands of the membership.

Such committees could also build links with teachers in further education, NALGO, and hospital workers, who are pursuing similar claims. With a firm commitment to support each others' demands the tide could be turned in the struggle of workers in the public sector, and a big victory won against the cuts in social expenditure.

JIM DONOGHUE

# RACIST RUNS IN OXFORD

Leading spokesman of the extreme right-wing Monday Club Harold Soref was forced to make an undignified escape from anti-racist demonstrators in Oxford.

Soref was speaking on 'Coloured Immigration' at the invitation of the Oxford University Monday Club. But his speech was interrupted by 40 militants shouting slogans and trying to get into the meeting.

Soref promptly fled out of a rear door of the Union Society Building, through a house, over a five foot wall, and into a waiting sports car. When last seen he had driven through a red light, narrowly missing a passing student, and was heading for his 4-star hotel.

## NUS POLICY

The demonstrators, whom Soref described as 'scum', were trapped in the Union Society building by Monday

Club thugs and police, who proceeded to take names and photographs for their respective files. Two students were arrested and charged with 'criminal damage'.

The counter-demonstration was organised after a general meeting voted in favour of the NUS policy against fascist and racist speakers. An anti-fascist committee was formed, as part of an ongoing campaign.

The committee bases its actions on the idea that free speech and democratic rights were won through working class struggle. A fight against the fascists, who want to destroy these rights, is essential in order to defend these hard-won gains.

The next action planned by the committee is a demonstration against a National Front meeting planned for Oxford Town Hall on 21 May.

Soref and other leading Monday Clubbers saw their meeting as a test case. So that despite the arrests, the affair was an important victory for the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement.

# UNION DELAYS OFFICIAL BACKING FOR COWLEY

NATIONAL negotiations on the victimisation of Alan Thornett at the British Leyland Assembly Plant in Cowley have broken down. The plant's transport drivers are still awaiting official backing for the strike, at present suspended, which they launched in defence of their right to choose Thornett as their steward.

When National Officers of the T&GWU warned Leyland management that official strike action would follow a failure to agree, the company for the first time shifted from their absolute refusal to recognise Thornett. They eventually offered to accept him as a shop-steward after six months good conduct.

The union rejected this insulting offer and this stand was endorsed by a meeting of the drivers. But Moss Evans, national organiser for the T&GWU refuses to call an official strike in the absence of Jack Jones and his deputy (who are both abroad). The drivers have resolved that on his return Jones will be met with a strong delegation from the Transport department to demand backing for their action.

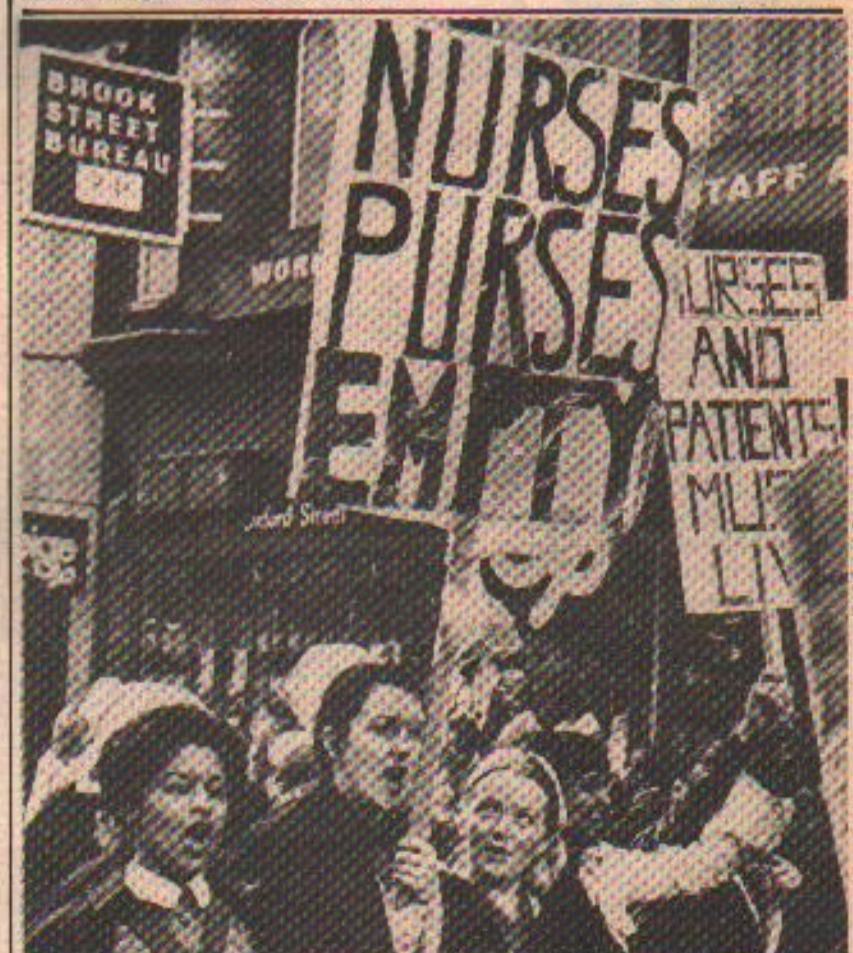
Meanwhile, the General Purposes Sub-Committee of the Regional Committee of the T&GWU has been pursuing its

inquiry at Cowley. The inquiry has strayed beyond the original terms of reference, which were to investigate the management's charges against Thornett.

The inquiry has become a 'fishing expedition' into all aspects of the union organisation in the factory, with the clear aim of reducing the influence of the 5/55 branch, long a militant thorn in the side of the regional bureaucrats. The 5/55 branch has now resolved that if the inquiry does intend to make recommendations beyond its terms of reference, these should be submitted to a special meeting of the full regional committee, on which Thornett is a delegate, before publication.

Carol Miller's plans to establish a 'Cowley wives action group' suffered a setback at the hands of pro-union women. So she has now set up this anti-strike outfit from her own front room! While her support has declined to a handful, Miller still has the advantage of unlimited publicity. Women trade unionists, and wives who support the union, must step up plans to counter Miller and her backers if they try and resume their activities during the coming struggles.

Last Monday's *Workers Press* carried a slanderous attack on the IMG's role at Cowley. A full reply will appear in next week's *Red Weekly*.



A new upsurge of militancy is affecting many groups of workers without a tradition of struggle. In this case it is nurses, who staged a mass demonstration in London on Monday to back up their London weighting claim. Yorkshire miners' leader Arthur Scargill has pledged the miners' support for nurses picket lines.

# NATIONAL DEMO FOR IMPERIAL TYPEWRITERS



Bennie Bunsee addresses a mass meeting of strikers last week

THE STRIKERS at Imperial Typewriters in Leicester are now 900 strong—a majority of the workers force at this factory, which employs 1,100 Asians out of a total workforce of 1,600.

The grievance which sparked off the strike on 1 May was the recently introduced Measured Day Work scheme. But the workers are also complaining of cheating and discrimination by the company.

They had been told that to earn the bonus rate they had to produce 200 machines per day, but they discovered that the schedule in fact called for 168 machines. One worker calculated that, as a result, he had been cheated out of £546 in his 18 months of employment there.

The strikers also state that white workers employed at the factory for a few months have been promoted over the heads of black workers who

have worked at Imperial for 8 or 10 years.

They also cite instances of petty discrimination, such as an Indian girl who was reprimanded for clocking two cards, while a white girl behind her clocked five cards with impunity.

## 'WHITE BACKLASH'

The factory's T&GWU branch met last Friday (10 May), attended by over 300 members, although not by the branch officers. The meeting unanimously adopted a seven point programme, including opposition to victimisation and the bonus system, a cut in the differential between men and women of 50% by the end of the year, and the election—not nomination—of shop stewards. (There is only one—non-elected—Asian shop steward in the factory.)

The strikers are also organising a special 'grievance meeting' of the

branch, at which they are trying to get the attendance of the District Official, Mr Bromley, and the factory convener Reg Weaver.

Both of these men are hostile to the strike. Bromley has said that the strikers are 'under the influence of an alien ideology', a statement which the chairman of the strike committee H. Kahetani has described as 'a scarcely concealed invitation for a white backlash'. Weaver has said that he has his own rule book according to which workers can only be shop stewards if they have been in the factory for at least two years.

## WITCH HUNT

The strike committee plans a national demonstration in Leicester on Sunday 19 May. Amongst the speakers invited are Mike Cooley (former president of AUEW/TASS), Ernie Roberts (Assistant General Secretary of the AUEW), Tariq Ali of the IMG, Avtar Jouhal of the Indian Workers Association, George Peake, and Benny Bunsee who was prominent in the Mansfield Hosiery dispute in 1972.

After Bunsee had spoken at a meeting last Sunday (12 May), the *Leicester Mercury* launched a witch-hunt against the strike. The paper claimed that there were 'reports from well-informed sources that a Trotskyite group were at the back of the troubles, and there is in existence a short list of firms to which the troubles were planned to spread.'

The Imperial strikers see their struggle as closely linked to the Mansfield Hosiery dispute. Their strike bulletin refers to the strikes which followed it: by black workers at Harwood Cash, E. Jaffe, STC, Artid Plastics, Perivale Gutterman and Art Castings.

'We pay tribute to the Asian workers of Mansfield Hosiery who beat out a path of determined and consistent struggle for black workers in Britain,' says the bulletin.

The strikers are equally firm in their desire to achieve unity with the white workers, of whom 40, out of 500, support the strike. The strike committee has issued a leaflet appealing for unity, '... our fight is for ALL workers, men and women, black and white ...' it says.

The Imperial strikers must receive national support for their demonstration this Sunday. T&GWU militants everywhere must insist that the leadership make the strike official, and back these courageous workers who are fighting for basic trade union principles.

# HACKNEY BACKS WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER CAMPAIGN

The Working Women's Charter, drawn up by the London Trades Council in March, is proving to be an effective means of raising within the labour movement the issues confronting women at work.

The Charter has already been adopted by a number of trades councils and union branches, and has become the basis for organising local activities in several areas.

The most extensive plans so far have come from Hackney Trades Council, which will be holding a Charter conference in September. A series of local public meetings are planned as a build-up to the conference. These meetings are projected as forums for discussion on such topics as equal pay and opportunities, prices, and nursery and health facilities.

Meanwhile, a questionnaire has been drawn up for circulation to shop stewards' committees, inquiring about women's pay and conditions and what the unions have done to improve them. Hackney Wick has been chosen as an area for particular attention, and an investigation is to be carried out into the situation of women workers in the factories, hospitals, and schools in the locality.

Jane Leggett, a Hackney teacher who first raised the Charter on the trades council, told *Red Weekly* that there was some opposition at first from a few deleg-

ates to the inclusion of the demand for free abortion and contraception.

'But the chairman insisted that it remain. He argued that it would alienate some people but this was all the more reason for including it, and adding an explanatory note to the Charter about how women's situation at work must be taken up in the context of their role in the family.'

'From the initial idea of a single public meeting we've progressed to a programme of activities which will involve mass leafleting and publicity. The ideas were drawn up by the women on the trades council, and they have the full backing of the council.'

'I spoke at Hackney's May Day rally, and afterwards about 50 women said they were willing to help. We are particularly anxious to reach the women, many of them immigrants, who work in the tailoring sweat-shops, and we have asked Hackney Anti-Racism Committee, women's centres, tenants associations, and Under-5s groups to be involved in the campaign around the Charter. We have speakers available to explain the Charter to trade union branches and other organisations.'

The next meeting of the Working Women's Charter Group is on Saturday, 18 May, at 11 am in room 3c, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. Minutes and details of future meetings from: Linda Smith, 97 Caledonian Road, London N1.

# NIRC CRUMBLES UNDER ENGINEERS' HAMMER

## 'Scanlon's action has legitimised the notion of a national strike'

LAST week's national engineering strike against the NIRC was the first such all-out stoppage in the industry since 1957.

Why did the Executive Council suddenly decide to launch such a struggle—just a few weeks before the Industrial Relations Act is due to be repealed?

Scanlon's decision was a result of the mounting problems of the AUEW bureaucracy. The refusal of the leadership to fight for the national wage claim when the Tories were forcing a confrontation with the working class, and the complete sell-out at the National Committee, threatened to lose them the confidence of the militants, who elected Scanlon to defend them against the right-wing.

A militant stand against the NIRC was the means adopted to try and retain this confidence. So, when Donaldson decided to force a confrontation with the union, Scanlon had no choice but to call for all-out strike action. A capitulation to the NIRC in the same week as the sell-out on the claim would have

damaged the relationship between the bureaucracy and the militants beyond repair. Even some of the right-wing delegates at the NC understood this.

## CLIMB DOWN

The fact that Donaldson climbed down after less than 24 hours shows that even greater gains could have been made if the advantage had been pressed home. The engineers could have forced the NIRC to sweep the Industrial Relations Act off the statute books there and then.

If the strike had been made into the launching pad for a general strike to smash the capitalist counter-offensive, the repayment of all previous NIRC fines, the release of the Shrewsbury 6, the repeal of

Phase 3, and legislation to protect union funds and the right to picket, could have been forced out of the Labour Government.

But Scanlon never wanted the strike in the first place. Despite the weeks of warning given by Donaldson, no preparations were made, not even a statement that strike action would be taken.

Within the engineering industry the balance of forces has now been shifted in favour of the militants. Many, many workers will be asking why they were pissing around with one day stoppages when the kind of action taken last week could have stopped the Industrial Relations Act when it was still a Bill. And why was the employers' miserable offer accepted after two weeks of an overtime ban, when the Union obviously had the power to win much more?

## NATIONAL STRIKE

Scanlon's action has legitimised the notion of a national strike. When IMG militants in the AUEW argued for an all-out stoppage, not only against the NIRC, but for the national claim as well, this was



The strike may only have lasted for one day, but the police were quick to move in all the same. Four pickets were arrested outside the Ford plant in Dagenham.

rejected by Scanlon and Co. They argued that the support of the membership for a national strike could only be built up gradually, through limited action.

When the next pay claim is adopted later this year, how many militants will believe the same old rubbish? The strike has planted a time bomb underneath the bureaucracy and the 'social contract'.

The *Morning Star* hailed the strike as a great triumph. But before the strike the Communist Party condemned those who advocated such action. During the last one-day stoppage, CP militant Cyril Morton, convenor of the Shadlows' factory in Sheffield, said that those who advocated such action without long and careful preparation were living in cloud-cuckoo land. Now Scanlon is a hero for doing just that!

No doubt the CP will argue that their confidence in Hughie was justified all along. But the test will come when Scanlon starts to argue for 'moderation' in the next wage claim, in the interests of the social contract.

If the CP opposes holding back on wage demands, then they should

say so—and warn the membership about the danger of a sell-out by Scanlon and the leadership.

The next battle for the engineers will be to ensure that local settlements put at least the full national increase into the pay-packet. The employers will try to erode the rise, by consolidating bonus and other payments.

This battle should centre around demands for:

- \* An across-the-board increase of at least £3.50 per week throughout the industry.
- \* A 35 hour week and 4 weeks paid holiday (as originally demanded in the national claim).
- \* Larger increases for women and abolition of special 'women's grades'.

\* All rises to be fully protected against inflation by threshold agreements with the 'threshold' set at 0 (a sliding scale of wages).

The first lesson of the recent victory is that these local struggles should be centralised as effectively as possible on a national level. The recall of the National Conference of convenors which has already met twice in Manchester is the first step towards achieving this.

IN ALL THEIR PROPOSALS SINCE THE ELECTION, THE TUC AND THE Labour Government have made it clear, in practice, that they want the working class to bear the brunt of the economic crisis of capitalism.

Practically the first thing that the TUC did after Labour took office was to accept Phase 3. A circular sent out by TUC General Secretary Len Murray on wages said: 'The general pattern of settlements which has been established in recent months should continue for the present period.'

But, because of the retreat of the trade union leaders, all important wage settlements, with the exception of the miners', had been within the limits imposed under Phase 3. Therefore what the TUC is actually saying is that the policy laid down by the Tories must now be accepted. Murray spelt this out even more clearly at the conference of the white collar union APEX when he said, 'There will be no more special cases'.

What is more the Labour Government has been prepared to back this position up with vicious action. Foot's refusal of the just demand of the NALGO workers, supported even by sections of the ruling class, for an increase in their London allowance is a good example.

### FALLING STANDARDS

The future looks no better. The TUC is calling for 'reasonable' wage claims, which will only allow most workers to keep up with the cost of living. But in practice they are not even prepared to fight for this moderate aim. As we shall see, merely to keep up with the increase in prices, workers will need a wage increase of around 25% this year. The TUC is not suggesting anything like that sort of increase at all.

The official justification for Labour's incomes policy is that everyone will benefit from it. Minister of Sport, Dennis Howell, for example, speaking at the APEX conference, said that the Government had 'given concessions to the unions' and 'the unions must now make their response'.

The real situation is totally different. Something is taking place which should, if people thought about it, be seen as absolutely astounding. In an industrialised country, in the second half of the twentieth century, the crisis of capitalism is such that the living standard of the working class is actually falling.

This fall has now reached truly dramatic proportions. Even the working class consumption of healthy food is declining! Last year each person consumed on average 7lb less meat than the year before, nearly 1 lb less of fish,

and eight less eggs. This fall was obviously even more dramatic for families with low incomes. Meanwhile consumption of potatoes, beans, peas and carrots rose.



The situation is very clear. The falling standard of living of the working class, caused by price rises, is now forcing workers to cut back on decent food and substitute stodge and vegetables. Other basics such as housing, and so-called 'luxuries' such as beer and cigarettes, are being cut back even more drastically. Labour's tiny food subsidies, which are paid for out of taxes on the working class and protect the profits of the monopolies, are just pinpricks in this situation. The standard of living of the working class this year, by all estimates, will continue to fall. The only question is by how much it will go down. The *Financial Times* expects it to decline by 1 1/2%. Economists of the London School of Business Studies expect it to drop by as much as 5% this year.

This is the reality which cuts through all the Labour Government's sweet talk about 'reasonableness'. What Labour is actually proposing is

that the working class should allow its standard of living to be slashed in order to help the capitalists overcome their crisis.

### WAGE CLAIMS

Fortunately militants have shown at the union conferences that have been held so far that they are not taken in by Labour's talk. Some useful moves have been made on wages, at least on paper.

The National Union of Teachers has decided

to fight for a £2,000 a year minimum wage, and large increases all round. The Yorkshire Area of the NUM has submitted a resolution calling for £13-20 increases, with a top basic rate of £65. The South Wales miners say the NUM should aim for £5,000 a year for miners in the near future. Although the decision on a new engineering claim has been put off until later in the year, there are already resolutions calling for a £50 basic—£10 more than the average wage for a craftsman at present. The electricians' conference also delivered a rebuff to Chapple and Co. by demanding that the settlement reached under Phase 3 be renegotiated (although, with their usual contempt for union democracy, the ETU leadership is trying to wriggle out of this).

These demands are in fact very low. There must be no retreat on them. It is estimated that this year inflation will be running at 15-20%. With tax and so on, pay rises must be much

bigger than the increase in prices to protect real wages. The *Guardian* newspaper calculated that 'To preserve their real standard of living unions would need wage increases at least 20-25% above the increase in prices'.

This would mean that workers would need a 25% wage increase just to keep in the same place! To get an actual increase in real income wage rises of at least 30-35% must be won. For this reason militants must raise the demand for at least a 30% increase in wages and no retreat on the full claim. On an average wage of £40 this means a £12 increase.

But even with big pay claims put in, many other problems connected with wages remain. First, how are wages and wage increases to be protected against price rises? Second, how are the weakly organised workers, and those not in trade unions at all, to be protected? Third, how are all the demands to be fought for and obtained?

These problems are closely linked with the rate of price increases. Workers face a new situation when, as at present, price rises of 15 or 20% are expected. Very few are in a position to be sure of winning the 25% wage increases necessary to maintain their standard of living. Even fewer can be sure of winning the 30%-35% necessary to increase their real income. Under these conditions it is more and more urgent that the working class find some more continuous way of getting protection against price increases.

## THE LOW PAID

If the effects of inflation are bad for most of the working class, they are disastrous for the low paid.

Everyone knows about the terrible situation of the pensioners and the unemployed. But what is not generally realised is how many workers get less than the much quoted 'average' wage. The left-wing research group Counter Information Services, in its special report on the Heath Government, revealed that three-quarters of manual workers earned below the published average earnings.

### BIASED

Moreover the official cost of living index is biased against the working class—and against the low paid in particular. This is because it does not take into account how big a proportion of their income working class families have to spend on essentials such as housing and food. For example it calculates that only 8.7% of net incomes is spent on rent. This would mean that a worker paying £5 a week rent should be receiving after tax and national insurance—£60 a week. This is clearly ridiculous. Millions of workers pay £5 a week rent but receive nothing like a £60 a week income. This is just one reason why the TUC, or some other working class body, should draw up a real workers' cost of living index.

The situation of low paid workers is very dangerous for the working class. The employers and the press are continually trying to turn these workers against the trade unions.

Equally dangerous is the attempt by the right wing within the trade union movement to use arguments about the low paid to support anti-working class measures such as an incomes policy. Tom Jackson of the Postal Workers, for example, said on a television programme during

the election that 'We need an incomes policy. The prize must not always go to the strong'.

### RUBBISH

Jackson's views are, of course, rubbish. No low paid worker ever receives a penny because a highly paid group is holding back. On the contrary, it has been the stronger groups of workers pushing ahead that has pushed up wages. The *Financial Times* calculated that the real income (wages after prices are taken into account) of a worker with two children, earning the average wage, fell by 0.6% in 1972-73 (when Phase 1 and Phase 2 were in operation), will fall by 1.4% in 1974, but rose by 7.6% following the miners victory in 1972.

Despite this Jackson's views do to some extent reflect a confusion into which weakly organised workers can fall when the strongly

males in manual work (and what about women?) should be earning less than £25 a week. More than 12 months ago the trade union movement stated that no adult worker should be earning less than £25 per week, and in terms of its value today that must mean a bed-rock minimum of £28 per week.

### ACTION

Although Jones says this situation is 'intolerable' he admits that 12 months after the TUC policy was laid down the situation is still the same! He still has no proposals for action. All he can say is that 'somehow' the situation must be put right. This will get us nowhere. Action is needed to achieve a national minimum wage—a demand which can rally all low paid workers around the trade union movement.



organised do not take up the problem of low pay. Some time ago the TUC did show some understanding of this by demanding a £25 minimum wage. Jack Jones comments on this in a recent article in *Tribune*: 'It is intolerable, for example, that millions of adult

Jack Jones's figure is in fact too low. Two low paid unions, the farmworkers and the seamen, have already come out for £40 for 40 hours. But even determined action for a £28 minimum wage would be better than the present inactivity. By far the biggest section of the working

class suffering from low pay is women workers. Five years ago the last Labour Government promised equal pay. But almost nothing has been achieved. In 1972, for example, women earned, on average, less than two thirds of men's wages. In April 1973 the two million manual women workers earned an average gross wage of only £19.07. This is six pounds less than the old TUC target of a minimum wage of £25 for every worker. The situation has not got much better since either.

### REACTIONARY

The failure of the trade unions to take up demands on the oppression of women poses great dangers for the working class. It threatens to cut off a massive section of workers from the workers' movement and split the working class family in two. These dangers can already be seen in the reactionary acts of some workers' wives in the Cowley dispute.

Of course, equal pay alone will not end the oppression of women. Free contraception and abortion on demand, twenty-four hour nurseries, and much more, are necessary. But equal pay is a vital step, and a serious fight for this demand will cement millions of women workers around the struggle of the trade unions.



For full protection against inflation : a sliding scale of wages

For £40 a week minimum

# THE SLIDING SCALE

WAGES are supposed to be protected against price increases at present by the 'threshold' agreements, which are permitted under Phase 3. These do give some small protection, but there are many things wrong with them:

- \*Less than 4 million workers, out of 22 million, are covered by them.
- \*They do not come into operation until prices have already gone up by 7%.
- \*They are based on an anti-working class price index.
- \*The rises under the threshold agreements are too small.

The *Guardian* newspaper has made this last point: 'Of themselves threshold agreements will

only provide complete compensation for the lower paid (who are least likely to be covered by threshold agreements!) For someone on the average industrial wage an increase of 40p for every 1% rise in prices will provide less than adequate compensation for inflation' (20 April).

The only real answer to this problem is a sliding scale of wages. This is an automatic monthly increase in pay to compensate fully

increase in the cost of living. The payment for each rise in the cost of living must be raised to give real compensation. At present, for someone on the average wage, this means an increase of at least 60p for every 1% increase in the cost of living.

Of course in some unions the right wing tries to use threshold agreements to obscure the issues. The right-wing Cumberland area of

*Times*. 'There can be little doubt that the impending implementation of the cost of living threshold agreements is now one of the major worries in Whitehall'.

The ruling class is even more terrified that the rest of the working class will demand cost of living increases. The *Guardian* has reported fears that, 'Most of Britain's 22 million workforce will now press for threshold pay agreements'.

Not much help is likely to come from the Labour Government. In his budget speech Dennis Healey, instead of proposing plans for extending cost of living increases to the whole of the working class, went out of his way to denounce them because they prevented him from increasing direct taxes!

## OBSTACLES

But, despite all the obstacles, the fight for real protection of wages against inflation is a vital one. At the moment the working class is on a treadmill having to run faster and faster just to keep where it is. Already people are falling off the edges as they cannot reach the 20 or 25% wage increases necessary to safeguard their wages. If this situation goes on for long the runner will become exhausted.

The fight to protect working class incomes against mounting inflation is thus a decisive one. Central demands in this fight will be those to:

\*Extend the threshold to the entire working class and all forms of working class income—both through including such a demand in all wage claims, and by forcing Labour to make such protection compulsory under law.

\*Protect all wage gains by fixing the threshold at 0 (thus making rises automatic for every increase in the cost of living).

\*Provide 100% protection by setting threshold increases at a minimum of 60p for every 1% rise in the cost of living.

\*Establish a trade union controlled cost-of-living index.



The demand for a 'sliding scale of wages' has frequently been in the forefront of Italian workers' struggles against inflation. Several groups have actually won this demand.

for every increase in the cost of living. Agreements along these lines, although not fully adequate, have been won by workers in Belgium and Italy. The question is, how are we to get from the existing threshold agreements to a real sliding scale of wages?

## EXTEND

The first thing is obviously to extend threshold agreements to the whole of the working class. A good basis for this exists. Existing threshold agreements will almost certainly be triggered off by price increases next month. Obviously those workers not covered by such agreements will see the benefits to be gained.

In all further agreements the 'threshold' must be pushed downward from 7% to 0% so that compensation is received for every

the NUM, for example, is proposing that instead of a big wage increase the miners should ask for a three year contract and a threshold agreement. But this type of trick is easily dealt with by insisting on big wage demands in addition to the demand for cost of living clauses, and the maintenance of yearly contracts. The manoeuvres of the right can be easily exposed and are now far less of a danger than the threat of the working class becoming exhausted from having to run faster and faster to stay in the same place.

## TERRIFIED

We should be under no illusions that this will be an easy programme to win. The ruling class is already complaining about the cost of the present, inadequate threshold agreements and is trying to scrap them. According to the *Financial*

going to be needed in the struggle.

Even before the big struggles break out in the autumn or spring there are many steps which militants can take. The demand for a sliding scale of wages can be pushed forward at every union conference and in every local wages struggle. Engineering workers are going to be engaged in hundreds of local negotiations during the summer. In every one the demand for a sliding scale, a 'nil-norm' threshold, should be put forward. Immediate action is also possible on equal pay. Thirty two per cent of the work force in engineering are women.

Local organisations of the working class movement can also take the initiative. Hackney Trades Council, for example, is calling a conference, on the situation of working women in which equal pay will be a big issue. The London Trades Council's 'Working Women's Charter'

demands.

The strength of the big battalions of the working class must be brought into the struggle to gain demands such as a national minimum wage for the weakly organised. For such a gain can only be won from the employers if they fear a response from the working class as a whole.

## OPPRESSED

In fact, many sections of the population already look to the trade unions to protect their interests. It was very significant, for example, that when the pensioners held their first demonstration last year they marched to the TUC. Jack Jones and Len Murray, for all their other weaknesses, also had the right line when they threatened strike action if pensions were not raised.

employers. This is vitally necessary when, as we have seen, the capitalists are trying to isolate the trade unions.

All the demands which have been discussed—a sliding scale of wages, equal pay for women, a national minimum wage—are exactly the type of demand which could rally the mass of the population. Not only the organised workers, but the 12 million who are not in unions as well, would see the trade union movement as their defenders.

Some militants think the decisive place to put forward these demands is to a Labour Party conference. Of course this is useful, but it is not the key thing. The experience of the last years shows that the real power lies in the mass struggle of the working class. It is through such struggle that trade union militants must fight for these demands against any Government. The fact that Labour is in office just makes this task slightly easier at present.

The trade union leaders want to avoid this. Jack Jones wrote in *Tribune* '... somehow wages must be raised well above the poverty line indicated'. 'Somehow' will not get us very far. What we need to know is *how*. The decisive thing is to win the unions to fighting for them.

Jack Jones and Len Murray unwittingly showed the way when they threatened strike action over pensions. This so scared the ruling class that every party in the election had to promise increased pensions. The same line must be taken on all key working class demands.

We do not believe that the ruling class or the Labour Government will grant demands of the type we have discussed unless threatened with a general strike. What is vital now is to adopt a fighting programme of measures, and determine to use whatever means are necessary to win them—up to and including a general strike.



can provide the basis for such campaigns.

But not all demands can be won at a local level. This is particularly true of those demands, such as equal pay and a minimum wage, which affect poorly organised workers. National action is needed to achieve these

This is just what the organised working class should do—use its strength to gain important demands for all the oppressed sections of the population. By this means it can win over the mass of the population to the side of the organised working class and isolate the

# RESIST the CRISIS

## PROGRAMME FOR ACTION

THERE should be no illusions that the measures which are needed to protect working class living standards are going to be won easily. Capitalism is in a tremendous economic crisis. It is trying to take things away from the working class—not dish them out.

The ruling class has already shown great willingness to use the police and tough tactics. The eviction of workers involved in the Strachan's occupation, and the victimisation of Cowley shop steward Alan Thornett are only the most recent examples of this.

All the tactics developed by the working class in recent years—occupation-strikes, strike committees, flying pickets, etc.—are

**alan jones**

Equal pay for women

For an immediate 30% increase in wages

# TROOPS OUT

## a big breakthrough

The Troops Out Movement conference last Saturday (5 May), marked an impressive new departure in British politics.

The Collegiate Theatre was packed with over 600 people. Fourteen trades councils were officially represented, along with 29 trade union branches, and 47 students unions and socialist societies. Another eighty delegates attended from left-wing womens', and claimants' organisations.

### INFORMATION

The speakers crammed an impressive amount of information into the time available. Jonathan Rosenhead, Jack Dromey and Fred Halliday revealed an expert knowledge of the techniques of military and legal repression, and Eamonn McCann and John McGuffin spoke with a direct knowledge of the struggle in Ireland.

Bridie Dodds, from Andersonstown in Belfast, received a warm reception for her matter-of-fact description of life under the heel of the British Army. When asked if she encouraged her children to stone the troops she replied: 'No I don't encourage them—I don't have to'.

A high point was the speech by Mike Cooley, former President of AUEW/TASS. He spelt out clearly the responsibilities of the British working class to the national struggle in Ireland, and pointed out that this fused with the interests of British workers, in the demands for immediate withdrawal of the troops and self-determination for the Irish people.

Gery Lawless described the political situation in Ireland, and replied to Jonathan Rosenhead and Fred Halliday, who—asked whether they supported random bombings—had dissociated

themselves from the IRA military campaign.

Lawless explained the deliberate confusion concealed in the question, and threw back the challenge: 'What random bombings? Where, and by whom?'

In response to Fred Halliday's notion that self-determination ought to apply to 'Northern Ireland', and not to Ireland as a whole, Lawless explained why the principle had no meaning unless it was applied to the entire people of Ireland.

### ACTIONS

Possibly one of the most valuable aspects of the conference was that it confronted such 'liberal' confusion, and answered it in the context of a discussion on how the repression in Ireland could be defeated before it is used more extensively over here.

One important step taken by the conference was to set up a working party to discuss the establishment of a Workers' Commission of Enquiry, into the Lennon and Littlejohn affairs.

Several actions are to be organised by the Troops Out Movement following the conference:

A Rally in central London on 12 July  
A mass demonstration in October  
A petition to be presented at the Labour Party Conference in October.  
(Copies were distributed at the conference, and are available from: TOM, 28 Lammas Park Road, Ealing, London W5.)

A weekend school on Ireland for 29 and 30 June.

Local campaigns and public meetings around such questions as Army recruitment, and the demands for withdrawal of the troops and self-determination for the Irish people.

The organisation of visits to Belfast and Derry.



The platform (l to r): Fred Halliday, Jack Dromey, chairman Paddy O'Connor, Eamonn McCann, Alan Sinclair

## BEHIND THE SECTARIAN KILLINGS

**THE bomb which blasted the 'Rose and Crown' bar in Belfast on Thursday 2 May, killing six people and injuring 16 others, marked the resumption of the sectarian murder campaign, one of the most gruesome aspects of the situation in Ireland last year. It also blew away the last shred of illusion that Sunningdale could bring peace to the shattered Six Counties.**

But unlike last year the link between the murders and a specific organisation is much clearer. On 27 April the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) published a warning to the IRA that their bombing campaign would lead to a resumption of UVF military action. This was five days

before the 'Rose and Crown' attack.

A number of the previous murders were claimed by an organisation calling itself the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), but there is abundant evidence that no such organisation exists. Statements by the UVF, the UDA and the Provisional IRA claimed that the UFF was really a front for the British Army's Special Air Service.

The People's Democracy newspaper *Unfree Citizen*, in an article published on 6 May, examined the UFF. It came to the conclusion that the various loyalist organisations had committed murders using this name, although the SAS had also used it on occasion.

The article cited as evidence the crudity of many UFF bombs—chemical fertiliser, with an unsophisticated timing device—which makes it impossible to give a warning.

Most sectarian murders have been of Catholics in isolated communities within mainly loyalist areas, while SAS operations have concentrated on the politically important ghettos like Andersonstown or Creggan.

This evidence establishes fairly clearly the existence of a loyalist murder campaign, linked to an increasingly effective and well organised political campaign.

### WITH INTELLIGENCE

The UVF's warning to the IRA was published in the first issue of their new paper *Combat*. Most loyalist newspapers are shoddy little rags, full of crude bigotry, and hollow braggadocio. *Combat*, in contrast, is well produced and written with intelligence. The warning to the Provos refers to them as the 'Provisional Alliance', the term used by the Officials, and calls on the Officials to drive the Provisionals out of the Catholic areas.

The UVF knows that the Officials are in no position to do such a thing—but the statement is designed to aggravate the friction between the Officials and the IRA.

The present-day UVF first came to public attention when it issued a statement on 21 May 1966, declaring war on the IRA (which had then

been passive for four years). The nature of that 'war' became clear when on 26 May John Scullion, a harmless drunk, was gunned down in the Clonard district of Belfast. Then, on 25 June, four young Catholic barmen were shot as they left a pub. One of them, Peter Ward, died of his wounds. This incident led to the imprisonment of UVF leader Gusty Spence.

### BLACKMAIL

In 1966 the UVF was a gang of lumpen psychopaths; today they are a group of politically coherent psychopaths. The clandestinity of the UVF has hidden from view the changes which have occurred over the last eight years—but has also enabled it to resist the British infiltration and internal feuding which has debilitated the UDA.

Towards the end of 1973 the UVF declared its opposition to the existing leaders of the Protestant community—backing Desmond Boal as the only leader with any perspective to resist Sunningdale. Like Boal they were willing to make a temporary accommodation with the IRA, in order to maximise the pressure against Sunningdale. And also like Boal, they wanted to defend the Protestant ascendancy in any future break with Britain.

Following the general election, the loyalists have found a new unity, and increased hopes of being able to smash Sunningdale and force concessions out of the British Government. They do not need to continue their previous policy of concessions to the Republicans. The murder campaign is designed to blackmail the Catholic population into ceasing their support for the IRA.

### LABOUR COMPLICITY

Legalisation of the UVF by the Labour Government has enabled its spokesmen to appear publicly, be interviewed on television, and participate in the councils of the anti-Sunningdale Protestant organisations. This can only increase its prestige and influence amongst loyalists.

Similarly, the moves towards 'Ulsterisation' of the war—and greater reliance on the loyalists to hold the line against the IRA—can only strengthen the hand of the UVF and the other ruthless organisations of the Protestant right.

Not only has the Labour Government increased repression against the Catholic ghettos, it has encouraged the loyalist murderers. Merlyn Rees and Stan Orme must accept responsibility for these latest innocent victims. The British labour movement can only cleanse itself of their blood by taking up the campaign for a British withdrawal from Ireland.

BOB PURDIE



Over 2,500 students marched through London last Sunday demanding higher grants and an end to victimisation by police and college authorities. One of the main slogans was: 'Essex, Shrewsbury is one fight—workers, students must unite!'

The demonstration ended with a rally in Trafalgar Square. Among the speakers was one from Essex University, who stressed that it was direct action backed up by working class support which had won the reinstatement of victimised students Will Rich and Ronnie Munck. Miners' leader Mick McGahey also spoke, pledging full support from the trade unions for the students' ongoing struggle against police violence and for a better standard of living.

## What's On

nesday 22 May at 3 pm in University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. Disco in evening.

**CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACIALISM** conference in Hillingdon, Saturday 18 May. Speakers include Mike Cooley (AUEW-TASS), Steve Lynch (GMWU), Ron Keating (Race Relations Board), V.D. Sharma (JCWI). Starts 2 pm in Theatre 'E' Lecture Block, Brunel University, Kingston Lane, Uxbridge.

**JUMBLE SALE:** Saturday 18 May at 2.30 pm at Whittington Park Community Centre, Yerbury Road, N19. Proceeds to Red Weekly Fund Drive.

**IMG GAY GROUP:** Contact J. Mills, 153 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds for further information.

**PRICE SISTERS:** Picket outside Durham Jail to demand their repatriation to Ireland—not to 'E' wing, Saturday 18 May at 2 pm; followed by rally at Durham University at 3 pm—main speaker Jim Murray (AUEW Convenor, Vickers Elswick) plus speakers from Belfast, the women's movement, and IMG. Public meeting Sunday 19 May at 8 pm in Bridge Hotel, Newcastle—main speaker Eddie Milne (Independent Labour MP for Blyth). Organised by Tyneside Ad Hoc Committee for the Repatriation of the Price Sisters to

Ireland.

**NOTTINGHAM RED CIRCLES:** Wide-ranging series of discussions based on the politics of the Fourth International. Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday in the month at 8 pm in the Lion Hotel, Clumber Street.

**BENGALI FRIENDS** in Europe and elsewhere, for Bengali books and *Loyal* (Fourth International paper), contact: Bengali, Mullvadén, Box 3274, 10365 Stockholm, Sweden.

**LIVERPOOL RED BOOKS:** Revolutionary literature—Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Eastern Europe, Third World, Ireland, Women's Liberation. 81a Renshaw Street, Liverpool Tues-Fri: 12.30-3. Sat: 11-3.

**HAYES RED FORUM:** on 'Racism', Friday 17 May at 7.30 pm in the Featherstone Arms, Featherstone Road, Southall (near Dominion Cinema). For more information, phone John Alderson on 848 4652.

**RED WEEKLY STUDENTS** Meeting with speakers from the Editorial Board, Wed-

# Brandt's resignation marks the end of an era

No-one should believe that the main reason for the resignation of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt was the Guillaume spy scandal.

Even *The Times* admitted that in another period Brandt could easily have ridden out the storm. But it was a convenient excuse for getting out, and he took it.

Behind this lay his understanding of the impossible crisis which faces European Social Democracy. His decision reflects his inability—like the good reformist he is—to face up to the practical consequences of this understanding.

## INTEGRATION

Willy Brandt was the greatest example of those right-wing Social Democratic leaders who flourished in the early and middle 1960s. At this time the aim of most

European ruling classes was to integrate the trade union bureaucracy through incomes policy agreements, 'National Plans', and so on. Social Democratic parties in government were tolerated or even encouraged by European capitalists—in Britain, Italy, and West Germany, for example—because their close links with the trade unions made them ideally fitted for this purpose.

But by 1968 it was clear that this policy had failed. A massive strike wave was rolling right across Europe. The capitalist class turned instead to a policy of repression and a strong state. It no longer needed, or wanted, the Social Democratic parties in government.

From this moment on, every Social Democratic party in Europe found itself caught in a vice between the upsurge of the working class and the new turn of the ruling class. The

social support of the right-wing Social Democrats, which had been based on their direct alliance with sections of the ruling class, crumbled into dust.

## MASSIVE CRISIS

This situation led to a massive crisis for the Social Democrats. They faced the prospect of electoral disaster if they remained on a right-wing course. Yet the only alternative—a sharp left turn—threatened to produce effects going beyond the bureaucrats' control. Both Mitterrand in France and sections of the Labour Party in Britain share this fear.

Brandt and the German Social Democrats were able to escape this dilemma for a long time because of the relative passivity of the German working class. But a series of massive wildcat strikes last year were the writing on the wall; and this year

has already seen the unprecedented stoppage by public sector workers.

The situation in the SPD is now as unstable as anywhere. The party has suffered defeat after defeat in the local elections this year. Under continuous attack not only from the capitalist class but also from that section of the party's base which has been forced to the left (demanding withdrawal from NATO, large-scale nationalisation, etc), Brandt became increasingly indecisive and began to suffer long periods of depression and illness.

## DEMOCRACY FINISHED

In his own way, however, Brandt understood what was happening to him. In a whole series of letters he wrote that democracy was finished, and that the only choices were 'radical communism' or 'fascism'. His reformism, of course, prevented him from

drawing the practical conclusions which flowed from this.

Brandt's resignation symbolises the end of an era. The last 'great' leader of an openly right-wing European Social Democracy, he will have no successors.

For on one thing Brandt was absolutely right. By the end of the century, if not before, there will not be one single bourgeois democracy left in Europe. Either there will be the barbarism of fascism and military dictatorships, or there will be the proletarian democracy of workers' councils.

Brandt rose above Wilson & Co because in a certain sense he understood the problem. But he could not face the consequences. Those others who cannot will likewise follow him into the dustbin of history.

JOHN MARSHALL

# SRI LANKA Land of tea and terror

Tea is a commodity which virtually every household in Europe regards as a basic necessity. In Britain, we know that the price of tea has remained more or less stable while most other commodity prices have rocketed.

Today, however, because the plight of Ceylon's tea workers has recently been highlighted, more consumers are beginning to realise that this stability is due to the exceedingly low price paid by the estate owners and employers for the labour involved.

## LABOUR FORCE

Tea was introduced into Ceylon in the 1860s by the British colonialists when it was found that the climatic and other conditions did not favour the profitable exploitation of coffee plantations.

But there was one problem. The native Sinhalese had a long and proud record of resistance to Britain's imperialist predecessors, the Dutch and Portuguese, and could only have been converted into a docile force of plantation labourers at a tremendous cost.

Hence tea would never have

become the principal crop and the real mainstay of Ceylon's economy—had not the British already subjugated the landless poor of India. This meant that they were able to force-march thousands of Tamils from South India to Ceylon, to toil in slave-like conditions in isolation from the rest of the population.

## BRITISH-OWNED

Tea is still Ceylon's largest single foreign exchange earner, accounting for over 60% of foreign exchange earned in 1972. About 30% of Ceylon tea is grown by companies with British connections, and 28% of the tea consumed in Britain comes from Sri Lanka (Ceylon).

British companies—principally Lonhro, Brooke Bond and the CWS subsidiary, the Co-operative Tea Society—are intimately involved in the growing, marketing and retailing process. A report on the conditions prevailing on British-owned estates—*The State of Tea*—was recently published by the charity organisation War on Want.

Two points in the summary of the report will suffice to expose the appalling exploitation of these workers:

**'HOUSING:** Workers live in 'labour lines' which are seriously overcrowded. Buildings are not regularly repaired and maintained. Roofs leak. There is no proper sanitation and drains and latrines are blocked. Building operations, however, are almost at a standstill because companies are trying to make maximum profit at minimum cost.

**'HEALTH:** Poor conditions have workers vulnerable to disease. Protein and vitamin deficiency, anaemia and hookworm abound. Companies are responsible for providing medical facilities. Medical personnel are inadequately qualified and drugs are in short supply. Workers have difficulty in obtaining hospital treatment in the public government sector.'

## 'STATELESS'

It is very difficult for these workers to force significant improvements in their living and working conditions by themselves, however. Three main factors explain this situation:

1. Their total lack of citizenship rights—over a million are 'stateless', which means among other things that they have no right to register for employment, no right to collect social benefits of any kind, etc.

2. The repressive laws enacted by Mrs Bandaranaike's 'United Front' regime—these inevitably and deliberately hit this sector the hardest and also make it exceedingly difficult for any other sections of Ceylonese workers to support them since they too are victims of the same repression and of the intensified exploitation that it is designed to guarantee.

3. The right-wing bourgeois character of the plantation workers' leadership—as represented by Thondaman, President of the Ceylon Workers Congress (the biggest union in Ceylon), and a prominent member of the right wing United National Party (ousted from government by the 'United Front' in May 1970).

## ISOLATION

Because of the geographical and cultural isolation of the plantation Tamils, and because of their inferior status, the majority of Sinhala-speaking Ceylonese regard them with distrust and suspicion, and many prefer to pretend they do not exist.

All too frequently, applications by 'stateless' Tamils for citizenship under the Sirima-Shastri Pact and subsequent India-Ceylon agreements have been ignored or refused.

The tea growing and manufacturing industry is the largest employer of labour in Sri Lanka, employing over half a million workers (ie 17% of the total labour force). Over 7% of Ceylon's 13 million people live on the tea estates. Yet 6.2% of estate



Bala Tampoe, General Secretary of the Ceylon Mercantile Union and a leader of the Trotskyist LSSP(R), addresses a recent public rally calling for an end to the repression and the rebuilding of a Left Movement

workers are officially unemployed, and the real figure is much higher because such a high proportion are 'stateless' and therefore not registered as unemployed.

Wages on the estates are the lowest in the country, and women's wages are the lowest of all. Child labour is widespread, as are the diseases associated with malnutrition and poor or non-existent sanitation facilities.

## REPRESSION

Most of Ceylon is now threatened by mass starvation. But on the tea plantations it is already a grim reality. The workers there have been worst hit by the general decline in living standards and rise in unemployment. The wage freeze imposed under the 1971 Emergency Measures is still in force, and every attempt to defend the living standards and right to organise of the masses is met with increasing repression and sabotage.

Today the trade union movement internationally—and particularly in Britain, because of the direct imperialist connection—can and must back up the tea workers and all the victims of repression and capitalist

exploitation in Ceylon.

This means not only demanding that the Labour Government set up an official enquiry into British company operations in Ceylon; but also pursuing action to force the Bandaranaike regime to end the State of Emergency, repeal all the repressive laws enacted under it, and release the thousands of political prisoners still held in the prison camps established in 1971.

Of course any decisive changes will depend on the successful rebuilding of a fighting Left Movement in Ceylon. This is a task which the vanguard of the Ceylonese working class has already taken up.

But right now it needs effective assistance—working class solidarity action, aimed in the first place at rolling back the repression and restoring democratic freedoms. This could make all the difference in helping to create the conditions for a successful struggle for socialism.

MEG MANSFIELD

For further information on Ceylon and details of solidarity activities etc, contact: Ceylon Solidarity Campaign, 9 Dennington Park Mansions, London NW6.

## International Marxist Group

(British section of the Fourth International)

97 Caledonian Rd., London N.1.



I would like more information about the IMG and its activities

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

# Italian divorce vote rocks right wing

The unexpectedly large margin by which Italian voters have rebuffed those campaigning for a repeal of the divorce laws is a serious setback for the capitalist class.

The strength of the major capitalist party, the Christian Democrats, had been swung almost solidly behind the campaign for repeal. They sought to exploit this issue in order to build a new right-wing bloc with a large mass base. Their allies in this were the neo-fascists of the MSI (Italian Social Movement).

But this scheme has been hit on the head by the mass mobilisations of the workers' movement, which played an important part in ensuring such a large vote against repeal. The coalition govern-

ment headed by Rumor (a Christian Democrat)—which was split right down the middle on the divorce issue—seems certain to fall.

In this situation the capitalist class will have to look for an alternative solution to contain the struggles of the workers' movement. It may well have to accept the prospect of a new coalition government including for the first time the Communist Party (which chose the aftermath of the Chile coup to announce its willingness for an 'historic compromise' with the Christian Democrats).

The possibility of such a development shows the extent to which the recent mass mobilisations have forced the capitalists on the defensive. Coming so soon

after the events in Portugal, the result of the Italian divorce referendum is a dramatic illustration of the new relationship of forces between the working class and the capitalist class which has been created on a European scale.

But such a situation cannot last indefinitely. The compromise which the Communist Party regards as 'historic' will be strictly temporary for the capitalists, enduring for just as long as they need to regroup their forces and launch a new counter-offensive. The consequences could well be a Chile-style military coup, for which preparations are already well advanced inside the Italian armed forces.

There is an alternative, however. That is to reject all compromises with the

capitalist class, and to build on the considerable gains already won by the mass mobilisations in order to build a movement which can get rid of capitalism once and for all.

It was around this perspective that the Italian Trotskyists intervened in the campaign on the divorce laws. In particular they stressed the need to learn from the recent strikes such as the one at Fiat in order to develop new forms of struggle for the future.

Next week *Red Weekly* will carry a long interview with one of our comrades who took part in the Fiat strike, providing essential background to an understanding of what has become one of the central arenas of the European class struggle.

# GUERRILLAS + WORKERS SQUEEZE SPINOLA

AS GENERAL SPINOLA puts the final touches on Portugal's new provisional Government, the struggle of the liberation movements in the African colonies and of workers at home continues to mount.

So far all the liberation movements have reaffirmed their determination to continue the fight until total independence is won. This stand has received backing from a meeting of the foreign ministers of the black African states.

In Portugal itself, workers are shaking off the fetters of 40 years of fascist rule and displaying tremendous creativity and fighting vigour.

Relations have been established between the various trade union bodies, and a common programme of demands drawn up.

These include the restoration of all individual freedoms; the confirmation of trade union rights, including the right to strike (a matter the junta has been very vague about); a free press, reflecting the views of those who produce it rather than those who own it; a forty hour, five day week; immediate action against inflation; immediate wage increases, and the establishment of a minimum wage; the reinstatement of all victimised workers; and the administration of all social security exclusively by the workers' organisations.

In the STEEL INDUSTRY (which is owned by the Champalimaud monopoly, one of Spinola's main backers) workers are putting forward a list of demands that include immediate honouring of all collective agreements, an end to all management-run tests for promotion (often used in the past to eliminate trouble-makers), the dismissal of two members of management closely connected with repressive policies in the past and the immediate reinstatement of all workers dismissed for trade union or political activities.

The workers are also demanding that the company's wages bill should be paid to the workers in a single lump sum—the precise amount subject to negotiation—and the workers would then collectively determine individual payments. Plans for paying an equal wage to all workers have apparently been agreed upon.

The management's refusal to grant these demands (using the excuse that the boss, Champalimaud, was in Brazil) brought the threat of an immediate strike. The workers resolved to occupy their plants around the clock, and special committees were set up to ensure total effectiveness of the stoppage and to supervise maintenance work

on machinery subject to damage.

Only the intervention of the Communist Party procured a postponement of the strike, and negotiations are now being carried on with the management.

A national assembly of RAILWAYMEN drew 5,000 workers to Lisbon last Saturday. The meeting elected twelve representatives to the railway company's board of directors, although it had received no invitation to do so. The workers resolved that the 'basic lines of company policy' should be laid down by their representatives.

Despite the decision of the junta to grant an amnesty, the continuation of the colonial wars has made most Portuguese deserters and draft dodgers think twice about returning.

A demonstration of more than 300 deserters against the colonial wars took place in Paris recently. Among the ideas being discussed by deserters' organisations is the drafting of a collective statement refusing to serve in the colonial wars which all returning deserters would sign, and the organisation of deserters to report to their barracks in a group in order to present this statement.

Spinola, even when he dons his new hat as Portugal's President, will face big problems trying to satisfy his capitalist backers. A direct confrontation with the popular movement the coup has unleashed could soon be on the cards. The presence of the Communist Party in the provisional Government (CP General Secretary, Alvaro Cunhal will be a Minister without portfolio, and another CP member will be Minister of Labour) is designed to overcome this problem.

But even the CP may be unable to tame this tiger. It is then that Portuguese revolutionaries will face the decisive test. Their ability to lead the mass movement towards the creation of a workers' and peasant Portugal, based on the new organs of proletarian democracy that are springing spontaneously from the mass struggle, could alter the entire political face of Europe.

Carl Owen



The Portuguese Trotskyists of the LCI (seen in demonstration above) are still small in number. But they can be relied upon to play an increasingly important role as the struggle for a socialist Portugal develops.

## India: troops scab - workers jailed

Over 6000 railway workers and trade union leaders are now being held in prisons all over India by the Indira Gandhi regime, in an attempt to smash the national rail strike which began over a week ago.

Troops and scabs are keeping some of the more essential trains going, and unless solidarity strikes by other workers begin immediately there is every danger that the Government will succeed in smashing the strike.

The Government has been preparing to deal with the strike for the last two months. But the two major rail unions, the All-India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) and the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR), have paid scant attention to the real problems of organising a rail strike in a country the size of India.

The AIRF bureaucracy, headed by

George Fernandes, has been so discredited over the last few years that it has tended to see the strike primarily as a quick manoeuvre to salvage its position among railway workers. As the influential *Bombay Economic and Political Weekly* put it:

'Both the unions have spent most of their time in building up a cosy relationship with the railway authorities with a view to securing all manners of privileges for their office-bearers at different levels. It is this persistent neglect of the workers' interests by the so-called recognised unions which has been responsible for the rapid emergence in the last few years of the category-wise unions as well as for large bodies of workers disaffiliating themselves from the AIRF.'

Over the last two years the Government has openly and deliberately violated agreements entered into with some of the category-wise unions, such as the militant All-India Locomotive Running Staff Association (AILRSA).

The latter led a successful 25 day strike last July-August during the course of which the Government accepted

all its key demands. Immediately the strike was called off the Government reneged on its promises, charge-sheeted 1000 workers, and dismissed 20 strike leaders.

All these events showed how the Government was likely to react to an all-out national rail strike, and preparations should accordingly have been made. But the AIRF leaders were not serious. Throughout the negotiations they assured the Government of their desire to accept a settlement and 'avert a strike'.

With generals such as these the railway workers didn't stand much of a chance. The Government decided to smash the strike (and this entailed the arrest of even collaborationist leaders such as Fernandes). It seems from all accounts that they are on the verge of succeeding.

Only a display of massive solidarity by workers and students and the emergence of broad-based support committees on the Gujarat model in the major cities could change the situation. But for this enormous miracle of organisation would be necessary, and given the fact that the Indian CP is still hanging on to the coat-tails of Indira Gandhi, such a national initiative is unlikely.

Nevertheless, the rail strike has raised many important questions such as the question of armed self-defence, and despite the likely defeat of this particular action, tens of thousands of workers will not be slow to learn the lessons for the future.

## Chile blacking puts Labour on spot

'Every hour those jet engines stay idle is worth a thousand speeches,' a Chilean refugee told us this week.

'The junta can laugh off words. But it cannot ignore gaps in its air-force.'

Had the Labour Government had its way, however, the junta would still be smiling. The Cabinet had no qualms about going back on its Opposition statements and agreeing to fulfil existing arms contracts. But its plans have been shattered by the spontaneous class solidarity of the East Kilbride engineers in blacking repair work on the junta's Hawker Hunter engines.

Now they have been joined by engi-

neers working on one of the Chilean frigates at the Clyde side yard of Yarrow. There is also talk of similar action at the Scott-Lithgow yard in Port Glasgow, where two submarines are being built.

And the trade union bureaucrats, who promised much but delivered nothing in terms of concrete solidarity action immediately after the coup, have had no alternative but to endorse these moves.

With the official support of the AUEW, ASTMS, and NATSOPA, the prospects for a blacking campaign which can in practice render Labour's decision null and void are exceptionally good.

It can be done—that is the message of the East Kilbride and Yarrow actions. Now every effort must be made in local areas to check on other trade links with the Chilean junta, and win support from rank-and-file trade unionists to extend the action.

For make no mistake about the effectiveness of this action. It hits at the junta's ability to co-ordinate its repressive apparatus. And it is also the clearest possible signal to the resistance forces that

they are not alone in their fight, that they can rely on positive support from their brothers and sisters across the world.

Such support is urgently needed at the present moment. Hundreds of prisoners have already been sentenced to death or received long jail terms in secret court-martial trials. Now Communist Party secretary Lois Corvalan and 26 other leaders of the Popular Unity parties have been flown to Santiago to stand trial. Many may face the death sentence unless a world-wide campaign is mounted on their behalf.

One important blow was struck on Tuesday night, when hundreds of students and engineering workers bounded a junta spokesman out of a meeting at Hatfield Polytechnic.

Another focus for the campaign will be the junta's celebrations to mark Chilean Naval Day, next Tuesday 21 May. The highlight of these is expected to be an evening reception in Whitehall. A mass picket outside will reiterate determination to force Labour to break all links with the junta (phone 278 9526 for final details).

## Squatters re-take 220 Camden High St

Squatters have reoccupied 220 Camden High Street, the London shop premises used until recently as an organising centre for numerous working class groups in the area. They moved in at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, just three weeks after the High Court order obtained by property speculator Joe Levy had been carried out with the aid of over 100 policemen.

The reoccupation exposed among other things Levy's stated intentions to

put the building to use immediately the squatters had been evicted. The only noticeable change was that the lavatories had been destroyed!

But its main aim is much wider. Says squatters' leader Piers Corbyn: 'This reoccupation is intended to spearhead a fight against the present carve-up of Camden High Street. Levy's are out to make millions from the site by destroying homes and shops and erecting new office

blocks in their place. But we intend to continue the fight against property speculation.'

The reoccupation is the first initiative of the 'action-backed enquiry' set up a month ago by tenants, squatters, and trade unionists from all over London. Another venture in this campaign is an anti-speculation exhibition, which was on show in 220 Camden High Street as we went to press and is available from the offices of the Camden Tenants Federation in 18 Camden Road, London, NW1. Invitations to speakers and offers of support for the 'action-backed enquiry' should be sent to the same address.

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