

# Red Weekly

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP (BRITISH SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL)

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## WILSON SCABS ON THRESHOLDS

In the first three months of Labour rule prices have gone up by more than 5%, while workers' wage packets have only just recovered from the big cuts they suffered under the three-day week.

Little wonder, then, that hundreds of thousands of workers have gone into struggle over the past few weeks trying to force their bosses to pay out 'threshold' pay rises.

While workers have been fighting to keep their heads above water, the Labour Government has used every conceivable weapon—from its infamous 'social contract' with the TUC bureaucrats to the Tories' Phase 3 pay laws—to try and trip them up.

The one spot of relief workers have been able to find from the relentless wearing down of their living standards has been the threshold pay-outs.

These are scandalously inadequate—they cover only a small proportion of workers, do nothing for those on pensions or other state benefits, and after taxes and other deductions do not give most workers enough to make up for the rise in the cost-of-living. But even this miserly compensation is too much, according to Mr. Harold Wilson.

Speaking to assembled dignitaries at the thrice mis-named 'Socialist International Leaders' Conference' Wilson whined: 'But no one—certainly not the Conservative Government last October when thresholds were introduced—foresaw ... an increase of perhaps £4 a week for the many millions of workers covered by threshold agreements. Nor was there any adequate perception that many thousands of workers not covered by threshold agreements would be bound to resent the protection accorded to those who were, and would put pressure on their employers to secure a similar degree of insurance for themselves.'

Clearly Mr. Wilson would prefer to see millions of workers having their pay packets shrunk week-by-week. As for those who fight against this prospect—their struggle is dismissed as 'resentment.' What check!

After all, the Labour Government came into office with millions of working class votes, pledged to keep prices down. As Wilson himself told the 'socialist leaders': 'This Government has taken office on the basis of a new strategy for fighting inflation ...'

And how is this 'new strategy' working out? Well, Britain now boasts the worst rate of inflation for over 50 years, with prices under Labour zooming ahead at the rate of 24% per year! And this is after Labour has put into effect its much vaunted gimmicks for holding back prices—food subsidies, rents freeze, etc.

Having failed abysmally to do anything to tame capitalism's inflationary monster, Wilson is planning to feed him on a steady diet of workers' pay-packets, students' grants, and old people's pensions. That is the real meaning of his dirty little sabotage operation against the threshold struggles.

It is clear that workers cannot count on Labour to do anything about inflation. The only way to defend workers' living standards is by seizing on the present threshold agreements and fighting to extend them—to cover every worker, to cover state payments, and to pay out enough to give 100% protection of living standards.

Encouraged by Wilson's words, the bosses will launch a big drive to do away with the threshold agreements when they expire in the autumn. They will be counting on Labour's support.

The trade union movement must prepare its offensive now to defend and extend the thresholds. Whatever measures are necessary—up to and including a general strike—must be prepared to smash the bosses' offensive, force from them threshold agreements that really protect wages 100% (a sliding scale of wages), and force the Labour Government to break with the capitalists and make such protection compulsory for all wages and all state benefits.



One of the most important features of the Imperial Typewriter's strike has been the direct involvement of Asian women. Here women strikers leaflet the factory.

## IMPERIAL TYPEWRITERS— MASS PICKET CALL

The strike at Imperial Typewriters Leicester is now entering its third month.

Race Today has been asked by the strike committee to set up a Solidarity Co-ordinating Committee and a number of actions have been planned.

A constant picket has been thrown up around Imperial Typewriters showrooms, opposite Russell Square Tube Station, London. On Wednesday a mass picket has been planned for there and their other showrooms across the country.

### MASS PICKET

On 16 July the strike committee have called for a mass picket of the factory, and it is expected that trade union members, immigrant organisations and sections of the revolutionary left will turn out in force for this picket.

A demonstration has been set for 21 July in Leicester. This too should get the full support of the socialist and trade union movement.

All possible resources must be mobi-

lised to back these actions. They can, by their size and power, influence those people still at work. They can develop solidarity actions by other workers. They can help to boost the morale of the strikers and their families.

Trade union members should be putting down resolutions of support for the strikers—members of the TGWU must insist that the strike be made official. Donations should be sent from branches, shop stewards' committees, trades councils and Labour Parties.

To win a strike you need money and every penny collected can be used to aid this fight. These workers have been denied strike pay. The Social Security has used every dirty trick in the book to deny them benefits. By refusing to inform the DHSS that there is a dispute at Imperial Typewriters, the local union bureaucracy is helping the employers to starve out these workers. Financial help from the working class movement can prevent this.

### INTERNATIONAL ACTION

Imperial Typewriters is part of the American multi-national combine, Litton, which owns 1660 plants in 32 countries.

Litton also owns Adler and Triumph typewriters as well as Olympus business machines. Other firms owned by Litton include Sweda business machines, Vao Norstand Educational Publishing and the London Office Machine Company. The way to make the company bleed and give it is by extending international solidarity actions like strikes and pickets of their world-wide factories, and showrooms. The International Marxist Group has written to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International asking it to organise actions against the Litton combine in every country where it exists and where the FI has a section.

The courageous fight of the striking Asian workers is a battle for trade union rights. It challenges racism—inside the company and the union. It is a struggle for the rights of women. By its self-organisation it has shown how workers can fight the power of the capitalist firms, the reactionary union leaders, the press and the intimidation of the police and the National Front.

These are the reasons why absolute and unflinching support must be given to this struggle.

# IN FOCUS

## TONY BENN'S PROPOSALS

A major row is breaking out over the economic proposals put forward by Labour's Industry Minister Benn. The Confederation of British Industries and the press have launched an onslaught. It is reliably reported that Labour ministers Jenkins, Lever and Healey are attacking Benn inside the Government. Jenkins' Parliamentary Private Secretary, a little known scab called Gwynoro Evans, has started a public attack on the proposals by declaring 'it is better to sacrifice a policy than to endanger national unity at a time like this.'

It should come as no surprise to any reader of *Red Weekly* to find out that Benn's proposals are not a road to socialism. We analyse what is wrong with his plan on pages 4 and 5 of this week's issue. But socialists also have to understand that the effect of Benn's proposals on the working class is not necessarily going to be what their author intends. The employers want to blame the whole economic crisis on the trade unions, and the main bulk of the Labour leaders are spouting about the 'social contract'. But Benn is forced, for his own reformist and opportunist reasons, to point an accusing finger (even if a shaky one) at the real centres of capitalist wealth such as ICI, Courtaulds and so on.

Not only does this do real damage to the capitalist political offensive but it helps stimulate a very important discussion in the working class on vital questions of ownership and control of the economy.

\* Any economic programme which does not transfer the decisive sections of the economy — the 300 monopolies — into the nationalised sector cannot solve any real economic problems. The trade unions, which is where real power in the working class movement lies, must stop drawing up plans for running the capitalist economy, and instead draw up a plan for the nationalisation of the economy under workers' control.

\* Any economic policy which goes against the interests of the employers will be met with sabotage and resistance. This sabotage cannot be met simply by Acts of Parliament, but only through mass action to gain workers control. The demand for workers control of the economy is not something to be introduced after the nationalisation of the economy, but is the *only* way of securing that nationalisation.

\* The capitalists' books must be opened. One vital question which Benn does raise, in a reformist way, is the abolition of commercial secrecy. This must be taken further, and measures can be taken from the base of the workers' movement to implement it.

\* Nationalisation should be linked to the struggle against inflation by demanding the nationalisation of the most notorious profiteers — in particular the oil companies, the food monopolies and all firms breaking the price code.

\* Nationalisation must be taken up in the struggle against redundancy. The nationalisation of the building trade, where a hundred thousand workers will be redundant by the winter, and the nationalisation of the motor industry, where there will be tens of thousands of redundancies (and the almost certain bankruptcy of British Leyland), are particularly urgent campaigns. But every redundancy must be met with an occupation through which the demand for nationalisation of the whole firm or industry of which the company is a part can be raised. Similarly the demand for the nationalisation of all firms breaking safety regulations should be raised.

ber of AUEW (TASS) described some of the activities around the Charter and the growth of the Charter groups throughout Britain.

'What is important about the Charter is that it merges the traditional demands of the WLM with others previously taken up by working women inside the factory and in the unions,' explained Fiona.

She said: 'A real struggle around these demands could provide the basis for a fusion of the ideas and forces of both the WLM and the labour movement.'

It was agreed to set up an ad-hoc organising committee to coordinate future activity and to make work in support of the nurses' pay claim an immediate priority. By holding a series of public meetings and actively being involved in women's struggles the Charter Group hopes to strengthen its base and support in the Birmingham area.

Many of the people at the meeting were delegates from trade union branches. The WLM had sent out over 600 circulars to union branches with copies of the Charter. Now the important task is to build on that base and widen the support that the Charter is beginning to get in the unions.

decisions should be made by the increasing number of women workers involved in the campaign. The article gave the impression that women in IS do not take decisions on matters of political affiliation on their own.

The article stated that IS made its first appearance at that meeting. Although the IS did not come to the first meetings they have been attending meetings for the past month.

# London allowance

## The Pay Board offers virtually nothing. Strike action must be stepped up

After four months of stalling by Employment Minister Michael Foot the *Pay Board Report* on London Weighting—cost-of-living allowance—has been published.

The *Report* shows that those members of the NUT and NALGO who said waiting for the *Report* would achieve nothing were right. They had argued that only strike action would force the employers to pay up.

The *Report* offers a two tier allowance. This recommends a £400 allowance for inner London and £200 for outer London. The divide is an arbitrary four miles radius based on Charing Cross.

This division is a complete fraud. It would, if accepted cut the Inner London Education Authority in half.

## NALGO workers

THE INITIAL REACTION of the NALGO bureaucracy to the Pay Board report on London pay makes it likely that even they will be continuing the struggle for a higher London Allowance.

The union's national negotiators told the employers' representatives at the National Joint Council last Monday that they were not prepared to settle for the Pay Board's figures—a £95 increase for Outer London and £256 for Inner London—but instead wanted to negotiate on the basis of £186 and £216 increases for the two sectors.

The employers claimed that this was outside the bounds of the report and so negotiations were called off until 8 July.

In this situation it is obvious that it won't be the skills of the negotiators that will enable the London claim to smash past the Pay Board proposals. This can only be achieved by massive, widespread strike action—something the union bureaucracy has been afraid to do ever since they called the Islington branch back to work when it looked close to taking control of the campaign out of their hands.

One feature of the 'resistance' of the bureaucrats is their willingness to accept the principle of increasing the differential between Inner and Outer London. The claim is for a flat rate £400 increase, but the negotiators will only be talking around the £186 and £216 figures, accepting less than 50% of the claims for the whole of London and attempting to split off the more militant sections in the central London branches from the rest of the district.

Any strategy to combat the Pay Board proposals must start from the basis of a flat rate £400 increase to unify the whole membership behind the claim. The manoeuvres of the bureaucrats show that the only way this can be achieved is through the rank-and-file organising and leading the campaign. The continuation of the struggle makes it imperative for an all-London action committee to be formed from the local government and electricity workers taking action, and for this body to rapidly transform the campaign by organising the widest possible extension of strikes.

Alan Bennett

The offers are contemptible. Teachers already get a £118 allowance. After tax, the new increase would give many of the teachers, living outside the four mile radius, about £1 a week. Even Max Morris, the ex-President of the NUT for once got things right when he said: 'It's totally unacceptable.' Morris aptly described it as 'a dog's breakfast' and said: 'I cannot see how the NUT executive can possibly accept it ...'

He added: 'There is simply nothing right about it. The figure of £400 is wrong because it applies to a minority of London teachers—18 per cent in all. The figure for the other 82 per cent is the same as the sum offered by the employers 18 months ago.'

The same applies to NALGO as the teachers. The *Report* gives an eloquent

argument for stepping up strike action, not for calling it off.

What the *Report* does however, is give an argument for a London allowance for all those workers who have not had one in the past. Sir Frank Figgures, Chairman of the Pay Board, lamented that the *Report* would probably be used in that way.

Militants in all the unions should take him at his word. A struggle should be started now for a London allowance.

As well as setting up action committees, across-union organisations must be set up to bring together the fight of all London workers—those not covered by a London allowance, and those offered this paltry award.



Some of the NALGO members who picketed the meeting of the local government National Joint Council last Friday, demanding that strike action to win the national and London claims be stepped up immediately

## Teachers

THIS WEEK'S PAY BOARD report offers teachers a two-tier London Allowance system of £400 for 'inner' London and £200 for 'outer'. This contrasts with the present single rate of £118.

Edward Britten, General Secretary of the NUT, has been forced to describe the offer as unsatisfactory and forecasts 'tough negotiations' to increase the £118.

The NUT claim is £350 for all teachers. Many teachers have been expecting the Pay Board to hand out cash, and have been led to believe they would get nearly £350.

What is almost certain however is that the money available will be lumped together and distributed equally. This will mean teachers will get well below £350—probably something in the region of £240.

Teachers in at least seven schools have voted to strike on Wednesday to demand £350 for all, and no settlement without full democratic consultation of members

at union meetings in school time.

Wednesday's strikes will be followed by a lobby of the NUT Executive meeting at Hamilton House on Thursday, 4 July at 5 p.m. On Friday NUT militants will probably picket the Burnham committee meeting which will be discussing the London Allowance.

The main danger remains an Executive sell-out in the summer holidays. A combination of teacher shortage and the effects of the Tory imposed £180 million education cuts promises to make the coming Autumn particularly difficult for teachers.

A victory by London teachers is the best preparation for the Autumn. But London militants are conscious of the dangers of isolation and have demanded the immediate opening of negotiations on the national claim.

On Friday, 5 July the London Teachers Action Committee, supported by Rank & File, is holding a meeting at the NUFTO Hall, Jockeys Fields, to discuss the Pay Board report and plan for Autumn. Jim Donoghue

## LONDON RED FORUMS

The aim of the series is to provide both an understanding of the present political and economic crises in Britain, and the tasks of workers' organisations internationally.

The series will comprise:

1. Labour's Strategy: The present situation.
2. The Strong State, Fascism & Racism.
3. Chile/Portugal: Workers Power or Reformist Road?
4. The Crisis of British Imperialism: Ireland.
5. Imperialism and Armed Struggle in Latin America.
6. Women Workers and the Womens Movement.
7. Britain: The road to Workers' Power.
8. The Tasks of the Fourth International.

Every Tuesday at 8 p.m. in the General Picton, Caledonian Road, N.1. 15 mins. Kings XJ starting 9 July.

### WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER

A meeting held in Birmingham to launch a campaign around the Working Women's Charter was attended by over 100 people.

June Cave, from Birmingham WLM opened the meeting and explained the importance of the Charter. Fiona Fredenburgh, a mem-

In the last issue of *Red Weekly*, an article on the Working Women's Charter campaign included a quotation from Irene Breugel (not Brody as reported), spokeswoman for the IS. Due to last minute editing this was taken out of context.

It should have read that women in IS, or other political groups, should not take decisions on their own as to how the campaign be structured, but that these



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# THE FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM GOES ON!

## 'The only way to stop them is in the streets now', says Transport Union leader

Red Weekly talks to BRIAN NICHOLSON, Executive Committee member of the Transport and General Workers Union, Chairman of the Number 1 Docks Group.

What were your immediate reactions to the death of Kevin Gately in Red Lion Square?

Obviously I was taken aback and my first reaction was only human—I thought 'those bastards'—but then thinking about the exact circumstances I believe I was one of the first people to demand an independent enquiry.

The TUC leaders argue that we shouldn't give any publicity to the NF, that any publicity only aids and abets them. I don't know where they learnt their politics, to come out with this sort of argument. The one thing we have got to do is to expose the NF. We have got to do it in a positive manner, and in a number of ways. We've got to expose the leadership of this movement and expose their backgrounds.

How do you suggest this is done?

First of all there's got to be a real understanding of the positive line that the TUC should take on the National Front. I believe that the trade union movement, the Labour Party and the broad left have got a great deal to answer for in this respect, because for 25 years we've been in a state of 'no fear of fascism'. We can no longer hide the fact that we've got this bloody rotten cancer in our midst.

ing necessary? Should we allow fascists to hold open meetings in colleges and factories?

Would I allow the fascists to hold public meetings? Well in my opinion, no. We've got to fight these people with the weapons that they would ultimately fight us with if they were in power. Don't let's hide anything to anybody in the labour movement—what was Spain all about? What is Chile all about?

Don't kid yourself that they're going to treat us with 'freedom of speech' and 'democratic procedures' if they get to power. The only way to stop them, and I'm sorry if I sound undemocratic, is in the bloody streets now and not start whining about it in five years time.

What about the proposed NF/Orange Order marches coming up?

Well, I appeal to my colleagues in the TUC and in the Labour Government to ban these types of marches. If the NF mount any type of demonstration after the experiences of Red Lion Square and the left mounted a punitive effort to demonstrate in opposition to the NF, then the next occasion will be of such magnitude that people will be forced to take notice of what it's all about.

How do you think that we should prepare for these in the likely event that the Labour Government won't ban the fascist marches and the TUC won't mobilise counter-demonstrations?

If the Government doesn't ban these marches then how do we go about it? Well, I feel that the leadership of the trade union movement generally should be the established centre of any activities. But failing that type of organising centre, which has failed us so often in the past over the Industrial Relations Act and things of this kind, then obviously it's up to people like

We know that the Special Patrol Group were involved in the Red Lion Square demonstration. How do you view the increasing involvement of this sort of force in industrial disputes and demonstrations?

It's not increasing—they've always been there. Their activities have always been known to us, and I can go back some time in my own industrial career. They're at our bloody meetings, our branch meetings.

Who are you kidding? They're doing exactly the job that they're bloody well paid to do. The important thing is the political role that they are now playing despite what Government is in power. There are

the seeds of fascism at the end of the day—planted by the people who control this special section. Who are they? Who do they represent? They have been around ever since day one, ever since the Peterloo massacre.

Would you agree there has been a noticeable increase in police intervention in strikes, etc?

Alongside the reappearance of the extreme right wing there always looms the threat of regularised military intervention by the standing armed forces in industrial disputes.

But it also ranges wide from Ireland to Heathrow and back again. I myself was stopped three times the other day at Heathrow! The Heathrow episode was precisely an exercise to demonstrate their power in the event of an 'emergency'.

What should the labour movement do about this tendency towards a 'strong state'?

First of all we're talking about a leadership that isn't there. There's a smugness on the part of the leadership that exists inside the trade union movement who do not see the 'ugly head,' if I can call it that, of these forces being raised again.

What about the problem of physical force being used against picket lines as we've seen recently at Imperials, and at Chrysler last year?

Well this is where the labour movement is very weak. Such episodes are new in this respect—we've always had management spies inside the factories, but it's new that the employers have got people from the outside to do such jobs for them.

I think that everybody has got the right to physically defend themselves if attacked and then answer for it later. I've always found that it's those elements that disagree with disputes, that denounce them in the press etc. that are the first people to attack. But it's always the striker that winds up in the court and the bloke that did the actual attacking, provoking etc. is not heard of.

If the fascists mount a campaign in the autumn of this year then we in the labour movement, regardless of what group we belong to, must be prepared to go on to the streets, to demonstrate against these people. The lessons that are now being imposed upon the people of Chile must be learnt in this country. Simple as that.

The important thing is to get the leaders of the trade union movement to see the threat now and to organise on the basis of the threat now, and not in ten years' time.

If there was a meeting called to organise for the counter-demonstrations against the NF/Orange Order marches, would you be there?

I'll bloody well be there, and I hope that the people I spoke to over the past few weeks as a result of Kevin Gately's death are also there, instead of telling me they're sorry that they couldn't attend. They've got to be there.



'It's always the striker that winds up in court, and not the bloke that did the actual attacking' — at least a dozen strikers at Imperial Typewriters have appeared in court on charges of assault, but not the National Front thug seen attacking one of the pickets above



Dear Comrades,  
As the joint organisers of the demonstration on Sunday 16 June in solidarity with the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies and

the people of Portugal, we feel it is necessary to write concerning the statement by Steve Hart, from the joint platform of the rally.

We had understood that he would be reading a short statement, which had previously been agreed by the organisations involved in Saturday's demonstration against the National Front. In view of this we did not expect a statement which included criticism of one of our sponsoring organisations and felt that this was a misuse of our platform.

We have written to Steve Hart expressing our views on this.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for the

support you gave us on the 16th. We look forward to increased work together in the British solidarity movement for as long as it is necessary.

Yours fraternally  
Polly Gaster  
Secretary  
For CFMAG and Portuguese Workers Coordinating Committee.

**URGENT — Appeal for witnesses.**  
Any witnesses to arrests during the anti-fascist demonstration in London on Saturday 15 June are asked to contact Andy De La Tour — telephone 01-278 9526.



Recognising that the rise of fascist groups is taking place on a European scale, and needs to be fought as such, members of the GIM, German section of the Fourth International, mounted a picket outside the British Embassy in Bonn in solidarity with the anti-fascist demonstration on 15 June, and against the murder of Kevin Gately. They also distributed leaflets on the issue in Aachen, Cologne and other towns in the Rhineland.

## Meanwhile in Edinburgh

NEARLY A HUNDRED militants attended a meeting in Edinburgh on 'Who Killed Kevin Gately?'—a very high attendance considering that the police had been busy ripping down the posters advertising it.

Despite police harassment the meeting was a step forward in the growing campaign against the National Front. It decided unanimously to set up an ad-hoc anti-fascist committee whose immediate activities would include a speaking tour in the local labour movement with a speaker from Warwick University (where Kevin Gately was a student). A mobilisation is also planned against a meeting that it is strongly rumoured Martin Webster will be holding soon in Edinburgh.

'The blame for Kevin Gately's death,' a local Labour Councillor and International Brigade veteran, Donald Renton told the meeting, 'lay not with the National Front, or even with the policeman who murdered him, but with the Labour Government who have failed to carry out their duty to their class by extirpating fascism wherever it appears.'

## Police 'victim'

REMEMBER THAT COPPER who was supposed to have been injured in Red Lion Square and suffered a brain haemorrhage afterwards?

It turns out that it is medically impossible to directly link his condition to that Saturday's events. The type of brain haemorrhage that he is suffering from is the type that produces symptoms immediately it occurs—and the symptoms only appeared on the Monday after the demonstration. However, for several weeks before the demonstration he had been suffering from increasing

## and in Leeds

A SMALL SPLINTER-GROUP of the National Front, based in Leeds, misleadingly called the National Democratic Freedom Movement, suffered its first major defeat a few days ago. After the Labour Council had refused them a room to hold a meeting they attempted to hold a protest meeting on the steps of the Town Hall.

A newly-formed anti-fascist committee, set up from a meeting called by the Trades Council, made sure that the NDFM would not go unchallenged. They were rapidly routed and their self-styled 'leader' Edmund Morrison was pursued into a nearby police station... home from home!

The police played their customary 'impartial' role. Some of the anti-fascist militants were arrested and one has been charged with 'grievous bodily harm.' It is also reported that he was beaten up in his cell where he was kept for two days. All these comrades will need financial help for their defence.

Contributions should be sent to: LEEDS ANTI-FASCIST/ANTI-RACIST COMMITTEE, c/o 153 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds.

## Call from Warwick Students' Union

Warwick Student Union President, Pete Ashby, has called for a renewed fight against fascism and racism which brings together all sections of the students, labour and progressive movements.

Acting as spokesman for the Action Committee set up following Kevin Gately's death he urged student unions, trades councils and political organisations to organise in their areas and affiliate to the Warwick University

Action Committee.

Ashby said: 'We must establish a national network of Action Committees for information, mobilisation and action.'

'The call by this and other unions to ban the proposed National Front, Orange Order marches, can only be the first step.'

'Our job will not be completed until fascism is totally defeated and all people are able to live free from racist harassment.'

# MR BENN'S PLAN

The economic proposals of Industry Minister Tony Benn have produced a fierce row both in the press – as the cartoons reprinted here show – and in the Labour Party. Alan Jones looks at the meaning of the 'Benn Plan'.

When looking at any new Labour Party economic proposals probably the first thing any socialist does is to examine what plans for nationalisation they contain.

This is in fact the first giveaway about the real nature of the recent plans put forward by Tony Benn. They do not contain any proposals to break capitalist ownership of industry, but instead limit nationalisation to a very few cases (basically just ship-building and aircraft production). These are far too few to take control of the economy out of the hands of the capitalists.

Benn may claim that he is trying to use the tail of the public sector and State intervention to wag the capitalist dog, but the most elementary facts show the complete unreality of his approach.

## PUBLIC SECTOR

Take the size of the nationalised sector. It is true that half of all capital investment now takes place in the public sector – but this is more due to the collapse of investment in private industry than to the extent of the State owned industries themselves. In fact the output of the nationalised industries is only about one tenth of the whole economy and their workforce only accounts for about 8% of total employment.

In contrast to this, private industry is enormously concentrated and powerful. In 1971 the 50 top companies alone produced nearly half of all turnover. A mere 80 companies own two thirds of industrial assets and the largest 300 control 87%. In such a situation – which would not be fundamentally altered by Benn's very limited nationalisation proposals – it is the capitalist sector and not the nationalised one which must dominate.

This becomes even more obvious when you consider that the nationalised sector and the private sector are related at every level. To take just one example, the electricity industry buys its generating machinery from private industry, generates the electricity in

by Alan Jones

a nationalised industry and sells most of its output to private industry.

What occurs in the nationalised industries is virtually totally determined by what happens in the private sector of the economy. If investment falls and output drops in the private sector then there is no market for goods from the nationalised industries. If prices go up in the private sector then the nationalised industries have to pay more. As long as the capitalist economy exists there is no way round this.

The relation between the private sector and nationalised industries can be seen even more clearly when we look at the present functioning of the nationalised industries.

## EFFICIENCY

Contrary to the propaganda put out in the capitalist press the nationalised industries, even in an unplanned capitalist economy, far from being 'inefficient' are in fact far more efficient in the productivity of labour than private industry. For example, in the years 1958-68 output per man in British manufacturing industry, which is largely privately owned, went up by 4%. But productivity in the nationalised railways went up by 4.6%, productivity in the mines went up by 6%, in electricity by 7% and in the nationalised airlines by nearly 10%. Of course productivity is not the only,

or even main, consideration socialists take into account – for example keeping down unemployment or ensuring adequate public services are more important than just productivity figures. But these figures do show the lie about supposed 'inefficiency' of nationalised industry.

The reason why we are continually told nationalised industries are 'inefficient' is because the test applied to them is not the productivity of labour but the capitalist test of profitability.

This is quite ridiculous. It is only the insane economic system of capitalism which turns profit into a great god for which millions of men are to be thrown on dole queues, bloody wars fought and vast social convulsions gone through. The nationalised industries could make vast profits, if that was their aim, in no time at all. If they were allowed to follow the pricing policies of private capitalism – that is to raise their prices to that point where public outcry and sheer lack of buying power forces them to stop – they would show profits galore. But who would gain if the price of electricity were doubled and the nationalised electricity industry made a vast profit? Nobody.

## LOOTING

In fact, under capitalism, something worse than even simple profit making goes on. The whole economic policy of the nationalised industry is rigged so as to subsidise private firms. This is done in three basic ways.

First: sections of an industry are kept in private hands or let off to capitalists. Thus, for example, the manufacturing for the telephone system, a vast undertaking, is done privately. There are continual scandals over the prices charged by private firms to the Coal Board for pit props and other mining equipment. BOAC was forced to lose £1.3 million profit when its West African air-routes were given to private firms.

Second: the nationalised industries are looted through payment of vast sums in compensation to the former owners – who in any case had made vast profits previously out of the workers in the industry. For example, every year between nationalisation and 1972 the mines made more than enough money to cover their running costs. In thirteen of those years it made profits of over £20 million and in seven of them profits of over £30 million. Yet compensation and interest payments to capitalists are so vast that in most of these years, after the hand-outs, a loss was made. Even where money was retained it was vastly cut into. For example, in 1963 an enormous £72 million surplus was made. This could have been used to cut the price of coal, improve the wages of miners, increase investment, or all three. But instead a huge £50 million was promptly taken by interest and compensation holders.

Third: the nationalised industries are looted through being ordered to charge artificially low prices to private capitalist customers. The most notorious example of this is the way the nationalised steel industry for years has been selling steel to industrial customers at low prices, subsidised by the working class taxpayer. Many other cases can be cited – for example, the rebating system of the Post Office on company mail which, by 1971, amounted to a subsidy to industry of £18 million a year.

This situation in which the economic policies of nationalised industries are determined by the private sector is inevitable as long as the key centres of industry remain in capitalist hands. Even if Benn's proposals were implemented then it would still be the private capitalist dog which would wag the public sector tail.

## PLANNING FRAUD

Many right-wingers and leaders of the Labour Party oppose even the limited 'Benn Plan', claiming that the old socialist demand for nationalisation is now 'out of date'. They say that now industry can be brought under control without nationalising it.

Benn, whether he thinks that or not, certainly gives support to these ideas by the talk in his proposals of 'consultation' and (a key word this), 'indicative planning'. What this amounts to is an attempt to plan the economy without abolishing capitalism itself. It is totally unrealisable – as an examination of the so called 'planning' mechanisms of capitalism shows.

The first method which capitalist 'planners' have attempted to use to overcome capitalist economic anarchy is the method of simple persuasion. This 'technique' is a complete fraud. What occurs is simply that the employers say what they are going to do anyway, and the Government more or less just writes that down on a piece of paper and calls it a 'plan'. Even the economists of the capitalist class have to admit this. Top capitalist economist Andrew Shonfield, for example, has said in his book 'Modern Capitalism' that French economic 'planning' was mainly of use to, 'The large corporations who are interested in planning as a means of reducing the uncertainties of investment'. He added bluntly: 'The Plan reflects, in large part, their ideas'.

Exactly the same was the case

with the Labour Government's 'National Plan' of 1964. This openly stated that it was drawn up in the following way: 'Industries were asked what a 25% national growth from 1964 to 1970 would mean to them.'

With no compulsion in this so-called 'plan', what happens is that if the capitalists decide they don't like the plan they simply ignore it. Thus, under the 1964-70 Labour Government, the employers did not consider their profits high enough and therefore did not invest. As a result economic growth was less than half the increase it was supposed to be under the 'plan'.

If Benn's proposals were simply of this 'voluntary' type they would hardly be worth discussing. But let us give him the benefit of the doubt for the moment and suppose that he actually intends there to be some element of compulsion in his proposals. What will happen then?

## SABOTAGE

If Benn decides to compel someone to do something it is obviously because they don't want to do it themselves. Since the capitalist system is at the moment heading towards 25% inflation and a million unemployed it is not surprising that Benn might want to compel the capitalist class to do something other than what they intend at present. But all historical experience shows that the reaction of the capitalist class to any such compulsion will be very strong indeed.

While it is always calling for 'law and order', demanding restraint from the working class, and so on, the capitalist class itself is never concern-

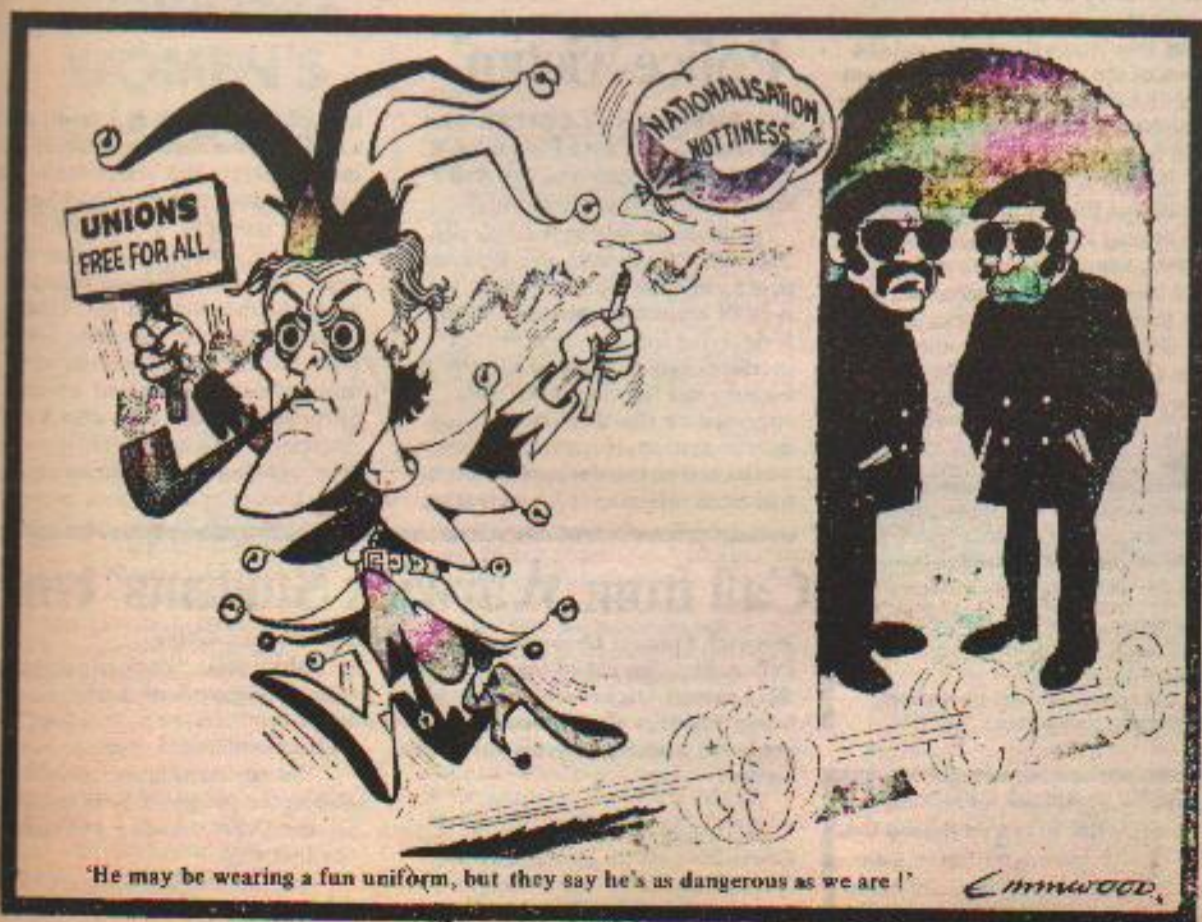
# HEAL

PRODUCTIVITY DEALS MEAN cheapening labour costs and increasing exploitation. For health workers in particular this has meant a severe and often intolerable increase in their work-load.

Faster turnaround of patients means a greater strain on nurses, ancillary workers, and technical staff. The work of both nurses and ward orderlies has become more demanding as the need for patients to have more attention increases. Their responsibilities have also grown as they more and more have to monitor equipment.

## COSTS

The swelling costs of running the NHS – exacerbated by inflation – has intensified the drive to increase productivity. The 1968 *PIB* report on nurses cynically commented that there was 'no overall shortage of nursing staff' and recommended 'improved allocation, training and utilisation of the existing workforce.' Their two reports on NHS ancillary workers recommended a productivity deal involving job evaluation and measured day-work. Their aim – to cut an already overworked labour force – was made clear when they recommended more representation of workers to cope with 'the delicate problems which will arise when manpower is being reduced.' It is the continuing



'He may be wearing a fun uniform, but they say he's as dangerous as we are!'



"There, there. Don't be nervous! It's just his way of cheering you up!"

Faced with legal attacks the employers will simply resort to greater disruptive and sabotaging efforts. For example, employers in Chile, under the Allende Government, were advised to hide their accounts, deliver poor quality goods to the nationalised sector, artificially increase their prices and so on.

Of course, some people may believe the British ruling class would never resort to such illegal tactics. Nothing could be more foolish than such a belief. The British ruling class has already shown it is capable of exactly the same tactics. In 1950-51 it sabotaged the nationalisation of the steel industry. Labour passed an Act of Parliament to carry this out, but the employers simply refused to carry out the Act. No information was given to the Iron and Steel Board. Technical details were kept secret. The company books mysteriously 'disappeared'. Technical experts refused to serve with the Government. The Minister of Supply was forced to admit in the House of Commons on 19 September 1950 that 'these people [the employers] decided to threaten, and indeed did carry out, a political strike... There is concerted action by a number of people for the specific purpose of sabotaging an Act of Parliament.' So much for the law-abiding nature of the British ruling class!

It is obvious that if the Benn proposals were used to go against the interests of the capitalist class they would meet with continual resistance and sabotage. One of the best signs of the lack of realism of Benn's proposals is that he does not put forward one suggestion for how the resistance could be smashed.



The Commissar is already organising package tours to Siberia.

ed with legality or 'restraint' when it comes to defending its own interests. The most terrible cases of this are countries such as Greece, Spain, and Chile. But less spectacular ruling class sabotage can be, and is, practised in hundreds of ways.

Every day the employers violate, ignore, or fiddle measures which they do not like on questions such as safety at work, equal pay, and prices. But they also use their colossal economic resources to attempt to prevent any measures they do not like being passed by the Government in the first place. This is done both through the activities of organisations like 'Aims of Industry' and through capitalist control of the press.

'Mr Cube, a cartoon-style figure sugar lump proclaiming anti-nationalisation slogans, appeared each day on more than two million sugar packets, on 100,000 ration-book holders distributed free to housewives by Tate and Lyle, and on all Tate and Lyle delivery trucks. Propaganda was inserted into material on the

clubs, schools and groups of soldiers in His Majesty's Forces. Stories or news items concerned with sugar, and sponsored by Aims of Industry, filled 15,000 column inches in 400 newspapers.'

Besides all this more than 100 newspapers printed comments against the nationalisation proposals by W. Bustamente - the notorious 'leader' of the Jamaican Industrial Trades Union, a scab 'union' controlled by the planters. Richard Dimbleby was hired to record interviews with 'contented Tate and Lyle employees'. Bribery was tried as well. In September 1950 a profit-sharing agreement was signed with the GMWU which supposedly 'served to support the contention that labour relations at Tate and Lyle could hardly be improved by nationalisation which, of course, would destroy the profit-sharing scheme'.



**MR CUBE**

When they feel their interests are really threatened, as they undoubtedly do with the Benn proposals, the employers will pull out even more stops. A good example here is the massive campaign carried out against the proposed nationalisation of sugar during the late 1940's and early 1950's.

An article on this campaign in the magazine *Public Opinion Quarterly*, published in the summer of 1951, came up with the following facts:

sugar refining industry sent out to 4,500 schools. Six mobile vans toured the entire United Kingdom, and more than three thousand speeches and lectures were delivered to factory and working men's clubs, youth and university organisations, women's

**DISRUPTION**

Supposing Benn was able to survive all these attacks and was able to get to the stage where he passed a Bill through Parliament and was legally ordering employers to carry out certain policies which they thought were against their interests, what would happen then?

**WORKERS' CONTROL**

The key to smashing the economic sabotage of the employers is in fact radical measures of workers control. In Chile, before they were stopped by the coup, the workers were already showing this by taking over factories, opening the books and organising production. All the resistance of the employers to the nationalisation of the steel industry in this country could have been smashed at once if, instead of dragging things out through the courts the Labour Government had simply decreed that the workers were in control of the industry, that they should take over the management, and so on.

Similarly in dealing with prices, the action of the workers at Allied Suppliers in Glasgow, who took industrial action against their firm's profiteering in grocery supplies, is a thousand times more intimidating to employers than the Government's Prices Board - which in its latest report reveals that 25% of companies are flagrantly breaking its regulations.

What is needed is a plan for nationalisation of the economy to be carried out by workers control, not a plan for hopelessly trying to regulate capitalism.

It is clear that militants can use the controversy started by Benn's proposals in order to put over real socialist solutions to the crisis. We will be doing this in *Red Weekly* in the coming weeks. But as for Benn's proposals themselves, they are damningly indicted on two counts. First, they cannot get to grips with the economic crisis because they do not contain a programme of fundamental nationalisations. Second, because they do not have the teeth of workers control of the economy they are unimplementable and unrealistic. The socialist way forward for dealing with the economic crisis is not contained in the proposals of Minister of Industry Benn.

# HEALTH SERVICE IN CRISIS

drive to boost the work-load which is a major source of militancy amongst health workers.

Hospitals are the most expensive sector in the NHS structure and account for 60 per cent of its total expenditure. For almost ten years there was hardly any investment in that sector. The limited programme for expansion therefore leaves little room for really drastic cuts. Community care is being put forward as the solution to reduce costs. Many well-meaning liberals and social democrats are confused by this policy. They see quite clearly the damage caused by walling up people in the vast, isolated institutions such as psychiatric, geriatric and mentally handicapped hospitals. Such methods often result in chronic loss of personality and independence. However, the present move towards community care is done to shift the financial burden away from the state on to the individual and their family.

Patients are ejected into the community to live on their own resources or made reliant on their families. Dire poverty, not care, is their lot. Governments - both Tory and Labour - have been able to 'hide' these problems in the community, away from the more exposed institutions. Divorced from the euphemisms of the bureaucrats, present community care is nothing more than a cheap option.

The present re-organisation of the NHS is another way in which the state is seeking to make economies in health expenditure. In 1948 Bevan instituted a tri-partite structure with separate administration of hospitals, general practitioners, and local authority services. The deficiencies from the point of health workers and patients were many.

**NEW SYSTEM**

The new system will not remedy these faults but will actually worsen the situation. The *Green Papers* and *Consultative Documents* which appeared between 1968 and 1971 were aimed to cut away at the idea of comprehensive health authorities and to exclude any form of worker or patient representation.

All members of the new Regional Health Authorities will be appointed and they in turn will appoint most members of the Area Health Authorities. There is not even direct election of doctors' representatives, let alone nurses and ancillary workers. In the NHS Act of 1946 certain groups had to be consulted before Regional Hospital Boards and the IMC's were appointed. Any 'citizen had the right to nominate any citizen, including him or herself.'

**COMMUNITY CARE**

Effective community care - a progressive policy which deserves the support of socialists - requires an enormous deployment of financial resources. Money is needed for housing, provision of special employment, home helps, home nursing, hostel accommodation, recreation centres and free holidays. Even the conservative estimates of the DHSS admit that there is a need for 28,000 sheltered workplaces for the mentally handicapped. In 1973 only 2800 of these were available - 10 per cent of the required number! Often such workers are paid purely nominal wages, or given 'spending money' of £1 a week.



The trade union leaders stood by and watched the ancillary workers go down to defeat last year—but now the issue of an NHS fit for the needs of the working class has been raised even more sharply by the action of the nurses.

Now even this limited 'interference' is removed. The entire emphasis is to be put on a 'sound management structure' - not surprisingly since the structure was planned by McKinsey and Company who are industrial consultants. The results will be a tighter control over expenditure and standards, aimed to save money at the expense of the patients and the health workers.

The Government *White Paper* on NHS re-organisation which was published in August 1972, indicates quite clearly the intention of continuing to levy charges

on patients. The *Paper* states quite categorically that the system of charges will remain. Schemes are now being put forward for introducing charges for everything ranging from doctor consultations to hospital meals.

**PRIVATE SCHEMES**

About one million of the upper income groups now subscribe to private health insurance, paying £27 million a year in premiums. This accounts for roughly two per cent of patients treated. Many firms are now financing private health schemes as part of fringe benefits for top executives, which also secures tax relief.

The importance of these schemes lies not in their size but in the distorting effect which they have on the health service. Private practice has undoubtedly had a corrupting effect on the consultants. Consultants have an incentive to lengthen waiting lists so that those who can afford to pay to jump the queue will do so. They impose extra burdens on nurses, other staff and NHS resources. The consultants then grab the payments.

The *White Paper* is adamant on defending private practice in the NHS, saying that the private sector can act as a stimulus to enterprise, development and high standards of service'. The reasoning behind this is the idea - an idea accepted by Bevan when he introduced the NHS - that senior consultants have to be bribed to work in the health service.

The growing militancy of health workers and the working class's expectations that it is entitled to an improving, not a deteriorating NHS, stand as the real obstacles to extensions of more charges and private practice. What is necessary now is to turn these struggles into an attack on the private sector and demand its complete abolition.

The nurses' fight for better pay and conditions also deals a severe blow to the plans of the government to cheapen costs at the expense of patients and health workers. It is for this reason that the entire trade union movement must take solidarity actions with the nurses and other hospital workers fighting to improve standards.

A Conference is being held on 27 July at the University of London Union to discuss the crisis in the NHS and the way forward. The Conference has been organised by the Central London branch of ASTMS and has been sponsored by seven other trade union branches. Details from Colin Smith, 18 Fife Terrace, London N1.

This is the second and concluding article by TOM WILLIAMS on the crisis in the National Health Service.

# THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS AND THE WAGES STRUGGLE

MANY TIMES in the past *Red Weekly* has criticised the International Socialists for economism, for failing to take up issues other than the wages struggle.

But what is now clear is that with the economic and political situation in Britain getting more and more serious the politics of IS are becoming dramatically inadequate even on the wages front. This is vividly shown in two recent major articles in *Socialist Worker*.

## INFLATION

In an article in the 1 June issue Tony Cliff draws a most extraordinary conclusion from what he calls the present situation of 'hyper-inflation'. He says: 'Hyper-inflation can become a locomotive drawing workers towards unity and struggle.'

But half a moment's thought, and the direct practical experience of every worker militant, shows that this statement is totally one-sided and therefore in practice false. Inflation can be a spur to putting in wage increases, but it also tends to fragment the working class between low paid and high paid, between the worker and his wife, and even between the worker seeing himself as worker and the worker seeing himself as consumer.

What Cliff is correct in pointing to is that the working class, for whom unity is a vital condition in any struggle, attempts to find ways of overcoming the danger of disunity. But this process is not spontaneous, and the whole of the working class, or even the majority of it, will not arrive at an adequate solution without any conscious interventions. The danger therefore exists of sections of the working class, even large ones, falling into passivity or even becoming prey to reactionary proposals on incomes policy and so on.

Cliff does refer to this danger at a few points in his article. But the purely propagandistic solution which Cliff gives is that of putting forward arguments which

## WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO CAMPAIGN FOR A SLIDING SCALE OF WAGES

show that it is capitalism and not the working class which is responsible for inflation, and which demonstrate that no section of the working class will gain by holding back wage demands from any other sections.

All this is necessary. But it provides simply an explanation - and that only for the few thousands who read socialist newspapers and discuss such questions. What the masses want to know, and therefore what the vanguard has to supply, is not explanations about inflation but practical measures to stop it or cope with its effects.

## RANK AND FILE

The second answer Cliff gives is purely organisational. He says 'a central role must be played by rank and file organisations which generalise the struggle.' But how are rank and file organisations to play this role? By simply existing? No, only by the policies they fight for. Simply saying 'build rank and file movements, without saying what policies they should fight for, is no answer to anything.'

What policy does comrade Cliff say can defend workers incomes, unite the working class in struggle, and overcome the dangers, as well as seizing the opportunities? He says: 'The way wages are won under capitalism is simple: workers in the strongest sections... win increases - then it is up to the rest of the working class to keep up by comparing their own wages with those received by the strongest and best paid.'

But this policy will not at all achieve the task Cliff wants it to. At the moment the rate of inflation is 15-20%. With tax deductions, a pay rise of 30% is necessary to keep up with such a rate of inflation. Few of the strongest sections of the working class, let alone the weakest, are going to get anything like such increases. In other words Cliff proposes a strategy which will protect the incomes of only a tiny fraction of workers while leaving the rest of the trade unions, let alone the twelve million workers who are not in unions or the unemployed and the pensioners, with no policy at all. And comrade Cliff seriously proposes this as a strategy to unite the working class in struggle!

## RETHINK

Someone on *Socialist Worker* seems to have been doing a rethink however. In the 29 June issue, instead of the task being for workers in the strongest sections to win and then for everyone else to follow them, we are presented with four class-wide demands. These are for: 1. threshold agreements 2. a 30% wage increase 3. equal pay for women 4. a 35 hour week.

Although key demands, such as a national minimum wage, are missing from this programme one might think 'better late than never' - particularly as two of the demands, equal pay and 30% increases, also appeared as part of the four point programme which the IMG put forward nearly two months ago.

Unfortunately appearances are deceptive. The most decisive of all questions on

wages at present, how to protect them from inflation, is not dealt with adequately, and no clear answer is given as to the best way to fight for these class-wide demands.

The key demand which the IS omit from their latest programme is that for the sliding scale of wages. The reason for this is doubtless that a couple of years ago IS rejected the slogan of the sliding scale. The argument given then was that it produced 'passivity'. This always was a stupid argument (in Italy for example various forms of automatic cost of living increases exist but no-one could accuse the Italian working class of 'passivity'). But now, in a situation of roaring inflation, the position of IS is not merely false theoretically, but is drastically wrong in practice.

The IS position is based on a belief that you can project the practice of the 1960s into the mid 1970s. When inflation was only at five or six per cent then most of the working class could gain, by sectoral struggles, wage increases which kept up with the rate of inflation. A few groups of workers may succeed in this in 1974. But the trend now, and one that will increase in the future, is for the working class not to be able to keep ahead of inflation by the old pattern of wage struggles.

## SLIDING SCALE

Of course, revolutionaries must be in the forefront of struggles for all wage demands put forward by the working class - even where these demands are inadequate - but revolutionaries also have to begin to introduce into the movement demands which come to grips with the needs of the new situation. The demand which is above all important is that of the sliding scale of wages. This always was a correct propaganda demand, but now it becomes an urgent and burning question.

Not to raise it will leave revolutionaries sliding along in the tail of events and not playing a politically leading role in them.

In fact the understanding that the old way is no longer adequate is beginning to dawn on IS - which is why the demand for thresholds is included in their programme. But thresholds are not adequate in their present form - they must be made nil-norm, based on a workers' cost of living

index and so on. (In fact they must precisely be turned into a sliding scale.)

The demand the IS raises is 'The thresholds now. Don't let the bosses stop you getting what you're entitled to.' But what about after November? Then no-one is entitled to anything under thresholds. Isn't it necessary to propose a campaign for thresholds to be extended and improved - in fact improved into a sliding scale of wages?

## GENERAL STRIKE

But as well as getting into a big tangle on the sliding scale of wages the IS also falls between two stools on the question of what action to propose to gain key demands. Cliff's original position is at least relatively coherent on this.

Workers do not achieve unity in struggle simply on moral grounds. Sometimes a particular sectional struggle is so important for the working class that workers will support it quite regardless of any immediate gain of their own. But, in general, fighting unity is created by common gain and common aims.

But Cliff's position is one of sectoral struggles without common goals or aims. Of course, on that basis all that can be called for is simple solidarity. It is just not possible to seriously carry through the task of unifying the working class in struggle on that basis.

But once you propose class-wide demands, such as *Socialist Worker* is now discussing, then the logic of the situation is very different. For what is the logical culmination of unified struggles for class-wide demands? It is obviously the most class-wide of actions - the general strike.

It is quite clear that in its policies on the wages fight the IS is vacillating between two different positions. The first position, relatively coherent but profoundly wrong, is that of Cliff's article. The second position - the one the IMG has fought for - is that, in addition to their work in the sectoral struggles, revolutionaries must begin to campaign for class-wide demands - of which the most important at present is the sliding scale of wages. But this latter position also has a logic at the level of what form of struggle is proposed. It leads to the demand for the unification of struggles, the extension of which is clearly the demand for a general strike to gain these class wide demands. A section of IS clearly sees the inadequacy of the first approach. But it does not yet see the logic of the second.

We know IS comrades are discussing many things in their organisation at present. One thing they should certainly discuss is the lack of coherence of line which their leadership is putting forward even on the wages struggle. The line they should adopt is that in addition to fighting in the sectoral struggle revolutionaries should push forward the line of immediate class-wide demands of the working class. The first practical application of this must be a campaign for unified industrial action to defend and extend the thresholds into a sliding scale of wages.

ALAN JONES



Ford canteen workers stood firm for a threshold rise - and won

## PORTUGAL: STORM CLOUDS GATHER

Storm clouds are beginning to gather over Portugal.

Moves are underway to roll back many of the gains won by the mass movement following the overthrow of the old regime. A left-wing editor has been arrested and imprisoned under military law for his uncompromising opposition to Portugal's colonial activities in Africa. State control over radio and television has been re-introduced. A new press law has been enacted, which lays down heavy penalties for failing to toe the Government line (banning, among other things, 'incitement to strike'). Just last week martial law, combined with the threat of court-martial, was used to force striking merchant seamen back to work.

All of these moves have been taken with the open and direct support of the Portuguese Communist Party.

In this country the Communist Party have started trying to whitewash the activities of their Portuguese associates. Last Tuesday (25 June) the *Morning*

*Star* carried an article which said: '... the forces of reaction came back instigating and exploiting strikes... But once again the maturity of the people has made reaction's task far from easy - postal workers who went on strike have returned after the democratic forces pointed out the dangers...'

It is interesting that the CP does not feel prepared to try and tar the postal workers with the 'reactionary' brush. But what they don't mention is that the means of 'persuasion' directed against these workers included a mob of several hundred who stoned the Lisbon central post office shouting 'Get back to work - you're threatening democracy!', and the preparation of a massive army-Government plan to break the strike with troops.

It is no wonder that the union leaders of the 'mature' postal workers denounced the 'splitting manoeuvres of the Communist Party and its allies' when they called off the strike.

This is the sort of problem that the

revolutionary left in Portugal faces every day. Their numbers are few, and their task immense. But their political fight is the only hope of preserving the gains of the mass movement, and carrying the struggle forward for a workers' and peasants' Portugal.

The Portuguese revolutionary left urgently need our assistance. So far our fund to aid the LCI (Portuguese sympathising organisation of the Fourth International) in its plans for a weekly paper has raised more than £50.

Contributors include:

Hull-£5.00	Hayes-£3.00
Louis-£5.00	Nottingham-£5.00
J. Sutcliffe-£1.00	L. Hodges-£2.00
C. Arthur-£2.50	Fred & Jo Cattle-£5.00
J. Holloway-£5.00	N. Adams-£5.00
Bath-£5.00	'Sympathiser'-£10.00

Come to the aid of the Portuguese revolutionaries! Send your donation

HOW TO: Red Weekly (LCI), 97 Caledonian Road, London, N1.

## WHAT'S ON

**LONDON RED FORUMS:** New series starts 9 July, continues every Tuesday at 8 pm in 'General Picton', Caledonian Road 15 mins Kings X tube.

**BENGALI FRIENDS** in Europe and elsewhere, for Bengali books and *Lalal* (Fourth International paper), contact: Bengali, Mullvadens, 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.

**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.

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

**FIGHT AGAINST RACIALISM:** Communist Mazdoor Dal meeting, Saturday 6 July at 6.15 pm in Slough Community Centre, Farnham Road, Slough.

**SOUTHALL RED FORUMS:** Every Friday evening at 8 pm in 'Featherstone Arms', Featherstone Road, Southall (near Dominion Cinema). Friday 5 July: discussion on the position of women in the family and at work.

**RED MOLES** - Internationals: First twenty Red Moles for only 50p plus 30p p&p; Internationals 1969-71, ten consecutive issues, only £1 plus 25p p&p. Limited supplies only. All proceeds to Red Weekly Fund Drive. Orders, with money, to B.E. Adams, 18 Corporation Oaks, Nottingham.

**FREE IRELAND FORUM:** in conjunction with Troops Out Movement, Paddy Prinderville on 'Self-determination and the myth of a loyalist nation in Ireland'. Friday 5 July, 8 pm, in General Picton pub, Caledonian Road, King's Cross.

**END POLITICAL TRIALS** in Chile - Labour break all links with Chilean Junta! Picket Cabinet meeting, 10 Downing Street, Tuesday 16 July, 12.30-2pm.

**SE ESSEX RED CIRCLE:** 'Ireland - why the troops should be withdrawn', Wednesday 10 July at 39 Kennel Lane, Billericay at 8 pm.

**FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM** goes on! Public meeting with speakers from Central London IS, London Communist Group, Camden IMG. Friday 5 July at 8 pm in the Co-op Hall, 129 Seven Sisters Road (Finsbury Park tube).

**WORKERS FIGHT FORUM:** John Cunningham on 'Communism and Social Democracy'. Sunday 7 July, 7.30 pm, 'Golden Lion', Kings Cross Road/Britannia Street. Second in series of forums on basic questions of Marxist politics. Details: 98 Gifford Street, N1 0DF.

**THE FIGHT GOES ON** against racism and fascism: public meeting Tuesday 9 July at 7.30 pm at 8 Falcon Road, London SW11 (Battersea). Speakers include representatives from Warwick University, IMG, and the chairman of the local Trades Council. Organised by Wandsworth IMG.

# WHY INDIAN RAIL STRIKE WAS SMASHED

The national rail strike in India, which began on 8 May, ended three weeks later in a severe defeat for the workers.

As many as 50,000 militants were arbitrarily arrested under various security regulations before, during, and even after the strike. Over 20,000 railworkers were sacked for taking part in it. The Government used every conceivable form of intimidation against the strikers — with police even preventing them from buying food, and raping some of the women workers. But despite all this, the strike could have been won — with a different leadership.

The body which launched — and later called off — the strike was the National Co-ordinating Committee for Railway Struggle (NCCRS), a coalition of various unions representing 1,700,000 railworkers and putting forward six main demands.

Of these demands, the most important were that: (a) wages of railworkers be brought into line with those of employees in other government and public bodies; (b) a bonus payment of an additional month's wages be made, again in line with the practice in other public bodies such as Air India and the Life Insurance Corporation.

Railworkers have been particularly hit by the effects of soaring inflation in the last few years. They also work in particularly appalling conditions — for instance, they have to work a minimum of 116 hours a fortnight. So it was not surprising to find that their struggle was supported by the vast majority of people (over 70% in one survey carried out by Bombay University).

This wide support, together with the railworkers' own militancy, and the strategic role of the railways in the Indian economy, together provided exceptionally favourable circumstances for a successful struggle.



Railway workers give enthusiastic show of solidarity — but they were eventually driven back to work, thanks to their reformist leaders.

But instead they were faced not only with a weak and vacillating leadership, but also with the opportunist wheeler-dealing of the so-called Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)). In these conditions, defeat was not surprising.

From the very beginning the Congress Party Government had made it clear that there would be no concessions to the railworkers. The Indian capitalists face a growing economic crisis which has increasingly forced the Government to abandon its usual populist rhetoric. Even the half-hearted attempt to resolve the food shortage by requisitioning grain from the big farmers and grain merchants has been called off. The black marketeers thrive while the working masses starve.

In this situation the Government is



Militant strikers take to the rails.

desperate to prevent the working class as a whole from using its industrial strength to improve its living standards. Even a small concession to the railworkers could have sparked off a wider upsurge. So the Government determined to do everything in its power to smash the strike.

The first step was to order the arrest of the rail leaders even while

by  
**Javed Hussein**

they were still negotiating with the railway officials, more than a week before the strike. From this declaration of war it was clear that the only way for the working class to halt this capitalist offensive was to meet the challenge head-on, by mobilising and organising the whole working class and its allies. But the CPI and CPI (M) simply prevaricated.

After talks with the railway officials had broken down, the NCCRS leadership voted to call an indefinite general strike from 8 May. But nothing was done politically to prepare and organise the railworkers and other sections of the working class for such a step.

### MASS MEETINGS

The most effective way of organising would have been to hold mass meetings of railworkers so that all workers could be involved in democratically discussing the way to win the strike. Preparations should have been made to counter the political offensive of the ruling class, and overcome the problems thrown up in any prolonged struggle. Other sections of workers should have been involved through the establishment of broad struggle committees. But none of this was done. In particular, no self-defence measures were taken to counter the inevitable police violence against the strikers.

Yet despite this the response of the mass of railworkers was almost total. Apart from the Government-controlled press, all the newspapers admitted that the strike had brought the railways — and with them a substantial part of the economy — to a

## Successful hunger-strike for Chilean prisoners

A hunger strike organised by the Latin American students' federation outside the Chilean Embassy in Bonn, West Germany, has succeeded in extracting new information about some of the political prisoners in Chile.

The hunger strike was called to demand that the Embassy issue a statement on the state of health of Bautista Van Schouwen, Alessandro Romero, Luis Vitale, and Manuel Cabieses, all prisoners under the junta.

More than 4,000 German citizens, including some MPs, went to show their solidarity with the hunger-strikers. Under this pressure, the Embassy press-attaché was forced to receive the hunger-strikers, and had to confirm that all these four were alive and would be committed for trial in the near future.

This is the first time that an official representative of the junta has admitted that Bautista Van Schouwen, a member

halt. Other sections of workers spontaneously walked off the job in solidarity with the railworkers. By the third day of the strike many militants were urging their leaders to call a general strike of all workers.

The response of the NCCRS leaders was typical. They continued to plead (from jail!) for a negotiated settlement. Elderly parliamentarians were sent to Mrs Gandhi to try to persuade her to make some compromise. Mr Niren Ghosh of the 'revolutionary' CPI (M) begged the Government not to adopt 'an unrelenting posture', assuring them that the strike was 'purely and simply economic'.

Of course both the CPI and the CPI (M) no doubt talked at the same time about a general strike of the entire working class. But they did nothing to prepare their trade union federations for such a struggle. Nor, for instance, did the CPI put the whole Kerala state administration at the disposal of the strikers, as it could have done.

### PROGRESSIVE ?

Indeed the CPI in particular having previously snuggled up to the Congress Party as the representatives of the 'progressive national bourgeoisie' — was extremely embarrassed by the whole business. By 15 May they were openly saying that it would be better to call off the strike.

The defeat of the railworkers

was thus ensured by the opportunist politics of the CPI and CPI (M). With the CPI this is not hard to understand. Its alliance with the bourgeoisie was too close to allow it to mass its forces behind the railworkers. When the leader of the Socialist Party called on the CP to withdraw from its coalitions with the Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, this was described as a 'provocation' by CPI leader S.A. Dange.

The CPI (M), however, always likes to think that it is a 'revolutionary' party; yet it, too, failed to mobilise its forces behind the strike. Was it that the CPI (M) put the sectarian interests of its own trade union federation before those of the railworkers (where the dominant force was the 'Socialist Party')? Or has its parliamentary cretinism simply rendered it incapable of preparing even its own forces for an extra-parliamentary struggle?

It must also be said that the course of the railworkers' struggle tellingly exposed the bankruptcy of various Maoist currents — notably the Naxalites — who peddle dogmatic schemas about the struggle developing 'from the country to the town'. The result of this approach is that the

### COMMUNIST MAZDOOR DAL public meeting on 'The political crisis in the Indian sub-continent'

Monday 8 July, 7 pm  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square (Holborn tube)

urban workers and their organisations have been left completely under reformist influence — leading to defeats like that of the railworkers which will also strengthen the Government's hand against the rural masses.

### REPRESSION

The outcome of the strike has allowed the Government to launch a widespread campaign of repression, sacking and arresting many trade union militants. These comrades must be defended without exclusion, despite the criticisms we have made of their class-collaborationist leaders, many of whose actions facilitated this defeat.

But at the same time every effort must be made, in the Indian community here as well as in the sub-continent, to build the nucleus of a revolutionary party which can lead future struggles to victory and the working class to power.

### Border Security troops patrol the silent tracks during the three-week strike.



### ARGENTINA:

# PERON: Main hope of imperialism dies

Juan Peron first rose to prominence after the June 1943 coup in Argentina. Unlike the normal military junta member, he had a very good understanding of how to try to manipulate the working class.

Peron used the conflicts of the Second World War, and the demand for Argentinian agricultural goods which followed it, to gain some independence from imperialism and on that basis give concessions to the workers. By combining this with 'leftist' talk he hoped to prevent the growth of independent working class

parties.

But in the early 1950s the demand for Argentinian goods, and with it the prosperity of Argentinian capitalism which Peron had utilised, began to decline. Peron turned increasingly to attacking the workers. However Peron could not satisfy the ruling class either and the military removed him from office in 1955.

### ECONOMIC CRISIS

Until 1968 the military remained firmly in control, but the workers remembered the 'good old days' of Peron. Under the impact of a new economic crisis things began to go drastically wrong for the military.

In 1969 massive strikes developed in Cordoba, Rosario and other towns, and armed actions were developed by the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and other guerrilla groups. The army was afraid that these two developments would fuse, as they did locally in the second Cordoba strike, into a mass upheaval in the whole of Argentina. The army's solution to this was eventually to allow Peron to return last year, in the hope that he could get the workers back under control.

But the 1970s are not the 1940s. Argentinian capitalism no longer has room to bribe the workers. Right from the start Peron was faced with a workers' upsurge. He dealt with this by an increasing policy of repression — most recently in armed suppression against the workers' movement in Cordoba and in the assassination of working class leaders. This has led both to the strengthening of the non-Peronist revolutionary left, and to deep divisions between left and right within the Peronist movement.

His wife, who succeeds him, is a representative of the extreme right of Peronism and will readily fall in with military demands for a harder crack down against the workers' movement.

Unfortunately the left in Argentina, while very big, has for the most part no idea of how to deal with the situation. The Communist Party in particular, following in the suicidal footsteps of its sister party in Chile, has simply appealed to the army to 'remain loyal to the cause of democracy and national independence' — which is rather like asking a tiger to stop eating meat and live on grass instead.

### REVOLUTIONARIES

Among the revolutionaries the strongest force is the ERP. In 1969-72, despite tactical errors, the ERP launched armed actions in a period when the Leninist criteria for launching guerrilla war — where the situation is passing through the upswing of a pre-revolutionary situation, but where the clashes with the ruling class are spread out over a long period of time — were fulfilled.

But events showed that the ERP had not launched these actions because of a clear understanding of revolutionary strategy, but simply for confused and militarist reasons. It was not able to adapt to the new 'democratic' conditions when Peron came to power.

The responsibility of the small Trotskyist forces in Argentina is therefore very great in a situation where the working class is still the most strongly organised in Latin America but where military repression is increasing and a drift to civil war capable of developing.

JAMES DOUGLAS

# Red Weekly

## Rank-and-file ban on private patients

# OUT YOU GO!

- say nurses

Members of NUPE have forced the new £12 million Charing Cross Hospital in Fulham to shut down its private-patients' wing.

Explaining their action, Esther Brookstone, local branch secretary of NUPE said: "We are trying to make a better health service for everyone - patients - staff - and that means getting rid of private patients in this hospital."

### SABOTAGE

Some well-paid consultants have tried to sabotage the workers' action by refusing to allow their well-heeled patients to be moved. However, the angry union members have given the hospital authorities until Wednesday night to move out all the patients. Unless this is done, then all services to the patients will end on Thursday morning.

Although NUPE has been making noises about banning private patients it has never got around to taking any action. In fact Bernard Dix a NUPE spokesman described the COHSE decision to introduce a permanent ban on private patients in NHS hospitals and on working with agency nurses as "potty". Dix claimed that a ban on private patients must "be co-ordinated, with everybody - medical, laboratory, clerical and ancillary people as well as nurses - keeping in line."

Fisher, NUPE general secretary did an agile about face on this. After the action by his members at Charing Cross he lamely admitted: "We have not yet determined a firm line of policy as a union on private patients." Feeling the hot breath of his members' militancy he added "but this does not mean that we do not support actions being taken at Charing Cross."

### EXAMPLE

The action of the NUPE members at Charing Cross has set an example to health workers throughout Britain.

Already other health service workers are acting, inspired by the lead from Charing Cross. NUPE members - at the St. George's Hospital Group - have arranged meetings at St. George's Hospital, Hyde Park Corner, St. George's, Tooting, the Atkinson Morley, Wimbledon and the Royal Dental, Leicester Square. The union leaders have dithered and procrastinated - nothing has happened. The rank-and-file have now moved - and shown the way forward.

They have also shown that they are fighting in the interests of the whole working class against capitalist attacks on the NHS.

Meanwhile COHSE - the union that

has made the most militant sounds - has caved in on the wages' battle. At a two-hour emergency meeting of the union executive last Saturday, it was decided to suspend industrial action in support of the pay claim.

This follows Mrs Castle's announcement that she would consider making an interim award if the Halsbury Report on nurses' and midwives' pay was seriously delayed.

Union general secretary Albert Spanswick claims that if the Halsbury Committee gives a date for its findings later than 31 August further action will be taken.

### BEST REPLY

Spanswick did some militant chest-beating and said "the action we have taken so far would be mild compared with the action we would take in those circumstances." This ignores the fact that the industrial action taken by health workers has been a big factor in encouraging sympathy strikes of other workers. Furthermore, his bravado about future action takes away the most decisive weapon in influencing the Committee's findings.

The best reply to the COHSE executives' capitulation has come from its members at a psychiatric hospital in Maidstone. Ninety five per cent of the COHSE members have voted to continue with industrial action.

J. KING



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Right)

Having been let down by their union leaders in the wages struggle, nurses and other health workers are now taking the future of the health service into their own hands - implementing Labour Party policy from below by banning private patients. No wonder the press is so upset - the idea might catch on elsewhere!

## CP vetoes solidarity strike

The Communist Party-controlled district committee of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers in Sheffield has taken the unprecedented step of over-ruling a decision of the shop stewards' quarterly meeting.

As reported in last week's Red Weekly a meeting of fifty shop stewards supported a resolution moved by IMG member John Wilkinson to take strike action along with the Yorkshire miners in support of the nurses.

One week later the district committee overturned this decision. A statement in the district committee minutes states that "insufficient time" prevented the AUEW from organising a day of protest. They have organised a rally as a substitute.

### SHAM

This is a total sham. Who decides whether it is feasible to get a stoppage? A meeting of shop stewards from factories throughout the district is just the body which best understands the feelings of the members.

What a boost it would have been to the militants in the factories if the district committee had given its full support for the resolution. When the members feel that they have the full backing of the union they are most prepared to take action. But the Communist Party does not think or act in this way. Its main concern is to keep its cosy relationship with the trade union 'lefts' such as Hugh Scanlon. They are scared what the Sheffield resolution would do to that.

As John Wilkinson explained to Red Weekly: "What is crucial to the CP is not this particular resolution. They see it setting a precedent of the district taking action without a ballot and without sanction from the national executive. This could cause real embarrassment

to their alliance with Scanlon in the months to come."

### SUCH SUPPORT

Kath Cirket, another IMG member and the seconder of John's resolution, added: "Whenever the question of the district taking independent action has come up at shop stewards meetings in the past, members of the district committee have always told us that it was unconstitutional to go ahead without a ballot or executive sanction. But there was such support for the resolution at the last meeting they were forced to manoeuvre behind the closed doors of the district committee.

"If we are going to stop them getting away with this then factories should put into action the resolution and campaign in other factories for their support.

"This is the way to prevent the CP from sacrificing everything simply to maintain their relationship with Scanlon."

### HOT AIR

Nurses who have been campaigning for joint action with the miners and engineers are "bitterly disappointed". A student nurse from Middlewood Hospital remarked "When we had our demonstration in Sheffield a month ago George Caborn, district secretary of the AUEW, spoke at our rally. He told us that we could depend on the full support of the engineering district committee. Now we know that this is so much hot air."

A staff nurse from the Northern General said: "The original resolution from the shop stewards was a big boost to the confidence of our members, which was flagging at our last mass meeting.

"Now we will have to concentrate on the rally and make it known that the real way forward for the nurses is industrial action like the Yorkshire miners are taking."

## NEW ATTACK ON CAR WORKERS

MANAGEMENT at British Leyland's Rover plant in Solihull have presented shop stewards with an ultimatum on speed up. Unless production is increased from 400-450 cars a day to over 700 all "surplus labour" will be made redundant.

This threat fits in with British Leyland's speed-up attack at its Cowley plant and elsewhere, and with the redundancy drive which last year led to 2,000 workers leaving the Austin Longbridge plant.

So far however the Solihull workers

are not giving in and other struggles (a strike over grading) have not been stopped either.

However the plant leadership is saying that redundancies can be avoided by 'persuading management'. But the crisis in British Leyland makes redundancies and speed up absolutely necessary for management. Any concessions on speed up now will not halt redundancy but will strengthen the management's position. The fight back must take up the demands for:

- \* No speed up - a workers' veto on the speed of the production line
- \* No redundancies - work sharing with no loss of pay
- \* Nationalise British Leyland and the whole of the motor industry under workers' control
- \* Immediate occupation of British Leyland plants if any redundancies are imposed.

## WOMENS MOVEMENT RESPONDS TO POLITICAL CRISIS

Nine hundred women attended the Conference held by Women's Liberation in Edinburgh last weekend.

An encouraging feature of the Conference was the fact that more and more women in the movement are responding to the present political situation.

A resolution moved at the workshop Women Against Fascism noted that the bourgeois myth of "free" speech has no relevance to the anti-fascist campaign and marked down the death of Kevin Gately to 'police brutality'.

The resolution called on Conference to 'unite with all others who are directly faced with the struggle against fascism (eg blacks and the trade union movement) and to actively oppose fascism by whatever means necessary wherever it arises, especially at meetings, rallies, etc of the National Front organisation.

The Canterbury Radical Women Group also moved a resolution on the strike at

Imperial Typewriters. The resolution expressed full solidarity with the strikers at Imperial Typewriters and recognised 'the exemplary role played by women in that struggle...'

The resolution also called for a telegram of support from the Conference and a collection for the strikers.

Until last weekend the WLM has been based on four main demands: equal pay and job opportunity; equal education; comprehensive provision of child care facilities and free contraception and abortion on demand. A further two points have now been added. These are for the removal of all legal impediments to women's economic independence, affecting taxation, pensions and insurance, and an end to discrimination against lesbians.

A recommendation was made that the WLM should campaign around the demands of the Working Women's Charter.

## DEFEND 'SOCIALIST WORKER'

CHARGES OF 'CRIMINAL LIBEL' are likely to be brought against Jim Nichol, director of Socialist Worker Publishers and Printers, for the poster that appeared on the Kevin Gately memorial march.

The poster showed a picture of a high-ranking police officer dragging Kevin by the wrists along the ground with the slogan of 'Murdered by the police' over it.

The case is going to be complicated for the police since the 'libel' is not against the police generally, or even the Special Patrol Group, but against the individual copper whose

chances of promotion are supposed to have been jeopardised by the picture!

At the end of the month the hearing concerning Socialist Worker staffwriter Paul Foot and the famous Janie Jones' 'names' that he published will take place at the end of the month. These legal manoeuvres are beginning to look like a concerted attack on Socialist Worker. This attack threatens every left paper, and the whole of the left must respond immediately. Without its press the labour movement would be severely hampered.

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**Fund drive**  
THIS MONTH'S TOTAL was better than it's ever been before.

The final week's post brought us another £97 - including £24.75 from Reading IMG, another £11.05 from London IMG, £10 from Bristol IMG, and so many smaller donations that it's impossible to list them all here. Thank you all, comrades, so very much.

That made the final total for June a magnificent

**£365.59**

But even though this total was better than it's ever been before, we have to admit that there's still some way to go if we're to transform the paper into the 12-pager our movement so desperately needs by the autumn.

So let's try to up that figure still further for July, and see if we can't make it this time to a firm £400. Send donations to: RED WEEKLY FUND DRIVE, 97 Caledonian Rd., London N.1.