

Socialist Challenge

Grunwick scandal **THIS MAGISTRATE MUST BE REMOVED**



On 29 September a Willesden magistrate, Mrs Dorothy Oakley, told a doctor that she was not pleased by the 'very light sentences' which stipendary magistrates at another court had been handing out to Grunwick picketers. She said:

"About 40% have got off. We shall have to change all that, and they will get much stiffer sentences."

The doctor concerned has given us a sworn affidavit to this effect since Mrs Oakley is trying Grunwick cases at the moment.

We say:

**MRS OAKLEY MUST
BE REMOVED NOW**

All those pickets convicted by the Willesden magistrates should receive a pardon and compensation.

See p. 8&9 for detailed story.

**What
Dromey
told us**

" Mrs Oakley is the Judge Jeffries of Willesden. She could, if given the chance, convict Dreyfus again. She should be dismissed forthwith by the Lord Chancellor and we are calling upon our local MPs to raise the matter with him and in the House of Commons. We will be urging all those convicted by her to appeal and, in the meantime, if she refuses to disqualify herself from hearing any further Grunwick cases, we will be asking the defendants to play no further part in the proceedings. **"**



**SUPPORT THE FIREFIGHTERS
SMASH THE 10 p.c. NORM**

The lecturer who worked for the Iranian Embassy

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Arthur Scargill on Sexism

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Editorial

THE FIREFIGHTERS are still on strike. The Labour Government is still refusing to accept their demands. The uniformed scabs are still in action. It is almost as if those whom the gods wished to destroy were first set on a collision course against a public sector union which had never struck before. Callaghan, Healey and Foot — the Labour leaders for 'standing firm' — would be making a very dangerous mistake to imagine that a defeat for the Fire Brigades Union would be a victory for the 10% norm. Edward Heath made a similar mistake when, in 1970, he thought that by defeating the postal workers he could lay the basis for a semi-permanent victory.

Labour Ministers might not like to publicly acknowledge the fact, but their pay policies are, in reality, being implemented by the army. Were it not for blatant use of troops to try and defeat a workers strike, the FBU would have won within twenty-four hours. Callaghan himself is reported to have told striking fireworkers that he 'sympathised' with them, but 'national interests' dictated the government's policies. In other words the firefighters have a strong case, but the interests of British capitalism require that the 10% limit is maintained.

It is a fact that the wage demands of workers in the public and private sector disrupt the functioning of a crisis-ridden economic system. But the solution to the problem does not lie in upholding the system at the cost of those whom it oppresses.

It is here that the traditional trades union response to the situation is hopelessly insufficient. For while all wage demands against the bosses of both private and state industries must naturally be backed by all socialists, the matter does not end there. For what has to be fought for in addition is an alternative set of socialist policies which pose a challenge to the interests of Capital in this country. These policies would include demands for nationalisation under workers control, a sliding scale of wages, cuts in defence spending, a programme of increased social expenditure on housing, schools and hospitals, etc. The trade union leaderships refuse to organise such a struggle because they accept the argument about the 'national interest', because they refuse to challenge the legitimacy of the capitalist system and because they believe that such a system can be satisfactorily managed by a Labour government.

The firefighters deserve to win on every count. If they lose the fault will not simply be that of the government, but also that of the rest of the trade union movement for failing to launch a united frontal assault on Labour's economic policies and proposing concrete alternatives. In several towns and cities trade unionists have taken their responsibility. Nottingham's march is a timely example of how to unite broad sections of workers against Labour's policies. Support committees to organise solidarity could be another vital step in the right direction. One theme of such action must be to compel the TUC to back a much needed call for national action in support of the firefighters.

The Labour government is existing at the present time on the good will of the Liberal Party — a goodwill, incidentally, determined by the need for self-preservation — but this could be reversed at any minute. Ultimately a Labour electoral victory will depend on its relations with the working class and those who mobilise it in periods of elections.

Labour's Xmas present to the Fire Brigades Union could well be a defeat. But if it is, it will, in the short term, presage a severe defeat for Labour at the polls. In other words those who are opening the door for Thatcher are not the Grunwick workers or the firefighters, but the leaders of the Labour Party.

Firefighters: striking out across the country

The third week of the FBU strike sees the strikers as determined as ever, and support for their stand continuing to grow.

Reports indicate that already many fire officers have joined the strike and pressure is mounting on the Fire Officers' Association to come out in all out support.

But the key to victory remains organising mass support and action for the firefighters.

Mass Action Means firefighters calling upon their leadership to mobilise the greatest possible help from other unions. Not just in terms of money, but all forms of solidarity action, from cutting off services to the scab troops, to sympathetic strike action.

Mass Action Means flooding the TUC with demands that they come out in favour of the firefighters. Calling upon the TUC to give total support to the strike and to all other trade unionists who act in sympathy.

Mass Support Means not relying on the TUC or the FBU leadership to act. Establish support committees in every locality. These are the best

established by existing bodies such as trades councils, public sector alliances, etc. Make sure that in whatever body is set up, members of the FBU are involved.

Mass Support Means continuing to hold demonstrations and lobbies in support of the firefighters and against the 10 per cent.

*Battersea: FBU leaders smear strikers

According to last Sunday's Observer, Terry Parry, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union sits by his phone, day after day, waiting for a call from the Home Office.

Whether or not this is the sum of Terry Parry's current activity the Observer does not say, but the leadership of the FBU have shown little enthusiasm for the strike. Where they have shown a degree of activity is in their efforts to head off any rank and file activity in the strike which challenges their authority.

The FBU leadership has been paying special attention to Battersea fire station in this regard. On Saturday 19 November the FBU officially disassociated itself from a march led by Battersea fire station workers, claiming it was 'political'. Last week the campaign took on an added delight. In issue No 11 of Strike News, the bulletin put out by the FBU leadership, it was claimed with reference to the strike fund, that 'so far no money has been received from K23 Battersea.'

This issue of Strike News, dated 24 November arrived at [K23] Battersea fire station with the sentence criticising them omitted. But when they were told about it they were furious. For two days previously they had handed over £70 to FBU official John Gregory for the strike fund. They had also received a receipt.

in brief...

*Teeside: Boycott plans for RAF helpers

With its conglomeration of oil and chemical industries, Teeside is one of the highest fire risk areas in Europe. That's why the superscabs — special RAF firefighters — have been sent there.

But the local FBU are hitting back. Branch officials have been touring the area, finding out which companies are helping the RAF and army to strikebreak. And now they have drawn up a list of companies which they intend to boycott once the strike is over.

Regional secretary Bill Griffin explained to Socialist Challenge that the FBU delegation has been obstructed from contacting union officials at a number of plants, and that they will not be serviced by any member of the local FBU in future. They are ICI, Wulton and Billingham, British Steel, Port Clarence, Monsanto, Seal Sands and Rohm and Haas at Seal Sands.

Bill Griffin has also appealed to the regional committee of the FBU to demand the TUC call a general strike in support of the firefighters.

OUR POLICIES

Capitalism is in crisis. The leaders of the Labour Party and the trades unions offer solutions that are in the interests, not of the workers, but of the capitalist class.

Socialist Challenge believes that the two vital tasks confronting revolutionary socialists are:

* To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

* To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

1 The struggle for socialism seeks to unite the fight of the workers against the bosses with that of other oppressed layers of society — women, black people, gays — struggling for their liberation. This socialism can only be achieved by creating new organs of power and defeating with all necessary means the power of the capitalist state.

2 Our socialism will be infinitely more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The Stalinist models of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe have discredited socialism in the eyes of millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.

3 The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will in the long run be decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

In Britain it implies demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and letting the Irish people determine their own future.

4 The Communist Parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the 'Euro-command' nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state. New revolutionary socialist parties are more necessary than ever before. Conditions today are more favourable than over the preceding three decades. But such parties can only be built by rejecting sectarianism and seeing internal democracy not as a luxury but as a vital necessity. This means the right to organise factions and tendencies.



10,000 UNIFORMED Fire Brigade Union members and their families mounted a magnificent demonstration in support of their pay claim through London on Saturday. The pity is that so few people saw it, as marchers wandered by the deserted office blocks of central London.

Delegations came from Strathclyde, Merseyside and Southampton but the overwhelming bulk of the demonstrators were from the militant London stations. Many of these are increasingly resembling small forts as the picket lines become more elaborate and comfortable!

However, all the 10,000 got for their efforts was a series of mealy-mouthed speeches at Speakers' Corner from bandwagon-jumping Labour MPs and their own 'leader' Terry Parry. Joan Lester, Chairperson of the Labour Party, informed the firefighters that they had the full support of the Labour Party but... 'this is not about the 10 per cent limit and pay policy'. The appalling sexist Frank Allain MP told the marchers that Jim Callaghan was going to get raped on this one so 'he might as well lay back and enjoy it.'

Terry Parry, general secretary of the FBU, was greeted with a mingled chorus of boos and cheers and then proceeded to outline a series of possible schemes and deals on hours and productivity, none of which will give the firefighters what they want — more pay now.

*Swansea: Public sector workers unite

*PUBLIC SECTOR workers in Swansea are organising a joint public meeting in support of the firefighters.

Following a lead from Morriston National Union of Public Employees, the meeting has been supported by IGWU local auth-

Confusion over whether this was a FBU only demonstration meant the turn-out from other London trade unionists was very small, despite the growing number of solidarity meetings and support committees in the London area. It will be through organising into activity the huge passive support that exists for the firefighters, which will guarantee the victory of their strike.

*Haringey Trades Council and J Division of the FBU are holding a solidarity demonstration this Saturday 3 December assembling at 11am at Endymion Road, London N4 (north side of Finsbury Park).

The demo call comes from a successful meeting called by Haringey Trades Council and NALGO which raised £64 — half for the Grunwick strikers and half for the firefighters. A further £92 was raised in one day by FBU members outside Tottenham bus garage.

The demonstration is being held to channel the massive local support that exists, and firefighters and trade unionists in the rest of North London are being approached to attend. North and East London Socialist Challenge supporters are urged to mobilise.

...ity workers, civil servants in the SCS, NUPE social service workers, as well as the FBU branch.

Ken Price, secretary of Swansea NUPE said, 'The firemen are leading the battle for more wages for us all. They deserve all the support we can give them.'

The meeting will take place on 6 December at Duffry Club, Woodfield Street, Morriston, Swansea. It is due to start at 7.30pm.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

If you agree with these principles and want to be involved in activities by Socialist Challenge supporters in your area, fill in the form below and send it to us:

I am interested in more information about activities in my area.
I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs.
(Delete if not applicable)

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to Socialist Challenge, 328-329 Upper Street, London N1.

300 march in Nottingham

'We're united to fight the 10 pc norm'



The miners: 'given pride of place at last Saturday's march'. Don Nelson, chairperson of Nottingham FBU is second from right.

'The Government has said it was the public that pulled down the power workers. Mrs. Thatcher said public opinion would judge strikes. Well we're prepared to gamble on that and say 'Look at this one' — As far as we're concerned, public opinion is with us.

'There is an executive council meeting this week in London. We are hoping — if possible — to pull out the fire officers in London. In the north of England officers have already joined us. If this spreads the pressure will be on the Government' Peter Rockley, executive council

member of the Fire Brigades Union, East Midlands.

'We're fed up with being told there is another enquiry around the corner. We're tired of being fobbed off. We want a decent living wage and we're standing up to be counted.

'The firemen have a saying. It's that every year they are issued with three shirts, two pairs of shoes and a public enquiry. And we are fed up with that. Now we want the results of these enquiries.' Don Nelson, Chairperson of the Nottingham FBU.



Brian Simister, Nottingham and District Trades Council



Workers at British Steel Corporation plant march to demand a 24 per cent increase, plus inflation proofed wages.

'We're marching today in support of our claim which is against the 10 per cent, and to show our support for the firemen. Our claim is for £15 and 30p for each subsequent rise in the cost of living. We want to protect our settlement against inflation.

'A representative of the FBU said today they are a special case. Well we're not a special case, our case is the same as every other trade unionist in this country. Workers like ourselves are coming out without the backing of the officials, and we want to unite all workers against the Government's policies.'

Peter Radcliffe, member of the strike committee at Stanton and Staveley BSC plant.

'In our strike, the Government is going further than simply using the 10 per cent guidelines. They say that British Steel is in such a dire financial position that logically speaking there shouldn't be any offer at all for people employed BSC.

'You've seen all the press and television releases this week. BSC losses are staggering. But it's not a problem peculiar to BSC — it's common throughout the world. There has to be a steel industry, and people have to be employed in it.

'Demonstrations like today's

are important. Because our strike isn't official, we are denied access to union funds and don't have any official assistance from trade unions. The march today helps us to get the message across. No matter what successive Governments have said in the past about rallying to the cause of working people, when the chips are down we are left on our own.'

Brian McGinley, secretary of the strike committee at Stanton and Staveley works, secretary of the GMWU.

'We need more generalised action against unemployment, against public expenditure cuts and against the 10 per cent. We need greater unity between different sectors in the working class so that we not only put an end to the 10 per cent, but finally bring about an end to the system that produces the cuts in the interest of private profits.

'If every labour movement body followed the lead of Nottingham, we'd be one step on the road to forcing the TUC to call national action in support of the firefighters and against the 10 per cent pay policy.'

Brian Simister, vice president of Nottingham and district Trades Council.

'We all have to join the battle to end this Government's reactionary wage policies. Everyone should come behind the firemen. That includes Labour MPs. What are Mr. Whitlock and Mr. Dunning doing in support of the firemen? They are keeping very, very quiet.

'They know that it's their policy that's responsible for the strike of the FBU, and the other strikes taking place all over the country — the power men, the engineers, and sometime in the future, unless they give way, then the miners might have to come in the battle once again.'

Joe Whelan, general secretary-elect of the Nottingham Area of the NUM.



John Peck — holding loud-hailer — chaired last Saturday's rally.

The Nottingham Trades Council gave a magnificent lead to the entire labour movement when it organised a demonstration last weekend to unite strikers from five different local disputes in a show of solid opposition against Labour's pay policies.

Pride of place was given to the firefighters because as Joe Whelan — general secretary-elect of the Nottingham area of the National Union of Mineworkers — explained to the rally, 'The firemen are fighting a battle for the whole trade union movement. If they are defeated, then the rest of the movement fighting for better wages will also be defeated. But if they are victorious, then the rest of us will win our fight against the Government's policies.'

With only six days' notice, members of a number of unions not currently involved in struggles — including teachers, miners, and local government workers — joined those fighting to maintain their living standards:

***Workers at the Stanton and Staveley plants of the British Steel Corporation.** The 1,000 workers are striking for £15 a week claim with inflation proofing, plus average holiday pay and a restoration of differentials — a claim involving a 24 per cent increase. The strike is unofficial and was sparked off when management locked out the workforce in response to a go-slow in support of the claim.

Officials of the union involved — the General and Municipal Workers' Union — have sabotaged the strike, calling on other plants to scab by returning to work. Peter Radcliffe, a member of the strike committee, told Socialist Challenge that workers are hoping the strike will spread to other plants this week — a move which will exert more pressure on the union to make the strike official.

***Metal mechanics at Raleighs.** Low wages and a meagre 10 per cent offer from management are what the strikers are up against. Les Chapman, convenor of the Joint Shop Stewards' Council and a member of the National Society of Metal Mechanics, outlined just how poor wages are for the 4,700 strikers.

He told marchers last Saturday that the lowest paid worker receives a gross wage of £39.53, the semi-skilled receives a base rate of £36.41, and skilled rates are between £42.07 and £47.57. 'Add 10 per cent to nothing, like management wants us to do, and you come up with a very low wage'.

***Workers from E&H Architectural Products.** Sacked within 24 hours after strike action was taken, workers are protesting the withdrawal of union recognition. Eighty per cent of the small workforce is involved — 15 people — in the fight to be reinstated with full recognition of the Furniture Timber and Allied Trades Union.

***Metallifactory workers** striking for a claim of over 20 per cent. The two hundred workers involved in this official dispute are members of the Amalgamated Engineering Workers' Union.

John Peck, vice president of Nottingham District Trades Council, explained why the rally was called and why every labour movement body up and down the country should be planning similar actions. Opening the rally he said:

'Today's march is a march by people who are linked by the common bond of opposition to the 10 per cent guidelines. This 10 per cent is something the Government is trying to dictate to the workers of Britain.

'It was never agreed to by the trade union movement. In fact at the Trade Union Congress the idea of any limit on pay increases was specifically and decisively rejected. The only thing that was agreed to — and many of us disagree with that — was the 12-month rule between pay increases.

'But now the Government is attempting to impose this 10 per cent limit on all workers up and down the country. If we accept the 10 per cent it would only mean a further decline in our standard of living.

Today, we all need about a £10 a week increase in pay to take us back to where we were two years ago. We are told that if pay is held down then by this time next year inflation will be at the single figure rate. We were told that in 1975 when the Social Contract was first initiated... These last two years have exploded a myth — that wages cause inflation. We've had restraint but nevertheless inflation is running at a rate of 17 per cent.'

The Nottingham rally is a step in the right direction. The TUC has shown where it stands — four-square behind the Government's policies. In a statement issued last Wednesday not a word was mentioned about the attitude of the TUC to the FBU strike. It merely expressed its 'concern' at the 'seriousness' of the dispute and offered to help 'to facilitate a negotiated settlement'. The Labour Party national executive committee hasn't even done that. Not a single statement has been issued by this body.

The TUC should be organising national action in support of the FBU and against the 10 per cent norm. Similarly, if the FBU leadership put out the call for national action, support would be forthcoming.

Workers struggling to defend their living standards can't wait for the TUC. The best guarantee for victory for the firefighters is for the working class people to take the first step of following the lead given by Nottingham. On-going support committees to plan such actions are vital. The mis-leaders of the labour movement will act only if they can't afford to maintain their silence and thereby the sabotage of struggles.

NUS conferences

Broad Left in crisis

Sue Slipman — President of the National Union of Students and Communist Party executive committee member — threatened to bring in scab labour to break last week's strike by staff members at the union's headquarters. This type of incident — combined with vigorous press attacks against student unions — is the backdrop to the NUS conference taking place in Blackpool this weekend. REDMOND O'NEILL reports on problems facing the left in the union.

This term the Tories have taken another leap forward in the NUS. With 20,000 members the Tories are the single largest political force in the student movement. Backed by £25,000 a year from Conservative Party Central Office and sizeable donations from private industry, the Federation of Conservative Students has taken the offensive. In Scotland, the FCS has led and won several campaigns to disaffiliate universities from the NUS — including St. Andrews and Edinburgh. In the rest of the country the FCS plays lip service to the unity of NUS, but has at the same time initiated a string of court actions to prevent unions from financially supporting the firefighters or the Grunwick strikers. A male member of the FCS disrupted the NUS Women's Conference two weeks

ago. Dave Wilks, national chairman (sic) of the FCS, summed up in a recent press statement the major problem for the left in dealing with Tory advances. The progress of the FCS in his view was best illustrated by the full backing it has won from the Broad Left majority on the national executive of the NUS on every major issue this term.

Thus it has been Sue Slipman who has repeatedly lent her name to the press witch hunt against the left in the student movement. She started off the term by condemning the anti-fascists at Lewisham, and finished by accepting Government plans to limit union autonomy. The middle of the term was filled with her threats to kick out unions opposing Zionism.

Conference delegates will be confronted by a Broad Left/Tory bloc out to oppose action on fee levels, the cuts, and women's oppression. A joint Broad Left/Tory motion will try to throw out the current NUS position of 'No platform' for fascists. And speakers from this unholy duo will also oppose any mass campaign to defend students' right to control their own unions.

All is not well in the Broad Left camp, however. Many Labour Party and Communist Party militants are dismayed by the *de facto* alliance between their own leadership and the Tories. These militants are trained to understand 'left unity' as meaning unity against the right. They find the about face a bit hard to swallow.

CHEAP CORN

After all, the Broad Left led the fight to wrest the NUS from right wing control in the late sixties — around a campaign to throw out the 'no politics' clause from the NUS Constitution. Today the FCS and the Broad Left leaderships propose to throw out unions who ban fascists, oppose Zionism, or support the right of women to close meetings to men. The left at Blackpool will be made up of all those delegates who refuse to go along with Sue

Slipman's 'historic compromise'. The task of the left will be to turn the student movement out towards the firefighters, and to the defence of the union's own members — especially in further education colleges. This entails a sustained campaign against the attempts — by the Courts, local education authorities, and now, the public accounts committee — to limit the autonomy of student unions.

EXOTICA

Sue Slipman's comments don't give grounds for comfort. In a document to conference she puts it this way: 'Our autonomy does not signify total freedom; our student union constitutions are our contract with the public within which we are given the power to operate on the public's money'.

In other words, unions will be expected to accept a local authority or college veto on what they can and can't do with their funds. The Socialist Students Alliance will be fighting at Blackpool to crack the Tory/Broad Left alliance and begin the process of uniting the student left on the basis of fighting policies. A nationally co-ordinated campaign to oppose all attacks on union control of union funds will be the centrepiece to the efforts of the SSA.

Broad Left walk-out

The Women's Conference of the National Union of Students ended in disaster for the Broad Left on 19-20 November when two of its executive members — Kay Copp-Brown and Sue Robertson — spurned a Conference decision to exclude men, and walked out, declaring the meeting unconstitutional.

Is something you can stuff...' Despite the undemocratic actions of executive members, women from over 40 colleges remained to discuss motions and elect the new women's committee.

They were joined in their walk-out by a handful of women and a male member of the Federation of Conservative Students. It was his disruptive tactics which first prompted the vote for a woman-only Conference. The frustration which women union members feel about the executive's handling of the campaign is best summed up in their song: *We've got a woman president But that's just not enough And a token women's conference*

The majority of the campaign is not prepared to let the NUS sabotage, hide away, or label the campaign 'unimportant'. The actions of Copp-Brown and Robertson are part and parcel of the failure of the Broad Left to put forward perspectives for an active campaign. They are prepared to bureaucratically head off the growing support for the perspectives of the women's left caucus — a grouping active in the campaign. Delegations to NUS Conference will demand that these manoeuvres are rejected and that the decisions and newly elected women's committee are recognised.

by Pamela Holmes

WANTED URGENTLY: WITNESSES: John Lockwood (above) has just been sentenced to six months' jail by Lambeth magistrates for the pleasure of being kicked by police officers following the Lewisham anti-fascist demonstration on 13 August.

Lockwood, a delegate to the All Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, and an unemployed teacher, produced medical evidence of his injuries, but the court preferred to

convict him on the ludicrous charge of 'assault on an unknown police officer'. He is appealing against both conviction and sentence, but has to locate the other three or four comrades who were shoved southwards along Lewisham High Road, past the police station in Ladywell Road, shortly before 5pm on 13 August. Ruah Information to Socialist Challenge, marking the envelope: 'John Lockwood — urgent'.

Rank & File conference: action, but what policies?

The National Rank and File Delegate Conference in Manchester on Saturday attracted 522 delegates from 251 delegating bodies. The conference passed a resolution in support of the firefighters' strike and endorsed a declaration on the way forward for Rank and File. The delegates heard many militant speeches and a great deal of information about local struggles. But at the end of the day it's not the feeling of elation on hearing fiery speeches that counts, but what comes afterwards. JONATHAN SILBERMAN reports.

Can a conference representing 251 trade union bodies call strike action? This is one of the questions that emerges from the conference. For the delegates did indeed pass a resolution calling for a day of solidarity with the FBU strike on 7 December, including the call for strike action.

There was little opportunity to discuss the viability of the call. The Conference Arrangements Committee made no provision for amendments to the resolution on the firefighters' strike, and the resolution itself was not distributed to the delegates in advance. Indeed delegates could be excused if they didn't realise



they had called strike action on 7 December. Paul MacDonald (Strathclyde FBU) who moved

the resolution didn't mention the strike call. Only one delegate speaking from the floor referred

to 7 December. Certainly the feeling of the conference was for building solidarity action. It was also for building the type of movement that could effectively organise such action. But Jack Robertson, the editor of *Engineers Charter*, posed the real question when he observed, 'There is a great difference between the rank and file, the millions of rank and file trade unionists, and the Rank and File Movement which commands the authority of only a tiny minority of the rank and file'.

INVOLVED AGAIN

There were good ideas from the conference. The resolution on the firefighters called for the building of local representative 'Firemen Support Committees' to coordinate solidarity action. The general declaration also called for such support committees for other disputes. These are vital, but such

authoritative broad based local committees are not enough. Alan Thornett (British Leyland, Cowley), made the point when he said, 'everyone wants to organise the rank and file, but around what policies and for what objectives?' But there was little discussion over what policies were needed. For example on the Grunwick strike, Kamlesh Gaudal, chairperson of the strike committee, received a standing ovation. He appealed to the conference to make suggestions on how to win the strike. Kamlesh was the last speaker before lunch, but after lunch there was no further contribution on Grunwick and no answers were given to Gaudal's appeal. Such omissions were illustrated in a speech by Martin Murphy (Jacobs, Sheffield). He advised, 'look after the little things and the big things will look after themselves'. One could ask in reply, big things like strike action on 7 December?

Electricians: right wing policies triumph

Right-wing policies triumphed at the end of the five-day electrician's biennial conference in Blackpool last week — despite the nearly unanimous resolution deploring Government interference in pay

bargaining. In a secret session on Friday, a move to restore the democratic elections on the union's 140 full-time officials — suspended in 1961 — was defeated. The same meeting decided to continue the

ban to prevent members of the Communist Party from holding union offices. This erosion of democracy continued with the decision to wipe out the Northern Ireland seat from the executive. It now is reduced to 13 members, and general secretary Frank Chapple and plumbers' secretary Charlie Lovell each have an executive vote. This makes Chapple one of the very few union general secretaries to hold voting power. The union leadership banned

The pay resolution reflected shop-floor calls for rises of around 30 per cent, but the safety net of the 12-month rule was unfurled. The electricians' claim will be prepared by a special conference of power-station shop stewards in December — the time when the miners' claim is due if the 12-month rule is adhered to. But by diverting the opposition in the union up the road of defending differentials, Chapple and the right-wing cabal that runs the EETPU know that there is little danger of the rank-and-file getting out of their control.

Spurred on by the executive, the conference favoured a go-ahead for the proposed nuclear waste reprocessing plant at Wylfa, as well as an expansion of the whole nuclear and fast-breeder reactor programme.

REWARD

A mild resolution was dumped which called for a moratorium on nuclear development until new safety measures are developed. Delegates also roundly defeated a resolution calling for withdrawal from the EEC in favour of a pro-Common Market resolution. Perhaps Chapple, Tom Breakwell and Co in the EETPU not only wish to condemn the working class to low wages in a capitalist Europe, but if all else fails they can always hope for a nuclear 'leak'.

WEANED

for political reasons at least two electricians' representatives from the conference. Wyn Bevan, a left-wing leader of the Port Talbot steelworkers electricians' strike earlier this year, said 600 members of his Pontardawe branch were transferred against their wishes into the Port Talbot branch. Billy Williams, secretary of the 3000-strong Cardiff branch was similarly refused admission by stewards. He said that his whole branch had been suspended. Conference also passed a resolution increasing the size of future biennial policy-making conferences, by including shop stewards as well as branch delegates — which could add about 250 to the 600 at this year's conference.

Hounslow: pickets needed

HOUNSLOW HOSPITAL'S occupation committee has called on the labour movement to maintain the picket line in the vital weeks ahead. Although all of the staff have now moved to satisfactory jobs in other London hospitals — including training if required — the Hounslow will remain occupied until the area health authority gives 'firm assurances' that the hospital will be reopened as a community service. The January meeting of the area health authority will be discussing a paper put by the finance and planning group — who maintain that capital exists

for reopening the hospital, but revenue is not at hand — as well as the next round of cuts to be imposed on the health services. With the staff now scattered in other jobs, the occupation committee is determined to keep up the pressure. One of the committee's leading members, Chris Potter, told *Socialist Challenge*: 'We won't be leaving until the decorators arrive with their paintbrushes, and work to reopen Hounslow is underway'. Get your labour movement body to ring the Hounslow now to arrange time on the picket rota. Tel: 01-570 4448.

Socialist Challenge supporters in the Civil and Public Servants' Association will be meeting in London, on 10 December. Further details from Socialist Challenge Centres in Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester and London. [See 'Events' column on page 14 for phone numbers].



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Not content with spending £¼ million on protecting the National Front in Hyde and Manchester on 6 October, the Greater Manchester police recently laid on a slap-up luncheon at Ashton-under-Lyne police station. It was given to show gratitude to the heads of firms and institutions that provided their premises and other facilities for police use. At the lunch, on Tuesday 22 November, these loyal citizens — including local headteachers — were presented with plaques. They are inscribed with the words 'with grateful thanks for assistance rendered on 8.10.77'. Chief constable James Anderton meanwhile awaits his reward from the NFI

For a socialist opposition in AUEW

1977 has not been a good year for the rank-and-file in the engineering industry. While there have not been any really decisive defeats inflicted by the employers, the trade union bureaucrats have been successful in holding in check any attempts to break through the Labour Government's policies of wage restraint.

Of course this has not been easy for the leadership of the AUEW. At British Leyland the Executive Committee had to resort to joining hands with the management in supporting the sacking of the toolmakers in order to induce a return to work.

At Lucas it was the threat of the withdrawal of strike pay that had a lot to do with inducing the toolmakers to call off their 10 week strike on far from satisfactory terms.

Nor have these wage cuts been inflicted without the suppression of trade union democracy. Despite a clear call for an immediate return to free collective bargaining at the policy making National Committee of the AUEW, Hugh Scanlon needed no outside compulsion to allow the Executive Committee to reverse that policy at the TUC and vote in favour of the 12 month rule.

He resorted to the oldest Carronite trick in the book by refusing to let the rank and file delegation vote on the issue.

But what about the Broad Left? The AUEW has had an organised left opposition for over ten years now but it is further away from achieving its ends than it ever was with the decisive Executive Committee of 7 full-timers now firmly controlled by the right wing cabal led by John Boyd, the General Secretary.

Despite the success of Bob Wright in the Presidential election, the Broad Left is in political disarray. The defection of Hugh Scanlon to the camp of the right wing has not passed without leaving its mark.

The Broad Left has been inactive over the last three years despite the massive attacks on the wages and jobs of those who work in the engineering industry. In fact, in the critical Leyland toolmakers' strike, leading Broad Left and CP member, Les Dixon, voted with the right wing to support the sacking of the toolmakers.

While the Broad Left cannot simply be ignored, because it still remains a dominant national current in the AUEW, vague hopes of reforming it or changing it are clearly not on the cards.

An alternative will not be built by simply declaring one. This is the chief mistake of the Socialist Workers Party sponsored Engineers Charter.

But the need for militants to immediately start to build a principled socialist opposition of a non-sectarian character has never been greater.

Such an opposition must be prepared to fight independently for its policies using the most public platforms of the union, such as elections. Only then will it be equipped to do the job of fighting the right wing in the union through challenging the organised inaction that has been the record of the Broad Left over the last three years.

Whatever happened at the AUEW National Committee?

The National Committee of the AUEW voted to submit a claim of around 66 per cent to the employers in late December. But at the same time, in a major defeat for the left of the union, the NC went on to narrowly endorse the 12 month rule governing pay increases.

The left's defeat came after a long campaign by the Broad Left against the 12 month rule which climaxed in a public row with Hugh Scanlon at the September TUC Congress when he cast his vote against the AUEW delegation. At the National Committee the Broad Left were fighting to prevent his action being endorsed. They lost the vote by 27-24.

Their failure will have an immediate impact on many AUEW members. Last week Scanlon was able to press the TUC General Council into opposing British Leyland's corporate package deal. He didn't oppose it because the package deal attacks union organisation and his members' living standards, but because it would have breached the 12 month rule by allowing certain Leyland plants to bring forward their annual claim to November.

The effects of supporting the 12 month rule will also affect the national engineering claim. On paper the claim looks substantial, with demands for increases on the minimum time rate varying from £70 for skilled workers to £55 for the unskilled.

With the present skilled rate set at £42, that would represent a 66 per cent rise.

The claim also includes demands for a 35 hour week without loss of pay and longer holidays. But the National Committee's support for the 12 month rule may demobilise the potential rank and file support for the claim.

The implication is that the claim could only be implemented at a local level a full year after factories have settled for their 'Phase 3' increase this year. As domestic agreements end throughout the year this means there will be no common date when all engineering workers would get the benefit of their claim.



But militants will not only have to fight the 12 month rule to pursue the claim. The right wing clique which now dominates the leadership of the union has no intention of fighting for the claim even in its present weakened form.

Skilled workers by seeking increases in differentials which will top the 10 per cent norm, they will settle for far less than the 66 per cent increase they have been mandated to fight for.

As far as the right wing is concerned the demand for the 35 hour week is just a ritual they are compelled to go through. A serious fight for the demand would face the massive opposition

of the Engineering Employer's Federation and the Government. John Boyd and Hugh Scanlon (RIP) are going in the opposite direction.

Only a really major campaign to mobilise the rank and file could turn the paper claim of the National Committee into a real basis for the fight to gain a decent standard of living.

The decision of the 20 November national meeting of the Broad Left for a conference of shop stewards and convenors to discuss how to launch a fight for the wage claim could kick off the campaign. But that means demanding that the Broad Left sets the date and organises a planning meeting now.

Wright will win, but will he fight?



BROAD LEFT candidate, Bob Wright, is the hot favourite to win the presidency of the AUEW.

The post becomes vacant with next year's retirement of Hugh Scanlon (RIP). The result of the first ballot in the election showed Wright gaining marginally less than his right-wing opponent Terry Duffy. (83,893 to Duffy's 83,959).

The Broad Left should be able to make up this deficit by the time of the second run-off ballot in March.

Only 27.3 per cent of the AUEW membership voted in the first ballot. This was despite the postal ballot system, which is lauded to the skies by the right wing and the Tories as being the best way to democratically involve the membership.

But despite the postal ballot the low poll reflects the feeling of a large number of the rank and file. They found little to choose between Duffy's support for the Social Contract and Wright's failure to fight for action in the

union against it.

Of the alternatives that were on the ballot paper Roy Fraser's vote of 19,071 came as a surprise to many. But it was Fraser who led the toolmakers' strike in March which threatened to shatter the Social Contract. It was this record which won votes for Fraser outside his own patch of the skilled workers.

But the vote of Ian Morris, a leader of the Heathrow engineers' strike and the *Engineers Charter* candidate supported by *Socialist Worker* and *Socialist Challenge*, was poor by any standards. His vote of 9,997 was less than the 12,137 received for the sectarian campaign of Alan Wilkins of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

The result was unsurprising in the light of the refusal of *Engineers Charter* to seriously attempt to draw in other left forces in the union behind Morris's campaign or indeed to organise a systematic campaign in the localities at all. For example, no meetings were held by the Charter at all in London, Birmingham, Leeds or Manchester, despite offers of help from *Socialist Challenge* supporters in the AUEW in these areas.

The fact that these candidates were the top five in the ballot results means that the Broad Left can be fairly confident of victory in the second ballot.

But they should not be too confident.

Other AUEW election results announced at the same time show a far less rosy picture. Broad Lefters Ron Halverson, unlike Wright, publicly led the campaign against Scanlon's manipulation of the engineers' vote at the TUC Congress in favour of the 12 month rule. Nevertheless he lost on the second ballot for national organiser to right winger John Byrne by 92,383 votes to 142,647. In Executive Committee elect-

ions the first of two ballots saw Communist Party member Les Dixon trailing behind 'moderate' Edmund Scrivens. Another defeat for the left was Harold Robson's victory over Vickers convenor Jim Murray for EC member.

These results should come as a warning for the Broad Left that they cannot rely on the weakness of Duffy's right wing candidate to pull Bob Wright through the second Presidential ballot.

Wright's campaign contained a credibility gap as wide as the distance between his left talking against the Social Contract and his failure to support the struggles which were doing that job in the

spring of this year.

That was why it was correct to back Morris as an alternative socialist candidate. Morris' poor vote does not reflect the unwillingness of the membership to fight back, but rather the refusal of the Socialist Workers Party (of which Morris is a member) to try to build a democratic, broadbased fighting tendency in the AUEW.

Wright should now be able to command enough votes in the second ballot to make sure that at least one firm supporter of wage restraint rises no higher in AUEW office. His verbal opposition to the policies of the Labour Government will benefit rank and file militants who want to take up the fight seriously.

It is for this reason that *Socialist Challenge* calls on all its supporters in the AUEW to actively campaign for Wright in the March ballot.

Women trade unionists get creche

MANY trade unions have played the game of lip-service to the fight for women's rights.

Attempts to cover-up the all too obvious under-representation of women members in the trade unions by sticking Marie Paterson in the chair at the TUC and Annual Conference of Engineering Union's Conference will not content women trade unionists for long.

But a welcome change of a real sort was undertaken by TASS, the staff section of the AUEW, at a conference called to discuss training and job opportunities for women in industry. 60 women, members of AUEW (TASS), attended the conference last month under chairperson Judith Hunt, the women's national organiser. The large numbers attending

the conference was no doubt assisted by the almost unprecedented decision of the union to provide a creche for the course of the conference.

Not surprisingly demands came forward from the conference for better nursery, creche and after-school facilities for the children of parents who both work.

If every union was to undertake the effort made by TASS on this occasion for its conference in Birmingham then union officials might find less to complain about when they talk of women being apathetic and not interested in trade unionism.

Rather than provision of a creche for union meetings being a one-off affair it should become a regular practice.

Call for action on wages and jobs

Socialist Challenge ENGINEERING SUPPLEMENT

by GRAHAM WILLIAMS (TASS, Leeds)

DEMANDS that action be taken now to launch a rank-and-file campaign in support of the national engineering pay claim for increases in the national minimum rate and for a 35 hour week without loss of pay, were endorsed by the Broad Left conference held in Birmingham on 20 November.

But the fact that no specific proposals for action came from the floor of the conference indicates that the leadership of the Broad Left is far from ready to launch such a campaign itself.

The conference was opened by Bob Wright. Although his speech roundly condemned the record of the Labour Government and the capitulation of the TUC to the Labour Government's 10 per cent limit on wages and the 12 month rule, he failed to propose any steps that the Broad Left could take up as a means of reversing this trend.

The only definite proposal coming from the platform was a call for regional conferences of AUEW members to be called to organise local campaigns in the March elections and discuss the way forward on the industrial front.

It was left to speakers from the floor to propose the sorts of broad actions that could begin to draw in the rank-and-file of the AUEW

into opposition with the Government's incomes policy and the right-wing leadership of the AUEW.

The conference endorsed a resolution from Birmingham shop steward, John Graham, for a conference of shop stewards and convenors in the New Year to discuss how to launch a fight for the next national wage claim due to be submitted to the employers on 19 December.

The conference also decided to back a call from a shop steward from Stockport for a lobby of the meeting with the Engineering Employers Federation. However it is very doubtful that the leadership of the Broad Left will put much energy or enthusiasm into mobilising for such actions given their record of failures over the past few years.

While the absence of Hugh Scanlon from the ranks of the Broad Left may give them and the Communist Party a bit more room to show a left face their bureaucratic practices will continue.

One of the high points of the conference was a speech by a member of the Fire Brigades Union executive, Warm applause greeted his statement that the FBU strike was a struggle which the whole of the working class should support to victory since it was the first major confrontation over the Government's 10 per cent wage limit.

The conference was attended by only 150 delegates. This obvious lesson of the Broad Left being hog-tied to the left bureaucrats who in turn are bound to Callaghan was ignored by the Broad Left top table.

But the fact that they had to take resolutions from the floor, breaking with past practice, meant that even they realise there is a ferment in the rank and file.

Whether they will do anything about the proposals that came from the floor and were passed is another matter altogether.



Amalgamation battle Right wing finds new allies

by RON THOMPSON (Sheffield AUEW)

THE RIGHT WING flexed their muscles again on the 52 delegate National Committee of the AUEW when they threw out the long-delayed proposals for amalgamation of the union.

By 28 votes to 23 they rejected proposals coming from Broad Left delegates which would have drawn the four sections of the AUEW—Engineering, Foundry, Construction and TASS into one amalgamated union instead of the present loose federation.

The right wing have hypocritically opposed the merger on the grounds that it is undemocratic. This argument is hollow given their virulent opposition to balloting the whole membership on the issue. This was the course decided by the National Executive Committee of the four sections, going over the heads of the Engineering Section's National Committee.

Amalgamation is the last contribution which Hugh Scanlon wants to make to the union before his retirement. But the right wing have already decided to shatter this fond aim through a campaign through the law courts to rule the decision of the NEC unconstitutional. They will quite likely succeed since there is no provision for the engineering section's leading body to be overruled in this way.

Another arrow in the right wing's bow is that there is a kernel of truth to their accusation of lack of democracy. The main object of their fire is TASS. They will use every trick in the book to prevent the Communist-led union from using its influence to change overall policy.

At present this is the privilege of the right wing through their domination of the engineering section.

Which way for Leyland skilled workers?

by STEVE GRIFFITHS
AUEW shop steward, Rover Solihull.

Now the corporate bargaining ballot fraud is over, Leyland's skilled workers have to decide their next step. It was this group of workers who were the most solid in voting 'no' to the proposals. This was despite the recommendations of most electricians, senior stewards and AUEW and T&G convenors.

One answer has come from the Executive of the Skilled Workers and Toolroom Workers' organisation. Meeting in Birmingham on 15 November, they agreed to call for a united Leyland skilled workers' agreement.

Some workers will see the best way of fighting for such an agreement within the new five tier corporate grading structure. And if they don't think so now, Derek Robinson, Longbridge convenor and Sir Richard Dabson's favourite Communist, will be trying to make sure they do in the future.

What this proposal boils down to is opposition to any struggle now, and reliance on bureaucratic in-fighting.

Alternative proposals have come from the craft committee at Rovers. They have proposed the holding of a shop stewards'

conference to prepare the fight and the claim. Democratic preparation of this sort of conference is key.

A bulletin should be circulated amongst the various plants to ensure all members are aware of the arguments for and against a claim which includes a separate agreement.

Such a bulletin should open its columns to all individuals and shop stewards' bodies which have a point of view. It should not just reflect the view of the skilled workers' committee executive.

Above all now, it's vital that a date be set for the conference.

Our right to an agreement should be seen as the fight for better wages in 1978. The starting point for the claim should be the Confederation of Ship-building and Engineering Union's basic minimum of £70 plus £15 to 1979, plus a system for inflation-proofing wages.

No one group of Leyland workers will be able to resolve their problems by fighting alone against the Government imposed re-organisation. But the fight of skilled workers could lead a coordinated fight back against the trade union bureaucracy and the right-wing drift of the plant leadership.

The attempts of management to impose speed-up and harsh manning levels will affect everyone. The basis for a joint fight is there.

It's up to the skilled workers in Leyland to grasp the opportunity.



Chapple's Law

IF engineering workers think their own right wing is undemocratic then they ain't heard nothing yet.

A new development in the amalgamation debate has been the overtures of Frank Chapple, leader of the electricians' union, to the Executive of the AUEW. Chapple's conditions for fusion amount to virtually the abolition of democracy in the AUEW. Not very difficult you might say. But listen to this. He wants:

- * Abolition of all District Committees.
- * Abolition of all Divisional Committees.
- * Abolition of the National Committee.

* Abolition of the Final Appeals Court.

His alternative is:

- * An 'annual' conference to be held once every three years.
- * Consultation in between times by the EC with different industrial groups.
- * An Executive with much greater powers than at present held by the AUEW EC.

On no account must Chapple and John Boyd be allowed to get away with this massacre. The AUEW is the most democratic union in Britain, and while this says very little, if it was to follow the fate of the EETPU, it would be a defeat for the whole of the labour movement.



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The rope and the hangman

Time to stop supporting Labour?



Foot — an effective Callaghan lieutenant

MUCH OF the left's thinking on the relation between revolutionaries and the Labour Party finds its roots in Lenin's 'Left-Wing Communism', written in 1920. Against those currents in the Communist movement who wanted 'No compromises' with reformist parties he argued for 'the vanguard of the proletariat, for its class conscious section, for the Communist Party, to resort to manoeuvres, arrangements and compromises with the various parties of the workers and small masters'.

Such tactics had been a vital part of Bolshevik policy up to and after 1917. But Lenin did not see the arrangements as fixed for all time — matters of 'principle'. They were designed to be used or discarded according to circumstances. It was for tactical flexibility that Lenin argued; against the so-called 'principle' of 'no compromises' advocated by the ultra-lefts.

This method led Lenin to advocate to the British Communists a policy of supporting the Labour Party in elections. But his advice was based on a careful analysis of the particular situation at that time which he outlines in his book (remember that at the time of writing Labour had never been in power: '...in Great Britain... there is a fresh, broad, powerful and rapidly growing communist movement among the workers which justifies the brightest hopes. The rank and file of the ILP in Scotland is becoming more and more disgusted with the thought of parliament, and soviets or workers councils are being supported by almost every branch.'

'In Great Britain... conditions for a successful proletarian revolution are clearly maturing'

By using a speech of Prime Minister Lloyd George, Lenin shows how the ruling class viewed the possibility of a Labour Government:

'In France this (Labourism) was called Communism, in Germany it was called socialism, and in Russia it is called Bolshevism... This country is more top heavy than any country in the world, and if it begins to rock, the crash here, for that reason, will be greater than in any land.'

It is clear from passages like these that in 1920 the size and influence of the Labour Party was due directly to a strong revolutionary upsurge among the working class, and it was this upsurge (more than the Labour Party itself) that put the fear of God into the bourgeoisie. Lenin considered Britain to be on the verge of a revolutionary situation, and among the masses there was a huge commonly-held illusion that the Labour Party would be the means of a radical reshaping of society.

The Communists of course knew that this wouldn't happen,

but in order to make this knowledge more widespread among the masses, Lenin advised the Communists to propose a united front with Labour. They should say 'We'll fight alongside you. We'll help put you in power. But at the same time we'll agitate for our own policies'. In this way the Communists would stay in unity with the mass of workers, fighting alongside them and helping them to achieve a goal which most saw as important.

By doing this, Lenin argued, the Communists would gain for themselves a wider hearing among workers and win their trust and respect. They would use that hearing to explain: 'Not only why soviets are better than parliament and why the dictatorship of the proletariat is better than the dictatorship of Churchill, but also that I want to support Henderson in the same way as the rope supports a hanged man — that the impending establishment of a government of Henderson's will prove that I am right, will bring the masses over to my side, and will hasten the political death of the Hendersons and Snowdens.'

THE SITUATION NOW

Can Lenin's tactics be transferred unchanged to the present day? Or have circumstances changed sufficiently to warrant a change of tactics? Let's draw a comparison between then and now...

Is there a 'fresh, broad, powerful and rapidly growing communist movement among the workers, justifying the brightest hopes'?

Are there significant sections of the Labour Party 'in favour of soviets'?

Are sections of the ruling class terrified by the prospect of a Labour Government?

Is there a widely-held belief that a Labour Government will radically alter society in favour of the working class?

The answer to these questions must be 'no'. There is, as yet, no left swing to compare with that of the early twenties and Labour have been in government too many times for there to remain any popular illusion that there will be any radical reshaping of society. At best workers now expect little more of Labour than that they should make a better job of 'running the country' (i.e. managing British capitalism) than the Tories.

But more significant than this, there has recently appeared a growing disillusionment in Labour — fuelled by the openly anti-working class policies of the last three years. Whole sections of workers are drifting into a

kind of political vacuum. They can't be bothered to vote in elections, seeing little difference between the parties, or they vote Labour only through lack of any alternative and with a good measure of cynicism:

'...there was a great deal of apathy and cynicism on the part of large numbers of working class voters which was manifested both in discussions with our canvassers and in abstentions at the actual poll itself... People were anxious to talk and they almost universally expressed great dissatisfaction with Labour's policies'. (Tariq Ali, *Red Weekly*, 6 April 1977 — after Stechford by-election).

The by-election in Ladywood appears to confirm the same trend. It seems undeniable that there exists a growing movement in the working class which consists of people who distance themselves considerably from the Labour Party. The movement is contradictory, lacks clear political direction, in some respects is passive or even right wing, and in most cases is based on little more than resentment and cynicism. But we cannot afford to ignore the existence of this trend, and we must reckon with it in our tactics. It is no longer sufficient

to implement. Of course what is wrong with this policy is that precious few people are in need of such an exposure as hardly anyone expects Labour to implement socialism any more. And so the policy falls very much on deaf ears. 'Labour to power with socialist policies' is a straight denial of workers' actual experience of the Labour Party in government. Far from clearing the way for more revolutionary policies, the tactic is likely to produce lack of confidence in the abilities of the far left.

Similar tactics revolve around attempts to affix socialist 'demands' on the Labour Government in order to expose it as non-socialist. Revolutionaries who raise such demands as 'disband the standing army' know full well that there is no chance of Labour ever implementing them. Once again the aim is purely to 'expose' Labour. But to whom? Where are the tens of thousands who are confident that Labour could and should disband the standing army, or similar undertakings?

Then again there are the tactics of joining in the left/right struggle going on inside the party — the fight to replace people like Reg Prentice with people further



Lord Watkinson of the CBI with friend

simply to classify the Labour Party as 'the mass party of the working class' and build our tactics around such an all-encompassing and vague statement. The direction of the drift among many sections of workers appears to be away from positive identification with Labour. This is why we need to re-examine our tactics. This is not a rejection of Lenin's advice. On the contrary. But it is Lenin's *method* we should seek to absorb rather than one particular set of tactics he advocated in 1920.

EXPOSE

'Labour to power with socialist policies', the line adopted by a number of far left organisations, is clearly a fairly close transposition of the 1920 tactics. The idea is to expose Labour's inability to carry out the socialist measures they were elected to

to the left. The thinking here is slightly different. It boils down to 'Labour left to power with socialist policies'. And it is essentially Lenin's united front tactic applied to the Labour left, and obviously based on the assumption that the 'lefts' command widespread support in the vanguard of the workers movement, and that it is they who must be exposed in practice.

'The left' MP's must be forced to fight Wilson and vote and campaign against his policies which are leading the Labour movement to disaster. They must fight to remove Wilson and Co. or be exposed as useless babblers.' (*Red Weekly*, 8 Jan. 1976).

There is nothing 'better' about a left social democrat rather than a right social democrat. Both will, given the right sort of circumstances, 'lead the Labour movement to disaster'. But the sort of tactic outlined in *Red Weekly* fosters the illusion that with a bit of reshuffling at the top the Labour Party might be

converted into a party genuinely committed to socialism. Whereas the actual situation is as described in the recent 'Draft statement of aims' in *Socialist Challenge*: 'Their entire record and position in society shows that it is a reactionary and utopian illusion to see a transition to socialism achieved by a

away from reformist thinking, and not particularly a drift leftwards. When Lenin chose his tactics in 1920 he chose them so as to act in unity with the majority of the workers in order to gain a hearing. Getting the hearing was the most important thing, not the vote for Labour.

Today it is becoming more and more apparent that calling for a Labour vote is gaining us precious little hearing among working class people. To amplify this point, consider the following case: suppose Callaghan were to call a General Election in the face of mounting opposition to the government's austerity measures. Suppose he were to make the central issue of the election his clear desire to get a mandate for further cuts in wages and public spending.

If revolutionaries called for a Labour vote in a situation like this, they would find themselves at immediate loggerheads with tens of thousands of working class militants whose spontaneous reaction would be to abstain. The tactic would gain us no hearing and would place us in the same camp as Callaghan in the eyes of large sections of the working class.

In such a situation our priority must obviously be to stand Socialist Unity candidates in as many constituencies as possible. But elsewhere, we should advocate abstention — for this would be much closer to 'acting in unity' with the most important sections of workers, and would gain us more of a hearing for our ideas.

However, let us be clear. We are discussing a *tactic* not a principle. Different circumstances may require different tactics. For instance in 1974 when the Tories fought an election around the issue of the miners' strike, a vote for Labour was not so much an expression of confidence in Labour as a demonstration of support for the miners. In that case it was vital to be on one side or the other, and where we had none of our candidates we should have said something along the lines of 'Vote Labour and let's show we support the miners against the Tories — but at the same time don't imagine a Labour government will act any differently.'

The present article is necessarily compressed and is intended only as an attempt to open up the debate on election tactics. It is only by abandoning the rigid slogan-mongering that has dogged the left for so long, and by beginning to take careful stock of actual trends and the actual experience of workers before we plan our tactics, that we will be able to find a wider audience for our ideas.

Neil Duffield
Marxist Worker Group, Bolton

Views expressed in the Open Forum column do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board. The column is open to all currents within the Labour movement.



Shirley Williams addressing a mass meeting during Stechford by-election.

DRIFT

Although there is a drift away from Labour, it is not a drift

Magistrate Oakley's motto Guilty till proved innocent

DOROTHY OAKLEY is a familiar figure at Willesden magistrates court, which has a well-deserved reputation as the Metropolitan Police's favourite dispenser of justice.

Socialist Challenge has evidence which seriously challenges Oakley's competence to sit as a magistrate. Several weeks before she sat in judgement on cases involving Grunwick mass pickets, she told a respected medical practitioner of 12 years standing that she was perturbed at the 'very light sentences' which had been meted out to Grunwick pickets by a neighbouring court at Barnet.

According to the doctor, Oakley stated: 'About 40 per cent have got off. We shall have to change all that, and they will get much stiffer sentences.' This has been borne out since Willesden began hearing

mass picket cases a fortnight ago.

We are publishing below the sworn affidavit given to us by our informant. He has asked us to withhold his identity for the time being, but has made it clear that he would be prepared to testify under oath to any investigation which is carried out, whether by the Lord Chancellor's office or the labour movement.

It is clear that Dorothy Oakley should be removed from the court immediately and that a public inquiry into the court should be instigated forthwith. A number of solicitors and barristers have, in the past, complained to the Lord Chancellor about the travesty of justice which transpires in Willesden to little avail. GEOFFREY SHERIDAN investigates the scandal of the Willesden bench and the Oakley phenomenon.

The 'justice' now facing Willesden - the Met. Police's favourite courts

Willesden magistrates court, as Dorothy Oakley observed to our informant, is on Grunwick's home ground. Early on in the struggle the strike committee designated the police based at Willesden Green as George Ward's private cops. Willesden court dispenses justice in a style that the National Association for Freedom holds dear.

It ranks as London's most notorious magistrates court, not least because of its eagerness to remand defendants in custody rather than on bail; for its hostility to legal aid applications; and for the frequency with which its punitive decisions are over-ruled by a judge in chambers or overturned by a crown court.

Reporter Lauren Soertz, who sat in Willesden court twice a week for over six months earlier this year when she worked for the *Kilburn Times*, found that the bench was only too happy to leave defendants in the cells so that, in the words of the police, 'they could stew it out a bit'.

Soertz and a solicitor protested vigorously when they caught sight

of a poster of Hitler adorning the walls of the court's warrant office.

Now solicitors and barristers involved in Grunwick cases are taking the unprecedented step of preparing a circular letter to the Lord Chancellor's office, demanding that action is taken against the Willesden magistrates because of their willingness to accept even readily controvertible police evidence.

TOO LENIENT

All the cases arising from the mass pickets of Grunwick were dealt with by Barnet magistrates court until a fortnight ago. In Dorothy Oakley's opinion, they were far too lenient.

Routine sentencing at Barnet of £20 fines on trumped up obstruction charges, with a further £20 to pay for costs, were evidently not good enough. There were, perhaps, too few jail sentences, such as the two months handed out to Roger Green for assault — his first alleged offence; or the 21 days imposed on *Socialist Challenge* supporter Derek Brough.

On 14 November, the 'justices of the peace' who perch on the Willesden bench began to foam at the beak. This was when they could really begin to sink their claws into the enemies of George Ward. The mass picket cases had come to the Metropolitan Police's favourite court; and to celebrate, Dorothy Oakley was brought back to the bench from her well-earned retirement two months earlier.

NOT GUILTY

Typical of the Willesden treatment was the case of *Socialist Challenge* supporter Frederick Leplat, a member of the Engineering Union's white-collar section, who pleaded not guilty to charges of obstructing the police and obstructing the highway. Fred, who had been standing on the pavement beside the Grunwick gate, was fined a total of £50 with £20 costs and 14 days to pay the lot. Like most others, he is appealing.

A prosecution counsel employed by Scotland Yard told *Socialist Challenge* between Grunwick cases at Willesden last Thursday afternoon that he was well pleased with the way things were going. He hadn't lost a single Grunwick case. Was he surprised, our reporter asked. 'Very', he replied. 'I normally lose lots of cases.'

He has good reason to be satisfied. The previous day, 18 pickets had appeared. All were

convicted. A solicitors' firm that has been dealing with many of the picket cases, estimates that four or five pickets in every 20 hauled up at barnet have been acquitted.

At Willesden the acquittal rate is already worse than that. The Dorothy Oakleys of the Willesden bench do not make empty threats. Yet Barnet's acquittal rate has been half the 40 per cent Oakley imagined it to be. Her error is not altogether surprising. A senior police official has said that Scotland Yard expected 45 per cent acquittals at Barnet, and they were 'amazed at their success'.

LAPSES

There have been some lapses from NAFF-style justice at Willesden. There were three acquittals on 15 November, for example when Illyd Harrington — deputy Labour leader on the Greater London Council — sat as magistrate. Chief Inspector Robert Hay from Willesden Green police station was furious.

He told Brent Trades Council secretary, Jack Dromey, who was representing one of the defendants, that Harrington should be removed from the bench because he had been present at the picket. Harrington's appearance outside Grunwick had, in fact, been purely as an observer. But even that was too much for Ward's shock troops, and no doubt as well for Harrington's colleagues on the bench.

They have a curious notion of impartiality. When strike committee treasurer Jayaben Desai was brought before them on an assault charge, her counsel asked for the case to be moved out of the area. The clerk of the court turned purple with rage. The magistrate announced they had no intention of dismissing themselves.

Desai, who is four foot ten, is convicted of reaching over a foot six wall and striking a cop. Oakley implies, the Willesden bench is well familiar with local conditions.

Peter Kandler, of the New Kensington law centre and one of the early advocates of neighbourhood law centres in Britain, considers that the Willesden magistrates have a Custer's-last-stand attitude to maintaining 'white decency' in an area that has one of the largest black communities in Britain.

He recalls a bail application that he made on behalf of a black on immoral earnings charge. After cross-examining the police inspector on the defendant's background, Kandler turned to address the bench whereupon they started chatting among themselves and declared that bail was refused.

In no uncertain terms, Kandler

What she had to say

I (name deleted), medical practitioner, solemnly and sincerely declare as follows: The following is a true statement, accurate to the best of my knowledge, transcribed by me from a pocket dictation machine, from a recording made by me immediately after the reported conversation hereinafter mentioned.

This conversation took place on the 29 September 1977, from 11.35 to 11.45am at (place deleted) without any attempt at confidentiality or secrecy, and took place between three persons, namely myself, X [whom I do not wish to identify], and Dorothy Oakley, magistrate. Ms Oakley is one of the magistrates who was about to try Grunwick demonstrators arrested while picketing.

In response to a statement from X, Ms Oakley said that she was one of the few magistrates who is not politically involved in this trial: that is to say, does not support one side or the other. Most of the other magistrates have strong feelings about the issue, and belong to one or other political parties. Ms Oakley went on to say that many of those arrested had been tried by a stipendiary magistrate.

This was very ungratifying, she explained, because a stipendiary magistrate does not know local

conditions, does not know what has been going on here, and has been giving them all very light sentences. About 40 per cent have got off. We shall have to change all that, and they will all get much stiffer sentences.

Ms Oakley went on to say that it was going to be a very big and a very long trial; they would have to be sitting all day, in rota. She added, the most shocking things had come out during the trial. The demonstrators had had their lawyers there in the crowd. They had taken the numbers of the police as they arrested demonstrators. They had actually stood there, writing in their note books before any complaints had been made.

While reminiscing about her past, Ms Oakley admitted that she had spent a lot of her life in a small mining town, and indeed was very fond of the miners. In those days I liked the trade unions, she said, they were very good, but they have become too powerful now. She said that APEX was beginning to get very worried, as they have undertaken to pay all the costs and fines: 'I don't think they realise just what these will amount to.'

I make this declaration by virtue of the Statutory Declarations Act 1835. [The statement was signed and notarised on 28 November.]



A perfect match: the right magistrate Dorothy Oakley and the right reverend George, posing for the camera 14 years before their well-earned retirement two months ago.

Thoughts of the right Reverend Oakley

THE VIEWS of Prebendary George Oakley, former Rural Dean of Brent, are the cause of much merriment in the labour movement in North-west London.

The reverend — husband of magistrate Dorothy — retired to the rural pastures of Oxfordshire two months ago, which finally brought relief to the readers of the *Kilburn Times* and *Willesden and Brent Chronicle* who had been regularly regaled with the thoughts of the right reverend.

On the day following the General Election in February 1974, for example, George Oakley expressed to his flock the following enthusiastic sentiments:

'There is need for prayer in England today. What with bombs exploding in our cities, people afraid to open their mail, students rioting, pickets assaulting peaceful workers — who can pretend we live in peace?'

Who, indeed? But the rev. went on to reveal that he had more than prayer in mind: 'Whoever is in power this morning, we are going to face a long bout of austerity — something most of us will welcome if it is going to give us our self-respect back.'

A couple of weeks later, with a Labour Government in office, George Oakley had evidently decided that the resurrection of

Christ was a matter of extreme urgency. In his 'Thinking aloud' column — emblazoned with the headline 'We are all too selfish' — the rev. had this to say: 'As long as England accepted the Christian faith, with its emphasis on sin and redemption, no one would have suggested that wage claims could be stopped by controlling prices, and it is only people who have forgotten their Christianity who think so today.'

Christians, one might have thought, would have some little concern for the price of meat and coffee, if not for wage levels, and it was perhaps in consideration of this that the oligarchs of the Church of England decided to abolish the time-honoured office of rural dean in Brent following the departure of the Oakleys at the end of September.

Yet the views of the right rev. — plainly ludicrous for a cleric ensconced in a predominantly working class area — admirably reflect the conduct of most of the magistrates who dispense 'justice' from the Willesden branch.

Among George Oakley's numerous calls to action was a demand for teachers to be trusted with a cane once again, in spite of the 'airy-fairy education'. Dorothy Oakley would no doubt endorse that opinion. We hope that she does not live up to her upright partner's expectation of politicians:

'No one any longer believes that a politician says what he means; rather he gives the impression of hedging his bets so as never to be called to account for anything he has said.'



Grunwick pickets

Union bosses join Grunwick witchhunt Will Dorothy Oakley join APEX?

Dorothy Oakley was no doubt delighted last week when the leadership of APEX suspended six Grunwick strikers from the union, reports GEOFF BELL.

The suspensions came on 22 November, immediately after four of the strikers had started a three-day hunger strike outside Congress House, the headquarters of TUC.

The hunger strike was in protest at the lack of action by the TUC concerning the cutting off of supplies and services to the Grunwick factory. Explaining the attack on the Grunwick strikers, APEX president Tudor Thomas complained that the hunger strike was 'designed to embarrass the TUC'.

The strikers would probably plead guilty to the charge that they were out to put the leadership of the trade union movement on the spot. They have every right to. It is now three months since the annual Congress passed unanimously a motion calling on all affiliated unions to 'continue and intensify' their aid to the Grunwick strikers.

Since then both the TUC and APEX have done nothing; indeed they have retreated from giving what little support had been previously forthcoming. The latest sickening

betrayal is only the most spectacular in a long line of sell-outs and compromises over Grunwick.

The suspensions have produced a torrent of condemnation from those in the labour movement who remain committed to the Grunwick struggle. For example, APEX Food Branch in Glasgow last week passed a motion which 'severely criticises the decision of the executive to suspend members of the Grunwick strike committee'.

The motion went on to 'call for the reinstatement of all the members suspended and for the executive council to give their full support in the struggle to achieve union recognition'.

The hunger strikers have also received the backing of three Labour MPs. Eddie Loyden, Dennis Skinner and Ron Thomas said on Wednesday, the day after the suspensions, that they fully supported the protest and urged 'the whole trade union movement to step up the struggle to achieve trade union rights at Grunwick'.

Most important of all, the obvious aim of the suspensions — to divide the strike leaders from the other strikers — has met with no success. At a meeting of all the strikers last Friday a unanimous vote of confidence was passed in the strike committee officers and the hunger strikers.

Such determination to continue the struggle was entirely absent from last week's meeting of the TUC General Council. Over two hundred trade unionists lobbied the TUC demanding they organise unions to cut off supplies and services to Grunwick. The General Council refused to even consider such action. Afterwards the TUC general secretary Len Murray added deceit to injury when he announced: 'The General Council has done everything it possibly could'.

The failure of these leaders to act means that the strike committee will be organising a further lobby of the TUC when the General Council next meets on 21 December. Before then trade union branches — especially APEX branches — and trades councils should be urged to pass motions similar to the one quoted above from the APEX Food Branch in Glasgow.



GRUNWICK "JUSTICE" — STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH.

let the magistrates know what he thought about their judicious decision, made without even giving him the opportunity to address them. The magistrates retired for 15 minutes and returned, smiling, to announce that they could allow bail on condition that the defendant put up two sureties of £250 each (absurdly high in relation to the case), and that neither were householders or relatives — restrictions for which there is no legal provision.

EXAMPLES

Solicitors and barristers have informed *Socialist Challenge* of many other examples of Willesden justice:

* Earlier this month the court dealt with a 15 year old accused of housebreaking, who had been in care since being abandoned a child. Quite plainly he had no financial support of his own, yet the bench refused to allow legal aid until 'his means had been checked'.

* A pupil barrister who was assisting the Cobden Trust in researching its publication *Bail or custody* sat for three days at Willesden. While there he attempted to advise two German students up on a motoring offence. They spoke no English. The bench attempted to remind the pupil barrister in custody for contempt of court!

* Bill Nash, a consultant solicitor with the Saunders and Ware firm, told us: 'I was dealing with a

pathetic case of obstruction where the defendant stuck to his case and the police to theirs. His story was not shaken in any way, which should have meant an obvious acquittal. The police officer told me he'd never known a student to get legal aid, and never known an acquittal against police evidence.'

* Before the Grunwick mass picketing began in July, the police informed 14 pickets at the gate one morning — all members of the Brent East Labour Party — that only six were allowed. Eight of the pickets were arrested and later convicted at Willesden. The police have no such powers, and the pickets were acquitted on appeal.

One solicitor who has complained to the Lord Chancellor about the Willesden bench is Charles Wegg-Prosser, a member of the Law Society's council. He told *Socialist Challenge*:

'About five years ago I had a scandalous case of two students on a theft charge who were both refused bail, in spite of their good records and both having families to stay with.'

'I was rebuked by the magistrates for raising the matter after the police had refused bail, although it materialised that the police had little interest in keeping the students in jail and they were released a couple of days later. I was utterly scandalised.'

In Wegg-Prosser's view, the Willesden bench mainly consists of 'right-wing Labour Party people, who — when they get in such a position — become more right wing.'

Last Friday, Lord Shawcross — a former Labour Attorney-

General — publicly joined the ruling class's campaign to abolish the jury system. He declared that there were 'far too many' acquittals at the Old Bailey. Meanwhile, the Labour Government, which led some of its supporters to believe it would reform the legal system, has not even had the temerity to retire Widgery, the reactionary Lord Chief Justice, who now awaits a General Election in the expectation of being followed by a Tory appointee.

Dorothy Oakley and her cohorts might seem small fry. But their decisions have brought misery to countless people.

Direct action against them is not, it seems, unprecedented. Solicitors have informed us of an incident that occurred a year ago. Thirty men charged with burgling hotels had been remanded in custody for some weeks. When they were again due to come up for remand, they learned that Dorothy Oakley was to be on the bench, and refused to leave the cells.

Oakley, we were told, led the other two magistrates down to the cells and shouted from the entrance: 'You are all remanded in custody for seven days.' They refused to listen to the pleas that ensued. We have not been able to obtain firm confirmation of this incident, but it fits Oakley-style justice and the fascist posters that have decorated the court building.

Oakley must be removed at once, and a full investigation must be conducted into this thoroughly reactionary court.

She must go!

In addition to Jack Dromey's statement, which appears on the front page, *Socialist Challenge* has received the following comments on Magistrate Oakley:

GRUNWICK STRIKE COMMITTEE: 'We are all appalled that a person in a public position should make such comments on the Grunwick issue. It's a frightening attitude for a magistrate to take.'

'In view of the fines that are being imposed on our pickets, Oakley's removal from the bench should be followed with criminal prosecution. And in view of the police action against the pickets, particularly on 7 November, we believe there should be a full public inquiry. This should include

the operation of the courts.'

PEGGY QUIRKE, secretary, Brent South Labour Party: 'A magistrate who makes remarks like that should not be allowed to sit on the bench. We've certainly heard it's a reactionary court. We have some of our people on the bench, but they've had to stand down on the Grunwick cases because of their involvement with the trade union movement.'

CHARLES WEGG-PROSSER, member of the Law Society's council: 'Dorothy Oakley's statement is highly improper and unjudicial. It is extremely wrong for someone exercising a judicial function to prejudge a case. A Grunwick demonstrator should be

judged according to the evidence, just like any other defendant.'

BILL NASH, consultant solicitor: 'To make such a comment about a group of cases you will be judging indicates a desire to convict more pickets, while a magistrate is supposed to be purely guided by standards of proof of evidence.'

'How could she know that another court is too lenient when she presumably doesn't know the evidence examined there? Her remarks are quite consistent with Willesden court.'

DENNIS SKINNER, MP: 'I just take it for granted that in our society, when judges come from the class they do, that you are bound to get a very reactionary bench. It's high time these magistrates were checked for membership of NAFF. Magistrates should be elected.'



Kicked by cops: six months

WANTED URGENTLY: witnesses for John Lockwood who has just been sentenced to six months' jail by Lambeth magistrates for the pleasure of being kicked by police officers following the Lewisham anti-fascist demonstration on 13 August.

Lockwood, a delegate to the All Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, and an unemployed teacher, produced medical evidence of his injuries, but the court preferred to convict him on the ludicrous charge of 'assault on an unknown police officer'.

He is appealing against both conviction and sentence, but has to locate the other three or four comrades who were shoved southwards along Lewisham High Road, past the police station in Ladywell Road, shortly before 5pm on 13 August. Rush information to Socialist Challenge, marking the envelope: 'John Lockwood — urgent'.



Letter from Long Kesh

'People may think him foolish...'

The recent publicity given to the methods of torture and interrogation practiced at the Castlereagh Detention Centre in Belfast are currently being investigated by Amnesty International. Our regular correspondent from Long Kesh prisoner of war camp tells of the human consequences of just one victim of such 'interrogation'.

more I talked to him the more I realised how gullible he really was. He seemed thrilled to be in the company of men who he saw as folk heroes. He was so carried away with it all that before long he imagined himself a fully fledged IRA man.

The youthful patriotic sentiment bubbling in him had finally found an outlet. Little did he realise the consequences of signing a confession to the killing of a soldier, a crime in which he didn't have any part. Nor did he realise what life imprisonment really meant.

Some people may think him foolish. But the facts are that the Special Branch who questioned him exploited his innocence, and a psychological phase in his life, in order to obtain an admission of murder from him. As a result of this exploitation, the young man will be deprived of his

freedom for many years to come. His torture is but beginning, as he grows older and presumably wiser he will only then realise what he was forced to do and his mental suffering will rapidly escalate.

To remedy this and many other injustices it is imperative that all those sentenced on the basis of their own 'admissions' have their cases reviewed by a more impartial judicial body than the present one — one which is only too glad to find any scrap of evidence to imprison any Nationalist or Republican to satisfy their sectarian and class bigotry.

And it still goes on. As a native of Armagh I am deeply concerned about the widespread arrests and imprisonment of youth of that city during the first week of November. With the re-opening of Gough Military

Barracks as an interrogation centre on 1 November, 40 local men and women were picked up and brought there to get 'business going'.

Although Armagh has been relatively quiet for a long period, apart from a series of unsolved Loyalist murders, the arrests were concentrated on the Catholic working class areas.

The population of Armagh is around 10,000 — approximately half are Catholics. Last week 13 of these Catholics were charged with various offences and thrown into prisons on remand. They were aged between 15 and 19. These arrests account for 0.2

per cent of the Nationalist population. That figure might not appear extraordinary, but imagine if that many had been arrested in Birmingham. It would amount to 2,000 people — with another 4,000 picked up. Such arrests would cause more than a ripple in Britain!

So no wonder the Nationalist people of Armagh are aghast, and no wonder there is such anxiety and consternation in all these working class housing estates. The question being asked now is, who is next?

Yours,
Tiocfaidh an la.

I have been in prison since early 1975. Since then I have listened to fellow prisoners' recollections of their experience in the so-called 'interrogation centres'. I know personally three men from different areas of the North who signed statements admitting guilt to the killings of separate members of the security forces. Killings which they did not commit, nor have any part in. It is well known in prison circles that these men are innocent and wrongly imprisoned.

In each case the victims suffered extreme mental and physical torture while being interrogated.

When they could no longer stick it, they signed already prepared statements, thus condemning themselves to long periods in prison.

I mention only three cases but it can be reasonably assumed that there are many others in a similar position. Sadly they have become the forgotten men and women as the volume of torture and brutality allegations continue to grow.

While I was on remand in Crumlin Road Jail in 1976 I met and became friendly with one of the three. He was very young, innocent and very naive. The

Irish women tortured

A place called Armagh

THE PLIGHT of male prisoners in Long Kesh concentration camp has been regularly featured in *Socialist Challenge*.

Yet over the last few months there has been an increasing number of women sentenced for political offences and a simultaneous deterioration of the conditions inside the women's prison in Armagh. These women are, as the men in Long Kesh, refusing to accept 'criminal' status for political offences.

ANN DUFFY, from the Short Strand area of Belfast describes conditions. Her comments are taken from a longer interview which will be appearing shortly in *Socialist Woman*.

Protesters are held in continuous solitary. They receive one half hour exercise period in the morning and one at night. But they have to use these to clean out their cells. So they never get fresh air.

The cells are small and all the windows are broken. So the women have to sit up in blankets for warmth all day. One woman is suffering from terrible migraine headaches. To get to the toilet they have to ring a bell and wait for a screw with guard dogs to come and accompany them down. Recently one woman has had guard dogs set on her while

being accompanied down to the toilets.

The cells of the remand prisoners are completely white with very low ceilings. The windows are just concrete slabs. The food is awful. One night it was so bad that even the nurse refused to let us eat it.

There are two women pregnant at the moment. One who is over four months pregnant is in solitary. She has to endure the same conditions as the rest of the protestors. She receives no extra exercise, nor is her diet any different.

The other woman is five months pregnant. They were



making her take hot baths every night. I told her to refuse to take them. She asked me to stay with her one night and I agreed. But the screw gave me some sort of medicine before I went in and I just conked out. They don't want anyone giving her advice.

As for medical facilities, they are given what's called a prenatal check one a week. But they are never examined. If they have any complaints they are given valium.

They don't want the bother of a baby being born in Armagh.

In Castlereagh 'interrogation' centre, women, like men, are

beaten. Mostly it's continuous beating around the head. One woman had tea thrown in her face. Many maintain they are drugged in Castlereagh. They tell of being sick and dizzy after eating food and can't remember the whole thing, just bits and pieces. I don't know about sexual assaults. I've heard it's increasing like the wee girl from New Lodge who was stripped and photographed. But again, a lot of women wouldn't talk about it. They would try and put it out of their minds.

Somehow we've got to make people see what's happening.

Military police swoop in Woolwich

British Withdrawal from Northern Ireland campaigner, Daid Marzella was arrested by the military police on Sunday. Marzella and Pat Arrowsmith were distributing 'Some Information for Discontented Soldiers', at an army housing estate in Woolwich when they were approached by two military police.

The MPs told the two that they were going to arrest them. Despite protest the military police refused to contact the civil police, and instead the bundled Marzella in a military vehicle. Arrowsmith was about to be

arrested when one MP said 'leave her alone, she's a woman'.

When David was in the army vehicle, he was intimidated and verbally assaulted with such comments as 'You fucking Paddy'. (Actually, he's Scottish.)

He was taken to an army barracks and questioned for one hour. A plain clothes MP told him 'We have a thick file on you lot'. He was eventually released after signing a statement saying he had not been harassed by the Army.

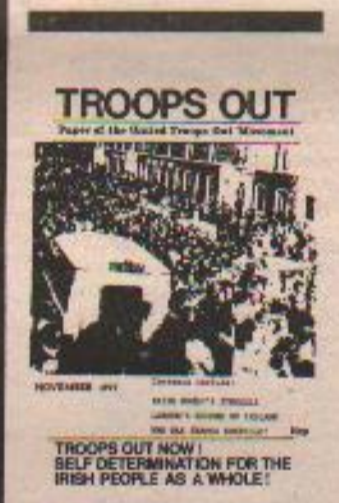
Last year 14 members of BWNIC were founded not guilty of sedition after being tried in the Old Bailey for distributing 'Some Information for Discontented Soldiers'.

Irish Solidarity News

Troops Out Conference

THE UNITED Troops Out Movement will be holding its second conference on 10 and 11 December at Sheffield University. The conference is open to all those who support the demands troops out now and self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. The conference will include discussion of work in the labour, women's and student movements, and what initiatives can be taken to win militants in these movements to a position supporting the national democratic rights of the Irish people.

The entrance fee will be 60p per day (30p for claimants and students), and a pooled fare will operate.



Details from Troops Out Open Conference, c/o Rising Free, 152 Upper Street, London N1.

The importance of the conference and the work the UTOM is doing are both illustrated in the latest edition of Troops Out, the paper of the UTOM. Contents include an article on 'Irish Women and British Imperialism', a report of the all-Ireland women's liberation conference, and an analysis of the British Labour Party and the Irish question. Troops Out is available from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1 at 10p plus 10p for p&p.

Workers' Research Unit

ANOTHER NEW publication is the latest bulletin from the Workers' Research Unit in Belfast.

In a really excellent publication the bulletin gives over 20 papers to a thorough analysis of British repression in Ireland. Full of statistics, tables and quotations from British military forces the long article is one of the best produced on this issue to date. The bulletin also has an article on the Northern Ireland economy.

It costs 30p plus 10p for p&p, and is available from the Workers' Research Unit, 52 Broadway, Belfast 12.

Prison Enquiry

ONE OF the least publicised aspects of the Irish war is the treatment Irish Republican prisoners receive in British prisons. Even since the death of Frank Stagg there have been numerous examples of brutality handed out to Irish prisoners in British jails.

By refusing to grant these prisoners political status and the right to serve sentences in their home country, the Labour Government is overtly sanctioning this brutality.

Such is the background to an enquiry called by Hull University Students Union into the treatment of Irish political prisoners in the Hull Prison riot of last year. The enquiry received the unanimous support of a 700-strong students' union meeting at Hull University.

The union is determined to be unbiased in organising the enquiry. A public statement has been issued to Merlyn Rees and Roy Mason inviting them to attend and explain why they refuse to give Irish prisoners political status. The enquiry is due to start in early December.

Birmingham Bombings

IT IS NOW just over three years since the six men convicted of the Birmingham bombings were first questioned by the police.

Since then the six men have consistently maintained their innocence.

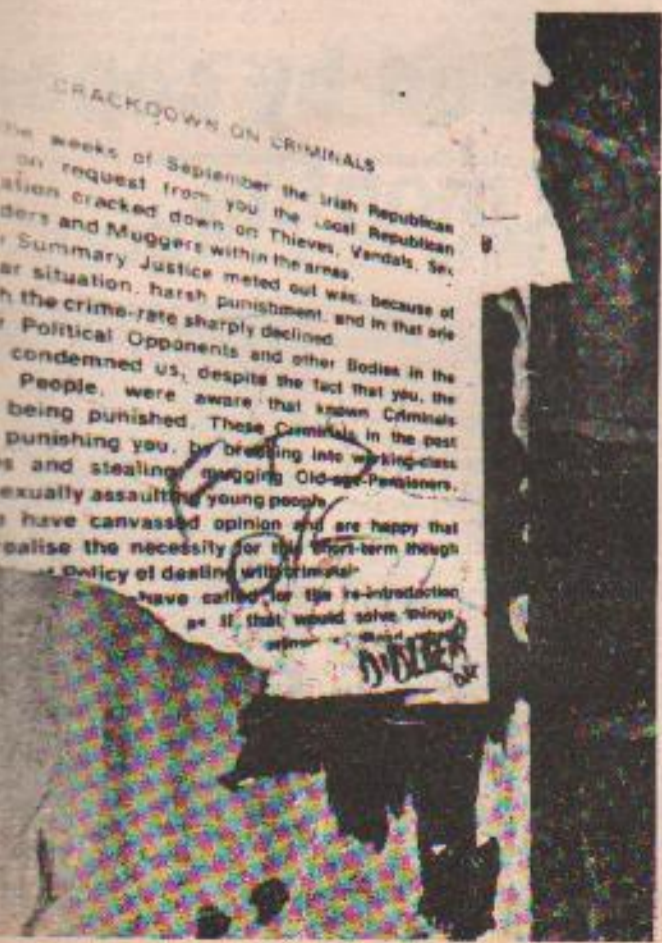
They have further stated that while in police custody they were savagely and repeatedly beaten by members of the CID, and that false and manufactured evidence was presented against them.

Now, solicitors acting for the six have issued writs claiming damages for assault against the Chief Constable of the West Midlands Police, the Chief Constable of the Lancashire Police and the Home Office. As the case is a major one and the implications so far-reaching, the proceedings will take place in the High Court.

Legal aid for the proceedings has already been granted to five of the men and the case of the sixth is being considered. It is noteworthy that legal aid for such costly proceedings is not granted without substantial and convincing evidence being submitted to the Legal Aid Committee.

Play

THE PIRATE Jenny theatre group is currently rehearsing 'Mad Micks and Englishmen' — a satirical revue with music and song written by Eamonn McCann. In a situation where blanket censorship exists on Ireland, McCann's play promises to be a rare opportunity not to be missed. The play is available for universities, trades councils, rank and file meetings and social events. Pirate Jenny is taking bookings now from Kieran McElroy, c/o Socialist Challenge. Or phone 960-5875 (day) or 272-1876 (evenings).



New light on Sadat's visit to Israel

The fruit of three month's planning

The visit of the Egyptian President, Anwar al-Sadat, to Israel seems likely to provoke as much controversy among the left and the Palestinian movement as it has within the Arab ruling class. Our Middle East correspondent, M. JAFAR, offers an assessment of the significance of the trip and reveals some startling new facts about the plans behind it.

CONTRARY to first impressions in both the Western and Arab news media, Sadat's decision to go to Israel was not all that sudden — a miracle of the new McLuhan era of instant transnational news communication. Although much essential information remains shrouded in mystery, some new facts have begun to surface.

In August, the American Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, visited the Middle East. His message to Sadat was that the Carter administration could not guarantee Israeli acceptance of the Egyptian-American proposals for reconvening the Geneva peace talks. This prompted a major revision of Egypt's foreign policy.

QUESTIONABLE

For some time Sadat had been uneasy with Carter's insistence on a 'whole' settlement, as opposed to Kissinger's step-by-step approach, on the basis of which he had negotiated two partial Israeli withdrawals from Sinai in 1974 and 1975. Sadat probably thought that Carter gave too much emphasis and 'nuisance value' to the Palestinian leadership, at a time when the forces of the resistance movement had been crushed by the Syrian army in Lebanon.

The ensuing deadlock over Geneva and American helplessness in light of Carter's problems with Congress, confirmed Sadat in his view of a need for a radical change. According to reliable journalists Sadat emerged in August out of a one month retreat with a detailed plan for secret contacts with Israel. These were put into effect immediately.

In mid-September, Moshe Dayan, Israel's Foreign Minister, broke off a scheduled trip to the US in Paris and apparently disappeared for a short while. He then made a return trip to Israel before going on to Washington. According to information which is just surfacing now, Dayan met with a high ranking Saudi official acting on behalf of Sadat.

The Egyptian President is known to maintain a particularly close working relation with the Saudi foreign intelligence service headed by Kamal Adham, as well as the extensive consultations he normally carries on with the Saudi regime on all sorts of matters. During the January uprising against food price rises it is now known that Sadat made a secret trip to Riyadh which resulted in a massive Saudi financial injection to bolster up the ailing Egyptian economy.

NOGOODS

The 'Saudi connection' in the meeting with Dayan, if true, is particularly significant in the light of Saudi Arabia's mild 'criticism' of Sadat's decision to go to Israel. It will be easier for the Saudis to mediate between Egypt and those regimes like Syria which were taken off guard by the Sadat initiative, if its position seems to be somewhere between the two sides.

Another incident which passed unnoticed at the time was Sadat's peculiar ministerial reshuffle early in October. He added five new ministers without portfolio, including Butros Ghali, currently acting as Foreign Minister after the resignation of Fahmia and Riadh, two Government ministers. Apparently Sadat expected many more resignations which did not materialise.

In late October, the Egyptian armed forces were given a 30 per cent pay rise. Large 'bonuses' and 'training grants' were given to thousands of officers. Several

hundred senior officers were sent on early retirement leave, and transferred from Cairo to remote camps in Upper Egypt. Sadat certainly knew the people he was dealing with, and it should come as no surprise that the entire top leadership of the Egyptian army gave him full support even before he left Cairo.

Finally there is the unusual incident of Sadat's 31 October visit to President Ceausescu of Romania, who had met the Israeli President Begin one month earlier. All parties concerned have intimated that the possibility of a Sadat-Begin meeting was discussed, although further details have not been made available.

The sum total of these hidden incidents and other more established recent political trends, demonstrate the following points:

- * That Sadat had carefully prepared himself to forestall any chance of a coup;
- * That he had the backing of the leadership of the Egyptian army, and the upper echelons of the civil bureaucracy, notwithstanding Fahmi and Riadh's resignations;
- * That he had played on the genuinely felt grievances of the Egyptian masses with the harsh economic facts of their daily life, by identifying a 'peace settlement' with reductions in the huge military expenditure of Egypt;
- * That Sadat in all probability was not working alone. There is a strong likelihood of Saudi involvement in the whole affair, at least in its initial conception if not in its final details;
- * That extensive discussions had taken place with the Israelis on at least one occasion in September, which incidentally were reported

to the Americans. There is no reason to assume that during these discussions the Israelis had been anything but completely frank with Sadat on just how little they were willing to concede as an immediate response to his trip.

* That the Syrian drift to the left after President Assad's realisation (along with Sadat's) that momentum for a settlement was once again foundering on Israeli intransigence, would eventually serve to weaken Sadat's position in Egypt.

Economically and politically Assad's room for manoeuvre was far wider than Sadat's, and the latter realised this. The choice facing the Egyptian regime was either to let itself be dragged by Syria into another 'no war, no peace' quagmire in a situation that ruled out the military option for Egypt, or to take the initiative itself. Had Sadat opted for the former, he would certainly have been overthrown within a year or two.

In this context, one can see in Sadat's action a carefully thought out long term attempt to get slightly more concessions from the Zionist state. By changing the ground rules of the relationship between the Arab and Zionist ruling classes.

Sadat has probably been more conscious than any other Arab leader of the changes since the October 1973 war. The emergence and growth of a new and more solidly based generation of Arab capitalists has been most perfectly expressed in the Egyptian policy of 'Infitah', or the political and economic opening to imperialism.

Sadat is trying to snatch the initiative away from Assad by gambling on the extension of the policy of 'Infitah' onto the inter-Arab political terrain embracing the relationships between all the ruling classes of the region. His gamble stands no small chance of at least temporary success, as it coincides with the objective processes of development of the Arab bourgeoisies at present. His opponents, the rejectionist Arab regimes, are now a confused medley of



governments, as much as war with each other as they are opposed to Sadat.

But will the Zionist state oblige? The rejectionist Arab regimes — with Syria rapidly joining their ranks — argue that Sadat has received nothing in return for the unprecedented recognition of the Zionist state.

Today's Zionist establishment is unlikely to concede anything of substance immediately. That would be too obvious. But the long term significance of Sadat's address to the Knesset lies in the fact that an Arab politician for the first time intervened directly into the political situation in Israel.

The response to Sadat's visit among average Israeli citizens was completely unforeseen. There is a very powerful anti-war sentiment inside Israel, and Sadat has the intelligence to use this for his own interests. It seems that, despite short term appearances, Sadat's interven-

tion has probably placed more long term pressure on the Zionist establishment than any other political act since the October war.

But the October war, for all the mighty forces it set into motion, released from Zionist control nothing more than a useless strip of desert along the Suez canal. The Israeli state is today stronger than ever before. It will make no major concessions especially on the matter of Palestinian control of the West Bank, which is a matter of principle for the whole Zionist establishment.

The concessions they are likely to make are only those that touch the interests of the Arab ruling classes — and even on these they have not made up their minds. It is likely that they will now play a waiting game, dragging out the process of making concessions as long as possible.

SETTLE ACCOUNTS

What they concede will in part be dependent on the sort of support Sadat gets from other Arab regimes. It is too early to predict the precise line-up of Arab regimes on the question of Sadat's visit to Israel.

It would be foolhardy to think that even an act as dramatic as Sadat's assassination could substantially change the course of events. Some leaders of the Egyptian army have confirmed to journalists in private that if Sadat is assassinated his successor will be less able to change the train of events he has set in motion.

Sadat's visit has brought much closer the possibility of a 'peaceful settlement' — a settlement between the ruling classes of the region at the expense of the Arab masses. The Palestinian movement and people will be the frontline victims of this process. But so will the Egyptian masses, who will be confronted with a stronger and more self confident ruling class.

It is for this reason only that Arab revolutionaries must oppose Sadat's visit and fight against its successful conclusion with all their energy and effort. We must not be duped into thinking that Sadat has somehow committed a great 'national betrayal'. How is it possible for such a consummate bourgeois politician like Sadat to betray the interests of his own class?

On the contrary, Sadat has shown in this daring tightrope act far-reaching political imagination, which he is putting into good use from the point of view of the newly emerging Arab bourgeoisies of the region. The same sort of vision and political foresight is now required of the Arab revolutionary movement if it is to meet up to the challenge hurled upon it by its exploiters.

In Brief

CARRILLO: The latest thoughts of the high priest of Eurocommunism. At a press conference in Washington last week Carrillo opined that the Spanish monarchy was playing a 'positive role', that the US should be allowed to keep its military bases in Spain, and that Spain should join the Common Market.

SAHARA: The Polisario liberation organisation has admitted holding three crew members from a Spanish trawler. However, this is not surprising since the Spanish have been making a big naval build-up along the Saharan coast to back up French attempts to intervene in the area.

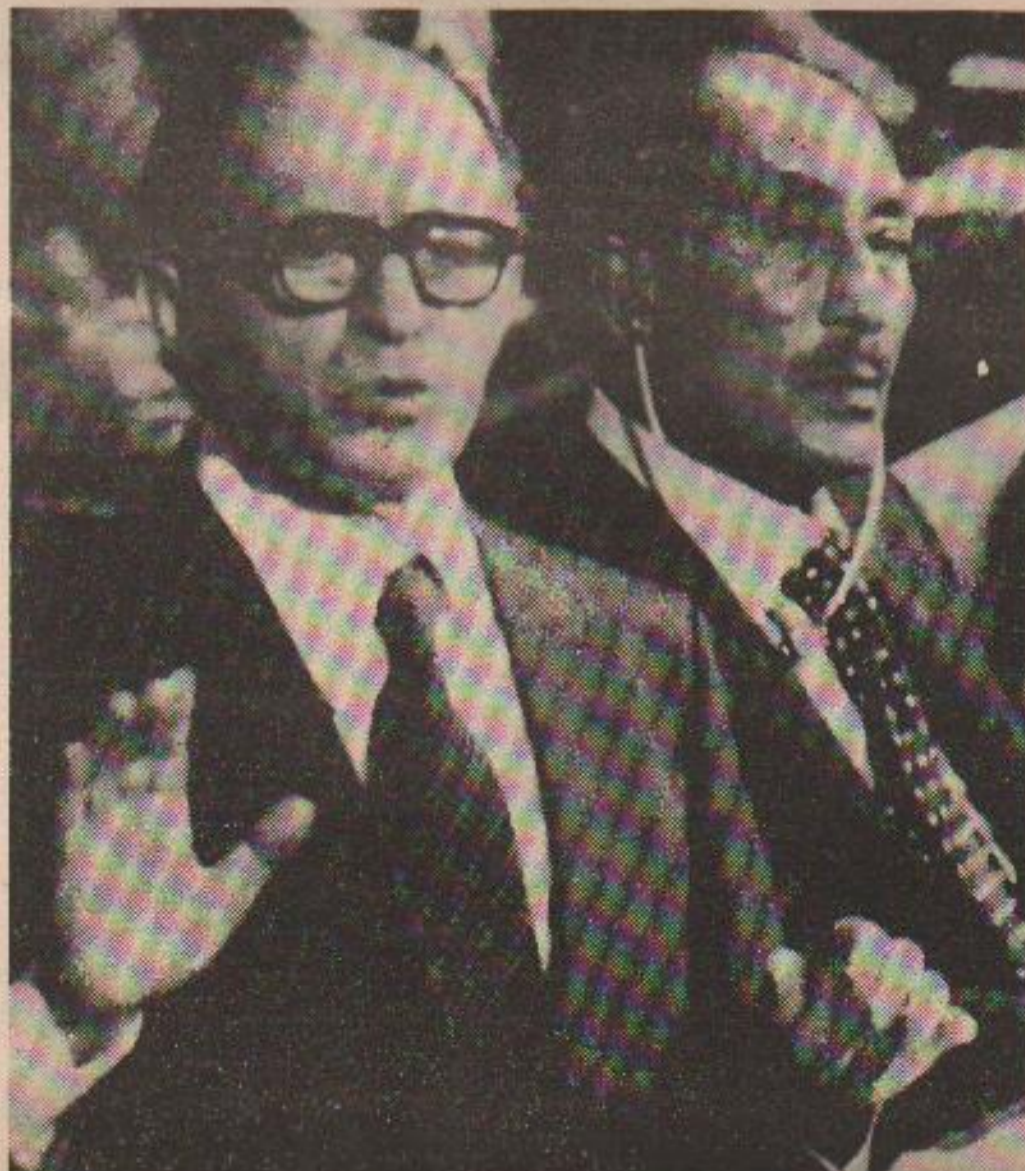
ZIMBABWE: The massive Lucas group, and three of its top executives, face summonses for Rhodesian sanctions busting.

PORTUGAL: Tens of thousands of people attended a far right demonstration in Oporto last week. Demonstrators gave the fascist salute and sang the Spanish fascist anthem Cara al Sol. No party took official responsibility for the march, but participants included members of the Social Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Centre and even the Socialist Party, as well as the fascist groups. One of the speakers was former Prime Minister Pinheiro de Azevedo. The monarchists and the Maoist-Portuguese Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) were also present.

The mob ransacked a Communist Party bookshop and firebombed the headquarters of the Internationalist Communist League. Portuguese supporters of the Fourth International, causing extensive damage and putting one comrade in hospital. We hope to carry a fuller report next week.

PAKISTAN: Newspaper editors and the journalists' union have called a day of action against press censorship. If this fails to win concessions they propose a mass hunger strike.

USA: Following in the footsteps of Harry S. Truman, Jimmy Carter has a little wooden sign on his desk in the Oval Office. It says: 'The buck stops here'. Unfortunately, that isn't where Carter actually works. He has a little office next door.



Under the unique Italian system whereby opportunities for patronage and political base-building are shared out between the major parties, control of this year's Biennale was vested in a member of the Socialist Party, Carlo Ripa di Meana. When, early this year, Ripa di Meana announced that the 1977 Biennale — by now one month of cultural events covering cinema, history, visual arts, religion, literature, theatre, scientific research and music — would have as its central theme 'Cultural Dissent' (i.e. repression of intellectuals in the bureaucratized workers' states), there was a prompt and extremely vigorous protest from the Soviet ambassador to Italy.

But after a certain period of controversy and manoeuvre, in which tactical advantages and disadvantages were judiciously weighed and calculated on all sides, the proposed topic was confirmed. The minority Christian Democrat government, which is kept in power by the Communist Party's policy of parliamentary abstention, correctly estimated that though the choice of theme clearly represented an attempt by the divided and directionless Socialist Party to score off the Communists, the latter were caught in too embarrassing a dilemma to be able to react with any real force. The Communist Party itself, aware that repression in the Soviet Union and East Europe is electorally the heaviest millstone round its own neck, has at the same time — especially since Carrillo's rash pronouncements on the non-socialist nature of the Soviet Union today — been anxious above all to moderate the anti-Brezhnevite dynamic of 'Euro-communism'. In this situation, it had little alternative but to pursue the course it did: accepting to participate in the Biennale, but in the most minimal and 'unofficial' way. Simultaneously, the PCI permitted a rather higher-level involvement by its members in a 'Conference on Power and Opposition in the Post-revolutionary Societies', organized by the Manifesto group to immediately precede the opening of the Biennale and designed in particular as a left-wing counter-event to the latter's 'History Seminars'.

MIXED AUDIENCE

Now all this might seem just a trivial episode in Italian cultural politics, were it not for three factors: (1) the range of participants who attended the Manifesto conference and the Biennale history seminars; (2) the international conjuncture (the Carter 'human rights' offensive; Eurocommunism; the impact and exploitation of Solzhenitsyn; continuing repression in the USSR and East Europe); (3) the central importance for revolutionary Marxists of the 'model of socialism' problem (how to project a conception of proletarian democracy susceptible of being taken up by the masses as clearly and convincingly superior to bourgeois democracy). Because of these factors, the two meetings in question focused some key practical and theoretical difficulties facing socialists today, in an almost ideal-typical way.

The conference organized by the Manifesto group brought together four or five hundred militants from a segment of the political spectrum that is emerging with growing homogeneity as a recognizable current, despite the diversity of party (or non-party) affiliation represented. Perhaps the essential defining characteristic of this current is that it aims to influence and deflect the overall strategy of the mass Communist Parties. Its main components come from, on the one hand, disillusioned former Maoists, on the other CP members unhappy about the rightward drift of the Euro-communist parties. Since the virtual collapse last winter of the



Photo montage: PETER KENNARD

Confrontation in Venice

The Venice Biennale was once simply a two-yearly exhibition of contemporary visual art. In the late Sixties it became the scene of repeated confrontations between the art establishment and political militants plus proponents of a

'counter-culture'. It diversified its activities. This year's session was entirely devoted to discussing repression and dissent in the USSR and Eastern Europe. QUINTIN HOARE was present and discusses the implications of what took place.

Manifesto group's project, since its 1969 expulsion from the PCI, of constructing an alternative mass revolutionary party, the group has increasingly reoriented itself in this sense. The Venice conference, was attended by members of CPs like Bruno Trentin, the Italian metal-workers' leader, Louis Althusser from the PCF, Alfonso Comin,

from Barcelona and by former Communists like Fernando Claudin or Franz Marek. There were Maoist apologists like Charles Bettelheim and Vittorio Riesel and orthodox Eurocommunists such as the historian and PCI deputy Rosario Villari. It was also attended by a number of the more left-wing political exiles from East Europe: Leonid Plyusch and Boris Weil from the USSR, Edmund Baluka from Poland, Jiri Pelikan from Czechoslovakia, Istvan Meszaros from Hungary. No Trotskyists were invited.

There were three days of vague speeches on the nature of the post-revolutionary societies and the stance to be adopted towards them; of laments that the Deutscherian-evolutionist hopes of the period which followed Stalin's death and above all the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU had proved so illusory; and of expressions of regret for the tardiness with which the 'West European Left' had faced up to the problem of Stalinism. A lowest-common-denominator final resolution was then adopted, of some twenty lines, which avoided all the thorny theoretical issues which divided the participants: is the Soviet Union capitalist, imperialist, social-fascist, socialist, a new type of class society, the same kind of society as People's China, and so on and so forth?

The most concrete passage in this resolution reads as follows: (The participants) 'believe that the conquest and defence of

areas of freedom in the post-revolutionary societies is essential; they explicitly support the struggle for democracy and commit themselves to denounce violations of the latter. They further believe that absence of freedom have their root in fundamental processes which took place in the phase of revolution and of transition: these concern us, form part of the heritage of the class struggle, and must be confronted and resolved on this terrain.' It would, of course, be easy for Trotskyists to feel complacently that, admirable though these sentiments may be, they only represent a step forward in relation to what was an extremely under-developed previous position. For manifestly, they do not really even begin to grasp the true theoretical and practical terms of the debate over the 'post-revolutionary societies' and their future. But, as I shall argue, such complacency is by no means the appropriate response.

The four-day-long 'history seminars' of the Biennale itself were a very different affair. The Socialist organizers, motivated by anti-communist opportunism and the cynical accommodation to capitalist society which increasingly marks contemporary social-democratic intellectuals, had lined up an array of keynote speakers worthy of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in its heyday. In the name of pluralism, and the need for the Left to stop speaking only to itself and face up to the arguments of the Right, an overwhelmingly anti-Marxist and even anti-socialist event was staged. Firmly barricaded from the public, fifty-odd notables sat round a table under the glare of television arc-lamps and in the presence of an audience composed entirely of press reports. The terms of debate were set by the introductory speaker for the first session Leszek Kolakowski: was Gulag contained in germ in the

essentially totalitarian and anti-democratic thought of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky? The whole of the first day, and most of the second, introduced by veteran cold warrior Leopold Labedz, editor of the CIA/Congress for Cultural Freedom (now Ford Foundation)-financed Soviet affairs journal *Survey*, saw a veritable gale of the crudest anti-Marxist propaganda, which hardly rose above the level of the *Daily Mail*, Harold Wilson or Mrs Thatcher's advisers: selected quotations from the socialist pantheon attacking 'democracy', plus liberal tarring with the brush of Gulag for any speaker prepared to defend Marxism or attack imperialism as well as Stalinism.

Kolakowski and Labedz were flanked in their attack by the founder-theorist of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, Cornelius Castoriadis (better known as Paul Cardan or Jean-Marie Coudray or Pierre Chaulieu), now a Parisian pseudo-psychoanalytic guru recently adopted as the latest anti-Marxist mode by *Telos* magazine in the United States. The level of his intervention, which introduced the final session, is perhaps best captured by the statement: 'I challenge anybody to find one single original conception in the entire work of Karl Marx which has any relevance to the revolutionary socialist transformation of society.' Another renegade voice which made itself heard in this sorry chorus was that of André Glucksmann, one-time rebellious pupil of Althusser and ideologue of the Mao-spontaneists in France, who has put firmly behind him any anti-democratic deviations in his own past (such as systematic physical attacks on Trotskyist meetings and other such minor failures to confront the negative legacy of Stalin), and has jumped from one Manichean view of the world (revolutionary China versus the fascist and imperialist rest of the

world) to another (the individual capable of redemption versus the evil society which surrounds him).

Glucksmann produced the crowning futility even of this occasion when, in reply to a rather defensive analogy proposed by the French Communist author Jean Elieinstein to the effect that *Capital* was no more responsible for Gulag than were the Gospels for the Inquisition, he said that at least the Inquisition had stimulated the Protestant Reformation! Since Glucksmann was seeking to prove that Marxism is dead, killed by Gulag, the argument combined gross historical blunder with self-defeating logic. But it seems that such stuff is enough to make a bourgeois intellectual star in the Paris firmament today.

None of this would be worth so much as recording, if it were not for the presence at the Biennale of large numbers of political exiles from East Europe, by no means all of them anti-socialists. Thus the intervention of a number of somewhat heterogeneous Marxists — Communists like Elieinstein, Giuseppe Boffa and Monty Johnstone, left social democrats like Melo Antunes, independent figures like Claudin, Trotskyists like Pierre Broué and myself — served to give some support to those like Jiri Pelikan, Michel Reiman, Jan Sling and Jan Kavan from Czechoslovakia, Leonid Plyusch from the Soviet Union, Wlodimierz Brus from Poland, who form a socialist left among the exiles from East Europe. As a result of this combination, a relatively acceptable composite resolution was passed, calling for the immediate liberation of a series of political prisoners not only in the Soviet Union, East Germany (Rudolf Bahro), Czechoslovakia and Cuba, but also in Uruguay and Argentina. Given the weighting of the meeting, this represented a limited success.

However, the really important

questions posed by these two conferences are: (1) what explains the tremendous impact of Solzhenitsyn in the West, and of the Carter 'human rights' initiative in the East; (2) what explains the still relatively limited impact of the Trotskyist analysis of the Soviet Union, even upon Marxists in the process of breaking with traditional Stalinist or Maoist certitudes. The answer to the first is relatively obvious, though it certainly allows us no complacency. The impact of Solzhenitsyn reflects a real crisis of the whole socialist project at the level of the masses in the advanced capitalist countries. Once the post-1956 hopes for a peaceful 'evolution' in the East, best articulated by Deutscher, had faded, after the fall of Khrushchev and above all after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the seeming inflexibly repressive nature of the Soviet and satellite régimes came to represent more than ever a forbidding negative example of what socialism might mean.

SWEET IRONY

Trotskyists alone had a conception of soviet democracy capable of serving as a concrete counter-model — but they were not able to project this at a mass level, because of their own weakness, material and also — it must be recognized — theoretical. Similarly, Carter has had an impact in the East because the mass working-class organizations in the West have not been capable of speaking consistently and with a clear voice on the question of democratic rights. If all they can talk of is 'bourgeois democracy', then what do they have to say more than a straight bourgeois spokesman like Carter? Yet one thing they cannot do is propose a state structure for the transition to socialism based on sovereign organs of popular power.

With respect to the second question too, no complacency is possible. Of course, for many militants such as those who attended the Manifesto group's meeting, their past certainly does hamper their ability to appreciate the immense scientific achievement of Trotsky's analysis of the nature of the USSR. But we must also be aware of the weaknesses of the alternative we have so far been able to present for such militants. After all, the statement of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was such a big advance for us — such a real contribution towards articulating a convincing contemporary model of socialism — precisely because *no such general and clear statement of the revolutionary Marxist position had existed before*.

The statement was formulated precisely following the events in Portugal, during which not only was the Fourth International badly divided, but even the majority was not able consistently, and from the beginning of the revolutionary process, to pose correctly the question of democracy. The ideas encapsulated in the USFI statement will only have the reception they merit outside our own ranks to the extent that they also inform and inspire our own internal practice. Again, and equally importantly, even on the ground where we are strongest from a theoretical point of view — the analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy made by Trotsky, above all in *The Revolution Betrayed* — the fact that no serious, book-length analysis of the Soviet Union has been produced since, in over forty years, greatly impairs the potential effect of our views. It is in this context that Livia Majtan's book on China assumes its full significance.

The paradox of the situation in Europe today is that the forces of the Fourth International are better situated than ever before to play the leading theoretical and organizing role in regrouping revolutionary forces to the left of the Communist Parties and in defending democratic rights in East Europe. At the same time, and for that very reason, our own theoretical and organizational formation is under the greatest pressure from the tasks which confront us.

A socialist spectacular in Sweden

'We are thousands'



Vi ar tusenden — 'We are thousands' — is the title of a play that toured Sweden in the summer. A four and a half hour history of the Swedish working class, it is an ambitious project and sounds, perhaps, something of an ordeal to sit through.

Perched on a bench, not understanding a word of the dialogue, ANDY DE LA TOUR — a member of the Belt and Braces theatre group — watched a spectacle which, he says, many socialist actors in Britain fantasise about.

He reports here on the Swedish response to Belt and Braces' rock music plays, and the experience of Vi ar tusenden.

'We are thousands' is no ordinary play; this is epic theatre, a show involving nearly fifty performers and musicians, staged in a tent that seats 1,500 people. One stage was an oval track half the length of a football pitch; another a rostrum in the middle of a sea of heads; a third a square at one end attached to a lorry with hydraulic lifts. The 'action' took place everywhere.

The play traces the development of the working class from the beginning of industrialisation in the early nineteenth century to the rise of the class struggle in the late 1960s. The central theme throughout is the role played by social democracy and its domination of working class politics since its inception. Here was, also, the political weakness — too often there was a picture of the working class as a class on the verge of revolutionary struggle but held back by their treacherous leaders.

In reality, there have been very few occasions on which the widespread united struggle has taken place; the major strikes in the 1930s, such as that at Adlen in '31 were bitter, but isolated events. The social democracy has never faced a serious challenge from the Swedish Communist Party, but the Tent Project was ambivalent on this aspect.

A major event in Swedish political history is the role played by social democracy in the war and the question of Sweden's

'neutrality'. The Swedish word for 'tiger' is the same as 'to be silent' — hence the scene in the play with a tiger in blue and yellow stripes (the Swedish national colours) who guides the swastika-painted train through 'neutral' Sweden into Norway. The Prime Minister, meanwhile, wrings his hands and wrestles with his conscience.

STRUCTURE

The play finishes rather unsatisfactorily with the student mobilisations on Vietnam in 1968 and then a short speech about the future which was rather more an expression of hope than a serious perspective. But the swirling red flags, the revolutionary songs and music expressed visually that celebration of class struggle that was the real strength of the whole show, an expression of hopes and dreams that are an essential part of revolutionary politics and which lend themselves to imaginative political theatre.

The track became the streets of Stockholm — trams, meetings, fights, cafes; a 30 foot angel rose (hydraulically not divinely) to claim the soul of a dead child; the huddle of impoverished capitalists stand beneath a rain-storm; a group of workers build a two-storey house. Not just gimmicks to titillate, but effects that turn into theatre what is

essential — the movement, the class in struggle.

While bourgeois theatre agonises over the self-doubt of the individual, preoccupies itself with psychology, and even infects its actors and demands of them that they slouch and mumble in the name of 'art', socialist theatre can do with the size to capture the essence of classes in struggle.

Brecht and Piscator in the 1920s mounted the spectacles, and their performers reflected it — that confidence of ideas; the knowledge that the working class will assert its domination.

There were many political weaknesses with the 'tent project', as it was commonly

possible. The struggle on the 'cultural' front is more advanced than in Britain. Dominated by and saturated with imported entertainment from the USA and Britain, culture — especially music — became a focal point for radicalisation. Ten years ago, to sing in Swedish was a political act, whatever the lyrics.

Consciously rejecting a kind of cultural imperialism, a whole generation of musicians and listeners has grown up who see their music, whether hard rock or traditional folk, through a prism of struggle. The largest selling musical magazine, *Musikens Makt*, equivalent to our own *New Musical Express*, is a socialist weekly paper.



known. The four theatre companies which came together to mount it could not agree on many points: no perspective was offered. There were also theatrical opportunities missed. However, it happened and that for us was the most important thing.

How? Nearly a hundred people toured the 'tent project'. There were six full-time child minders, resident teachers and medical staff apart from the performers, musicians and technicians. Every few days the massive tent, the seating, the lighting, were erected and dismantled and loaded into the pantechinon trucks.

Some particular features of Swedish political life made this

There is *Musikforum*, a kind of loose-knit national organisation of left-wing musicians and followers who organise 'gigs'. In every town there are different kinds of 'cultural committees' who organise events, hold meetings, print journals, all pursuing the 'cultural' class struggle. There are now two independent left-wing record production and distribution companies; unlike in Britain, there is not the same commercial stranglehold and groups can get their records sold in the shops and supermarkets.

The radical theatre companies emerged largely out of the 'music movement', whereas in Britain most of us have come

out of the 'straight' theatre. The tent project, costing £500,000 raised mainly from fund-raising events, was possible and succeeded because the organisation was there that could mobilise support, generate the interest and provide the personnel to see it through.

From only a two-week trip to Sweden in 1976, Belt and Braces Roadshow Company had generated enough of a following to merit a longer, more ambitious trip this year. So we took two shows, *A Day in the Life of the World and Not So Green as it's Cabbage*, and toured them both throughout the country for eight weeks. Ironically, there is an aspect of that 'cultural imperialism' that proved invaluable to us — the audiences understood English.

Both of our shows contain a lot of rock music and the most immediate was the readiness to accept political rock music by audiences who were not strangers to the form. Understandably, the largest audiences arrived when we played the cities, but even in the smaller provincial towns we were enough of a 'cultural event' to attract more than the far left and its supporters.

In some ways, life was easier in Sweden than in Britain — the level of interest in political theatre is much higher, the tradition of a political music culture creates an audience for our kind of shows, even Radio Sverige (the national TV network) was stirred into making an hour-long documentary about our work.

But for socialist theatre workers and musicians in Sweden or Britain there is still a long road ahead — to integrate the struggle and development in the field of culture and art into the mass movement, to entertain and inform, and by doing so to help create the demand from workers for something 'new'.

Seeing the tent project, discussing with theatre workers and musicians, playing to Swedish audiences, helped us with our theatre and with our politics, and has better equipped us for our job in Britain.

'As serious as your life'

VALERIE WILMER's new book, *As Serious as Your Life*, like her now reprinted *Jazz People*, largely hands the stage over to the musicians themselves to speak about their lives in music, which is the next best thing to playing or hearing the music itself. Apart from Nat Hentoff's *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, these are the only reliable first-hand accounts we have of what it is like to play the most vital music of our time: they are the mid-Twentieth century equivalent of Mozart's letters.

In the West, particularly since the rule of the bourgeoisie began, art has been trodden on, pushed to the margins, or co-opted and, if necessary, killed off. While the technological and political conditions of socialist transformation have become concentrated in the West, music — like the novel and civilisation itself — has regrouped outside, in Africa and Latin America. How exposed, then, is the position of the African-American artist exiled in the heart of the monster.

The peak of their achievements has been in jazz, which — far from dying when the pop world was invaded by the sound of the blues in the mid-Sixties (as the silence of the music press would have us believe) — was then entering a new and higher phase, which is the subject of the musicians' discussion in *As Serious As Your Life*.

When European composers at the same time began deliberately to explore the innovations in instrumental technique and attitudes to form which these musicians had made, the cat was out of the bag: all European music of this century, apart from the Schoenberg-Webern school, owes its existence to developments in non-European music.

Anyone who is a musician will be able to feast for a long time on the revelations of *As Serious As Your Life*. The social questions are equally stimulating. Jazz musicians have made an attempt — unique in any branch of the musical world — to overcome the 'star' system and help each other, organising themselves on co-operative lines.

However, if we expect 'music for socialism', we must first obtain the support of socialism for music. Valerie Wilmer quotes the individualist anarchist Thoreau at the beginning of her book, not one of the Marxist classics. And that is absolutely right. It is not the musicians who should be flattered by our interest in their music, it is we who should feel flattered by their interest in socialism.

The other interesting social question is an old story. In the age of the tape-recorder and of an information explosion, the survival on tape of the thoughts of many of these musicians is fortunate and as miraculous as the survival of Mozart's letters. The story looks like a repetition of what happened to the earlier great figures of Western music who died prematurely, insane or alone, or like the earlier jazz musicians, at least one of whose major figures in each generation (King Oliver, Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday) suffered premature deaths. What may be overlooked is that this situation has got worse. Of the half-dozen giants of the new music, most of them still youthful in the 1960s — Coleman Taylor, Sun Ra, Eric Dolphy, Albar Ayler and John Coltrane — only three are still alive, while the musically unskilled have made fortunes out of black music (in a long line from Paul Whiteman to the Beatles or, if you prefer them in blackface, from Al Jolson to Mick Jagger). McCoy Tyner's remark, 'Music's not a playing thing, it's as serious as your life', should itself be taken literally. In the act of playing the new music the feeling of the musician is that he is taking the whole of his CREATIVE ABILITIES IN A CONCENTRATED MOMENT; THAT he is taking his life in his hands. Too many of the best of them have had to lay it down.

Listen to the words and above all support the music of these people: they are the embattled voice of civilisation in a barbaric century.

CHRIS GOODEY

THE CONTINUING offensive of the right wing against the left has taken a novel and sinister turn. The latest group under attack are socialist theatre groups. The Tories, aided by the National Association for Freedom, have once again played a leading role in the witch hunt. Their victim is the North-West Spanner group, which has played to thousands of people in factory canteens, community centres and working peoples clubs all over the country.

4 Dec in Manchester

Putting a spanner up NAFF

On 7 October, a Tory councillor in Tameside, a self-confessed member of NAFF, moved that the Arts Council grant to Spanner be stopped and an investigative committee set up to look into its 'political aims and ideals'. This resolution was actually carried at the Council meeting. The Arts Council, however, has refused to be bludgeoned into condoning McCarthyism and has stated through its Secretary-General, Roy Shaw, that it will support the company against any form of political discrimination.

The attack on North-West Spanner follows an attempt by Yorkshire Arts to stop a grant to Red Ladder, another left wing theatre group. The attack on small theatre groups who are trying to develop a mass cultural practice is typical of the society in which we live. The massive sums of money spent on the

National Theatre, which caters only for a select and elite audience this doesn't make any sense the way I've done it...

The attack on North-West Spanner follows an attempt by Yorkshire Arts to stop a grant to Red Ladder, another left wing theatre group. The attack on small theatre groups who are trying to develop a mass cultural practice is typical of the society in which we live. The massive sums of money spent on the National Theatre cater only for a select and elite audience (though even on this front the NAFF McCarthyites will probably try and move towards a purge if they are successful elsewhere). The community and left wing groups try and break the cultural monopoly of London's theatres. They receive modest grants by comparison. To try and cut them

off is scandalous.

In any event, North-West Spanner are not retreating under pressure. They are organising a fightback. They have organised a conference to discuss the implications of the attack. Invitations have been sent to a vast array of playwrights, writers and groups. Henry Livings, Dave Edgar, Adrian Mitchell and John McGrath will be there, as will 7-84, *Belt and Braces*, *CAST* and other supporters of the Association of Community Theatres.

The conference is being held at the Peter Green Community Centre, Corporation Street, Salford 3, Manchester. Letters of support should be sent from Trades Councils, trade union branches, etc., and addressed to the group at the Drill Hall, Manchester Road, Mossley, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs OLS 9AY.

Socialist Challenge

New information from Iran

The storm after the calm

Open opposition to the Iranian dictatorship, in the form of mass meetings, demonstrations and university strikes, has suddenly escalated during recent weeks to levels not known since the early 1960s.

Frightened by these developments, the Iranian regime has decided to abandon efforts to patch up its human rights image, and has launched massive reprisals on a scale unknown since the massacres of June 1963. It is probably no coincidence that this comes straight after the conclusion of a new arms deal with the United States.

There has been a virtual blackout on the wire services from Tehran, and only one or two papers have carried any information. Most of our information has not appeared in any other British paper.

For the first time since the 1953 coup, when CIA paid thugs led by the notorious Sha'ban, 'the brainless', helped the army overthrow Mossadegh's Government, gangs of thugs have been brought onto the streets to attack demonstrations, meetings and homes of known dissidents.

According to the Writers' Association of Iran, an illegal organisation of dissident writers and poets, the number of people arrested in the recent events may be as high as 10,000. A number of people are believed to have been killed and hundreds, if not thousands, have been injured, many of them seriously.

The massive protests of the last two weeks were sparked off by a police attack on a meeting at Aryamehr University in Tehran during the Shah's visit to Washington. The meeting was one of a series of 'cultural evenings' which dissident Iranian writers and poets have been allowed to hold since last month.

About 7000 people had gathered at the university to listen to a

leading dissident poet, Sa'id Soltanpoor. While the meeting was in progress 2,000 people who could not get into the hall and had gathered outside were attacked by the police who then locked the other 5,000 inside the hall.

After 22 hours, when the 5,000 people inside the hall were eventually released, they immediately organised a demonstration and started to march towards Tehran University. Their ranks quickly swelled to over 10,000.

PIRATES

Bus loads of plain-clothed thugs armed with batons and knuckle-dusters, backed by uniformed police suddenly arrived on the scene and attacked the peaceful demonstrators. According to the Writers' Association, two demonstrators were killed, many more were injured and truck loads of demonstrators were arrested and taken to an unknown destination.

In response to this attack student representatives from all over the country called for a

general strike in all the universities. The call seems to have been very successful and has led to the closure of most Iranian universities, despite further attacks by thugs and the police on students at a number of universities.

The protests have also spread outside the universities. Much of the bazaar in Tehran is reported to have been closed as the result of a strike by shopkeepers and artisans. There has been a report of a demonstration at Karadj, a small town near Tehran, which in the past has been the scene of a number of major struggles by factory workers and shanty-dwellers.

The Writers' Association of Iran has reported that a number of dissident writers and intellectuals have been physically attacked or threatened by groups of thugs. Two of them, Homa Netagh and Ne'mat Mirzadeh, are believed to be critically ill in hospital.

RESISTED

They had gone to Aryamehr University to see the head of the university and protest about the ban imposed on further meetings at the university when they were arrested by the police. They were taken to a police station, beaten up and released. As they were leaving the police station they were kidnapped by plain-clothed thugs, hauled into a car and driven outside the city where they were beaten to the point of death.

The famous novelist and playwright Gholam-Hossein Sa'edi was visited in his home by Parviz Sabeti, the head of the internal security branch of SAVAK, who told him that if he uttered another word of protest he and his friends abroad would be 'run under a bus'.



The ACTSS (TGWU) staff at the National Union of Students Headquarters went on strike at 9.30am on 25 November because of NUS executive's refusal to implement the union's conference decision on the staff's pay claim. During the strike eight mem-

bers of the NUS executive crossed the picket line. The above photograph shows Sue Slipman in the act of scabbing — carrying papers for a mailing to NUS members, work normally done by the staff. One of the staff members on strike was allegedly kicked by

Slipman, while another Communist Party member on the Executive — Penny Cooper — replied to charges of scabbing: 'I'm not a scab, I'm a manager'. Further disputes might occur if the NUS conference votes to reduce the staff by 12.

*In London 13 Labour MPs signed a telegram of protest to the Iranian Government after a lobby of MPs organised by the Committee Against Repression in Iran.

Japanese readers 'banzai'

SOME OF our readers in Japan have recently provided us with a striking demonstration of internationalism — in practice. We recently received in the post a small parcel. On opening it we discovered the newest model Japanese micro-recorder (see pic) with a message on the tape inside for Socialist Challenge. This was a gift from comrades of the Japanese section of the Fourth International to show their appreciation of the Dobson dismissal. The message on the tape said that this new recorder was a combination of the most advanced technology and the skill of Japanese workers the use of whose labour made its production possible. We thank the Japanese comrades and we trust that this example will be emulated by readers in other parts of the world. The Swiss comrades, for instance, could send us a clock (helping some comrades to clock in on time), the French comrades could despatch a crate of wine (not Bordeaux) to aid investigative reporting; our American readers could provide us with the commodity for which they are understandably renowned: dollars.

Meanwhile on the home front there is a steady, but slow trickle of funds coming in. A Longbridge worker sent in a donation of £4; a comrade who wishes to remain anonymous had been saving up some money to pay his Grunwick picketers levy to the Mugistrates was let off because of the police hadn't managed to rig the evidence efficiently. He gave us £30. Another comrade sent us her tax rebate of £20. Mervyn Jones, the well-known novelist and New



Statesman writer took out a sub and made a donation of £2.50.

We would suggest once again to comrades that a subscription to Socialist Challenge, our de-luxe Calendar and the Russian Revolution Special make ideal seasonal presents. Don't be shy of ordering them through us.

The money this week amounted

to £180.60. This raises the total to £1117.78. Still another £582.22 to go.

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