

# Workers' ACTION

No.100

April 30-May 6, 1978

10p

FOR THE first time ever in Britain, May 1st — International Labour Day — is a public holiday. Ironically, this has been brought in by a government that has spared no effort to rally in support of the bosses against the working class.

Throughout the world the capitalists attempt to offload their crisis onto the working class. Forced into ever sharper international rivalry, the capitalists encourage the working class of each country to compete against their brothers and sisters in other countries, 'in the national interest'.

The great workers' parties that dominate the European working class each have the same message to preach: More work, more sacrifices, more patience.

In Italy the Communist Party calls on the workers to fight for 'national renewal'. In Spain the CP wants workers to limit their wage claims in the coming round of negotiations, and to put up with the high unemployment. In Britain the Labour Government insults the labour movement by blocking workers' wage rises above 10% while it agrees to wage rises of 14% for the armed forces: their reward for breaking the firemen's strike which could have bust the 10% limit.

While the respectable parties exhort the workers to submit to the 'national interest', the fascist National Front, playing on that same spirit of nationalism, tries to rouse white workers to hatred against blacks.

May Day is a day when socialists reaffirm the international character and international unity of the working-class cause.

In 1978, the events of the past few months have shown the working class in the world's two most powerful capitalist countries waging fierce and determined struggles against the bosses and the state, despite their treacherous trade union leaders.

The American miners defied the anti-union Taft-Hartley law; the West German dockers, printers, and metalworkers have shaken their bosses.

And in the USSR, a group of workers dismissed from their jobs for their incorruptible honesty and their hatred of bureaucratism and bullying have created a 'free' trade union. They have called upon the workers of the world to come to their support.

The British working class, this May Day, must recall our special international duties: above all the need to fight racism and immigration controls, and to support the struggles of the Irish people against British imperialism.

We should resolve to beat off the attacks upon us in a way that befits a section of an international class, rejecting the nationalist solutions of the Labour Party leadership — both right and left — and adopting the road of implacable hostility to 'our own' bourgeoisie and unlimited solidarity with the workers in every other country.

MAY DAY

MAY DAY

CAPITAL

LABOUR DAY

INTERNATIONAL

**CARNIVAL!!! AGAINST THE NAZIS  
SUNDAY APRIL 30/EVE OF MAYDAY  
11a.m. RALLY/TRAFALGAR SQUARE**

# Sssh!... you know who It's the unmentionable Colonel B

'The Leveller', 'Peace News' and 'The Journalist' are all being prosecuted for publishing the name of H.A. Johnstone [Colonel B].

Many other papers have now splashed his name across their pages, and in principle they too could be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act.

Britain has an extraordinarily tight — not to say paranoid — security law. Departments like MI5 operate without any control by governments or Parliament.

Colonel B appeared in public when he gave evidence in the court proceeding against Crispin Aubrey, Duncan Campbell, and John Berry, who were charged with allegedly giving, collecting, and receiving secret information, including information gained by Berry when working with the Signals Intelligence Unit [SIGINT].

CLARE RUSSELL talked to Crispin Aubrey.

■ ■ When are you, Duncan Campbell, and John Berry going on trial?

□ □ On September 5th, at the Old Bailey. The trial will probably last for three months.

■ ■ What are you charged with?

□ □ Duncan Campbell is

'The Leveller' and 'Peace News' appear in the High Court on Tuesday May 2nd; they are calling for a picket from 9.30am at the Law Courts, Strand, London WC2.

If found guilty, these radical papers could face fines and costs of over £10,000 each — and be put out of business. A defence meeting is scheduled for Thursday May 18th, 7.30pm at Conway Hall, London.

Leaflets are available from 'The Leveller', 115a Drummond Street, London NW1 (01-387 0176); contributions to the defence fund should be sent to Box H/AJ, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. The Aubrey-Berry-Campbell Defence Committee address is c/o 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

charged with receiving information which might directly or indirectly be useful to an enemy. John Berry is charged with communicating information. I'm charged with helping Duncan Campbell to receive the information, setting up the meeting between Duncan Campbell and John Berry, and recording it.

We are all being charged under Section 1 of the Official Secrets Act, which carries a 14-year prison sentence.

Another charge against Duncan Campbell is collecting information on defence communications, which is contrary to Section 1. It should be added that the vast majority of stuff that was taken from Duncan Campbell's flat is from public sources. It therefore doesn't matter if it is public; if you collect it in one place you can be charged under the Act.

The significance of John Berry is that he worked for

Signals Intelligence (SIGINT). He left the army in 1970. In February 1977 he contacted the Agee/Hosenball Defence Committee because he was concerned about the deportations, feeling that if he spoke about his experiences he could be called a security risk, as Agee and Hosenball had been.

The information he had was by no means damaging to national security. He wanted the interview because he felt he wanted to cut away the mystique concerning national security.

We had a three-hour interview at John Berry's house. When we came out we were arrested. Nothing has ever been published concerning that interview.

■ ■ Why do you think you are being prosecuted?

□ □ Duncan Campbell and myself are being prosecuted because they don't like people investigating areas which they would rather

keep concealed; John Berry, because they're worried that other soldiers and government workers will follow his example and publicly discuss their experiences.

■ ■ What are the connections between this case and the Agee-Hosenball deportations?

□ □ John Berry contacted the Agee/Hosenball committee. To discover the fact it is clear that MI5 must have opened the mail to the committee and then tapped John Berry's phone. There were a number of incidents which showed that the committee was under constant surveillance. The houses and cars of members of the committee were also broken into.

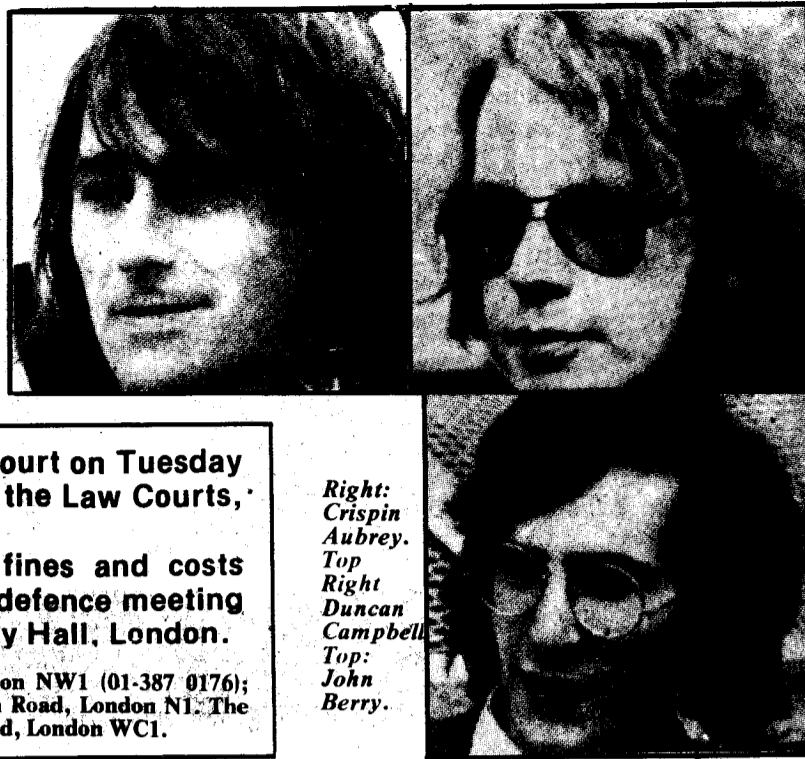
The reason for this surveillance was that they were worried about the public outcry over the deportations. They wanted to know

how much support the committee had and who was involved — and possibly to discredit it.

■ ■ What is the significance of the row over Colonel B?

□ □ The significance of Colonel B is that he was the main witness against us at our committal hearings last November. The fact that he didn't give his name was only one example of the way in which the prosecution tried to prejudice the trial before it had begun, by making it all sound so sinister than anonymity was essential.

Part of the hearing was 'in camera', too — without press and public. We couldn't ask how the policy that SIGINT should be secret was decided, and we couldn't even ask whether the information in Berry's interview was accurate.



Right: Crispin Aubrey. Top Right: Duncan Campbell. Top: John Berry.

## SPANISH CP HOLDS FIRST LEGAL CONGRESS SINCE THE CIVIL WAR

THE first legal congress of the Communist Party (CP) of Spain since the Civil War has just taken place. The opposition that had shown itself in the preceding months toned down its denunciations and there appeared to be near unanimity.

"The opposition came mainly from the sections of new militants, with some exceptions like Catalonia. And this happened because the new militants do not understand what a party is." That was the view of Santiago Carrillo, the party's general secretary, stated in the press shortly before the congress opened.

Indeed there are very many new members. In the last two years the party has grown from 20,000 members to 200,000 (although one leading militant from the Asturias told the congress that his area had seen practically no recruitment since the elections of June 1977).

The "opposition" — it is, of course, not a unified trend — consisted of more than half the delegates from some areas

(Catalonia, Badajoz, Soria and the members living in Germany), a third from Madrid, the Asturias and Murcia, plus strong bases in Alicante, Zaragoza, Galicia and Andalucia. There are also oppositional theoreticians like the Catalan Manuel Sacristan who likens eurocommunism to the prototype revisionism that Eduard Bernstein represented in the Second International in the 1890s.

### Epoch

One of the big issues at the congress was the leadership's proposal to drop any reference to "Leninism" in describing the party. This proposal was rejected at the congress of the Catalan section (the United Socialist Party of Catalonia).

This is 15 of the main documents began by saying, "We consider ourselves to be the heirs of those who in the difficult conditions of Russia in 1917 were able under the guidance of

Lenin to lead the world's first socialist revolution..."; but it ends with the rejection of the idea that "Leninism is the Marxism of our epoch".

The proposal was accepted by the congress without the storm of opposition that might have been expected after the Catalan party congress.

And while there was some opposition on that issue there was very little on the current questions of the class struggle in Spain. Carrillo was able to defend the party's line on the Moncloa pact with hardly a voice against. "Our strategy consists in confronting the results of the present crisis with the broadest possible spectrum of democratic forces". The pact, signed last October by the government coalition (UDC), the Popular Alliance (neo-Francoists), the PSOE and PSP (two socialist parties that have since unified) and the CP, is a social-contract type austerity policy.

An Asturian delegate, Iglesias, even claimed that this

pact of betrayal "far from demobilising is a means of mobilising the masses". He no doubt had in mind mobilisation for extra work and output!

If this sounds like an echo of the ideas of the Italian Communist Party's leaders, so did the denunciation of terrorism and violence by Sartoris, a leader of the Workers' Commissions: "Terrorism is today the unqualified enemy of the working class; it must be fought without reserve."

### Alliance

Carrillo spent a lot of time attacking the PSOE for "presenting itself as an alternative power" — this contradicted the policy of "national unity". His problem is that the Socialists won four times as many votes as the CP in the elections; and there is no realistic perspective of an electoral alliance with the Socialists or any bourgeois parties, either at the all-Spanish or at the national level.

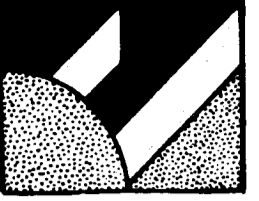
The Congress also debated the organisational restructuring of the party undertaken after the Central Committee's August 1976 decision to abandon the party's cell structure and put the organisation on a geographical basis.

One delegate from the Asturias complained about the bureaucratic way this was implemented and added "It has brought about a substantial demobilisation by increasing fragmentation and lowering the level of activity." Clearly the party's reorganisation is directly connected with its almost total absorption in electoral politics.

The congress will have disappointed those who thought that an open split might occur or even that a substantial opposition might emerge. Nevertheless, this 9th Congress did show some divisions. In future, the party leadership will be less able to control them given the party's promises of democracy and the pressure on it from a recently strengthened far left.



Carrillo [far right] at the signing of the Moncloa pact



A REPORT recently leaked to the press shows just how seriously the Tory party are contemplating a massive showdown with the trade unions. Unfortunately for the Tories, the conclusions of the report are not particularly encouraging for them.

The Report — which was requested by Maggie Thatcher — was written by Lord Carrington, who played a leading role in the 1973-74 Tory debacle over the miners' strike.

It warns the Tories that the troops could not carry out massive strike breaking to the extent they did in the 1926 General Strike.

The reasons given are firstly that Britain simply doesn't have enough troops, and secondly that it would permanently damage the fabric and the practice of the country's politics. In other words, the use of troops would have the serious effect of heightening class tensions to an unmanageable degree.

Carrington also pointed out that advanced technology in many areas had made it impossible to use troops. The fire and power workers' disputes both showed up the limitations of using

# If you can't break them, bend them

poorly trained troops.

The question of whether a Tory government could handle a militant stand by the working class is of course crucial for the ruling class. It is their pessimism about the inability of a Tory Government to manage the trade unions that leads them to continue to place their confidence in Labour.

A senior official involved in civil emergencies recently remarked that it was easier for the Labour Government to "take on" the unions. "The Conservatives

do not hold the trade union movement in anything like the same confidence as Labour ministers".

The Report, although pessimistic about the deployment of troops, did however have other contingency plans.

As reported in the 'Times' "It recommends that a higher priority should be given to emergency planning in periods of political and industrial quiet, and that the best brains in Whitehall should be devoted to it. One lesson the group drew from the

experience of the Heath Government was that it had been a mistake to leave such work until the last minute".

It was the Emergencies Committee which was behind the strike-breaking operation code-named Operation Raglan. Troops were organised to take over the driving of petrol tankers in the event of a drivers' dispute.

Lord Carrington strongly advised the Conservative Party to strengthen this unit.

The response of the Labour Government to the Re-

port was to emphasise the Tories' inability to "handle" the trade unions. Callaghan replied to a jibe by a Tory about the Labour Government's use of troops during the firemen's dispute by saying: "The Conservative Party tends in dealing with the unions to be aggressive when it should be accommodating and to be timid when it should be bold".

The aim of dampening down and breaking working class action was not questioned!

Mr Moss Evans, the General Secretary of the TCWU, was reported to have said that the Tories "were adopting a negative approach". No doubt by this he meant that the Labour Government had the good sense to consult with the trade union bureaucracy at every stage of their anti-working class policies.

*A Republican prisoner, writing from Long Kesh, describes the undying struggle of Ireland's fighters for national liberation against the efforts of British imperialists, Green Tories, and Orangemen to define them as criminals.*

ON 18th September 1917, sixteen months after the Easter Rising, 84 men held in Mountjoy jail, Dublin, raised the old demand for prisoner of war treatment. When it was refused they systematically destroyed the fittings of their cells and declared a hunger strike.

One of them, Thomas Ashe, had spent 50 hours the previous week deprived of his boots, bed and bedding as a punishment for insubordination.

After three days of forcible feeding, he died on 25th September.

A few years later, with Ireland partitioned, there were again political prisoners in Mountjoy jail, fighting for prisoner of war status. When they refused to enter their cells they were told they could spend the night on the ground outside, with machine guns trained on them. But at midnight they were woken by kicks and cuffs and carried into their cells.

# If it was in Chile, there'd be an outcry

The following afternoon the prisoners systematically destroyed their cells. Doors were smashed from their hinges and walls were reduced to tatters.

The civilian prison staff were so affected they went on strike, and were replaced by Civic Guards. But POW status was conceded — for a time.

The same struggle was fought again in the 1940s. One-time IRA Chief of Staff Sean McCaughey and his comrades spent five years naked in their cells, refusing to wear prison clothing. On 11th May 1946 McCaughey died after 23 days on hunger and thirst strike in Portlaoise prison; he had been allowed no visitors since July 1941.

In Belfast at the same time, 20 men were confined naked to their

cells, refusing to wear the uniform prescribed for criminal prisoners.

Republicans have died in Britain's jails, too, struggling for the right to be in a jail near their home (Michael Gaughan) and against degrading strip-searches (Frank Stagg, who spent two years in solitary).

Republican prisoners in British jails have a particularly bad time, singled out for punishment regime, solitary confinement, 'ghosting' from prison to prison, and refused the usual educational and recreational facilities. Their visitors are frequently harassed and abused and subjected to humiliating searches.

But the major area of struggle for prisoner of war status is in the war zone itself — the British-

occupied north of Ireland.

In these six counties, there are nine times more people in jail than there were in 1966, before the present war began. This fantastic increase is obviously due to the political 'troubles'. They were sent to prison by special no-jury courts, mostly on the evidence of confessions obtained by the RUC by brutality or threats.

Nevertheless, on February 1975 Merlyn Rees announced that as from the following month all new prisoners would be regarded and treated as common criminals. (In June 1972, Tory gauleiter for northern Ireland William Whitelaw had responded to a hunger strike by Crumlin Road prisoners by introducing Special Category status for those serving sentences for political activities.)

Since March 1976, Republicans have consistently been refusing to wear prison clothes and to be treated as criminals. They are kept to their cells and denied outside exercise, recreation or visits. At regular intervals they face additional punishment (eg withdrawal of bedding) for their rebellion. Winter and summer they huddle in prison blankets.

The number now 'on the blanket' is now around 350, and is growing every day.

It was the Gardiner Report that recommended the ending of Special Category, together with the ending of official internment. The aim was to demoralise and atomise the political prisoners, and at the same time to isolate them from communities such as Ballymurphy, where each street had at least one resident interned or sentenced.

At the same time, a veneer of normality could be given to a war situation, and the world could be told that Britain's 'Province' in Ireland was returning to law and order as the violent criminals were brought under lock and key.

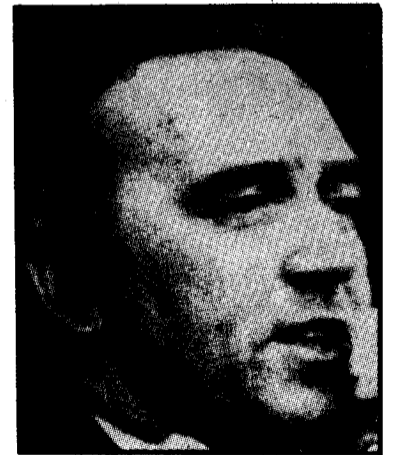
The British government was actually quite anxious to shuffle off the embarrassment of holding political prisoners. They re-named Long Kesh "The Maze" — and people in other countries were informed by British public relations and diplomatic agencies that Long Kesh "no longer exists"

Here in Long Kesh, as we still call it, two 20-foot walls snake their way round the last 12 cages, and within these walls others divide the camp phases. On the west wall the H-Blocks have been built, and in these our comrades who have been refused political status are shut away.

Imagine yourself locked in a coal shed for a day, naked and alone and cut off from the outside world. Imagine enduring that for months, stretching into years.

It's been two years now for some on the blankets. If it were happening in Chile or South Africa there'd be an outcry. Yet it is happening now, only a few hundred yards from where I write.

The demand for political status is not a matter of elitism. Republicans recognise and uphold the rights of ordinary prisoners. In the main, these prisoners are victims of the society which Republicans are striving to change.



Roy Mason, who carries on Rees' work today

Nor is it a matter of eagerness for the extra few 'privileges' of a political prisoner. No-one would go through months or years on the blankets, loss of remission, etc., just for that: it wouldn't add up — though of course we do all value the right to associate with comrades, to pursue an education in Republicanism, in politics, in Irish history or in cultural activities.

The important thing, though, is to struggle against the designs and the machinations of the British occupation forces. As long as these prisoners maintain their struggle, no British government can claim that it has pacified its Irish colony and now only locks up proven criminals. As long as prisoners are on the blanket, the world can see that Britain locks up "prisoners of conscience".

# THE FASCISTS TURN GENTEEL

LOUDMOUTHED ignorant thugs are fine for swaggering around putting in windows, beating up Bengalls on their way home from work, or trying to break up a left wing meeting. But the National Front is also keen to recruit some smoother characters — smarmy middle-class ultra-Tories who can provide a solid base, pay into the funds, and look respectable as election candidates.

Hence a most unusual NF leaflet, entitled 'The Quiet Thunder of a Quiet People', and delivered at an expensive West End address. Peppered with Latin and French phrases, the heavy Churchillian prose takes nearly 1000 words to reach the racist message that is usually screamed out in a few crude slogans.

After a pitiful appeal ('Never in the history of the British people has a political party been so attacked, travestied, and slandered as the National Front'), they go on to complain of the denial "of the rights of small people with limited capital".

Motorists, shopkeepers, businessmen and householders suffer from a state dealing out 'punitive punishments'. VAT inspectors,

it seems, are a major cause of nervous breakdowns, and are even given to ransacking... women's handbags.

Ending up with a quotation from Shakespeare, the leaflet offers immediate membership for £3, in 'complete confidentiality'.

The hard-core filth will come, it seems, 'under plain cover'.

■ ■ ■

BBC's 'Tonight' programme last week showed a Dutch film about fascist groups in Germany.

But for petty restrictions on the use of the exact name and trademarks of Hitler's party, nearly



Richard Verrall

150 groups with a total membership of 23,000 have complete freedom to organise. They strut through the streets in black leather gear and swastika-style armbands, immerse themselves in Hitler-worship, daub Jewish cemeteries and break up left meetings.

Their idea of the Third Reich is sketchy. "There weren't so many terrorists then", a pretty upper-class sixteen-year old told the interviewer.

The anti-terrorist hysteria has really helped these new Nazis to come out into the open. And it was clear the police are very indulgent to them.

Then the interviewer asked a young gauleiter about international connections. Oh yes, we have "much supporters" in England, he said. When he was last in London he had stayed with James Shaw, National Front candidate in Ealing.

And the NF had helped a lot with a German translation of 'Did Six Million Really Die?'. A German edition of this disgusting whitewash by NF leader Richard Verrall had even been printed for them on a press at Brighton belonging to a Front member...

DURING THE LAST ten years, with the aim of strengthening international authority and of erasing from people's memories the bloody consequences of the cult of Stalin and Khrushchev, important events have taken place inside the Soviet Union, on both an ideological and political level.

These events were of great significance for workers inside the country and occurred as much for propaganda as for the maintenance of the prestige of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the eyes of the world.

Thus there has been a renewal of party cards, following the example of Vladimir Ilyich [Lenin] and a renewal of passports as a step to raising the status of the 'Citizen'.

On 9th September, Politburo member of the Central Committee of the CPSU and Chairman of the KGB Yuri Andropov stated: 'We proceed from the principle that a person enjoys real freedom if his activities are in harmony with the general flow of social progress...'

...As for those comrades whose criticisms are just and who

aim to help matters, we treat them as conscientious critics and thank them...

...those who criticise mistakenly we treat as misguided people...

'And finally... Certain people in the West throw at us what they think is a 'clever' question: how is it that, on the 60th anniversary of the Soviet Union, there are still so-called 'dissidents'? As has already been said, those who are mistaken we try to help. We try to change their minds and correct their errors.

'However we get to a situation

where some of these so-called 'dissidents' began by their activities to break the law — when some people at the fringe of our society take the path of anti-Soviet activities, break the law, supply the West with slanderous information, spread false rumours and start organising anti-social attacks. For these renegades there is not and cannot be any base inside the country...'

We are Soviet people from different strata of society who were previously unknown to each other but who have come together in the process of an ordeal

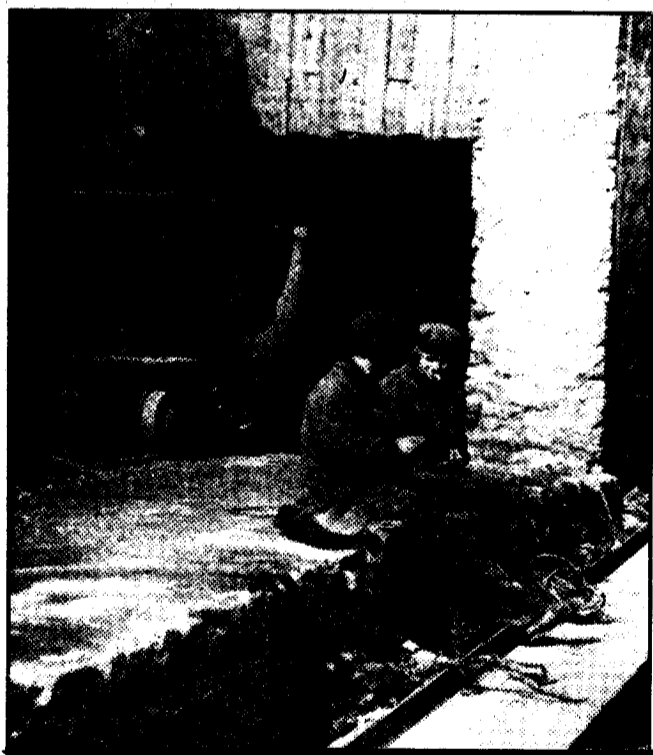
In the full sense of the word. We are people of various nationalities and from various parts of the country who are compelled to appeal to the so-called 'bourgeois press'.

We, the honest workers of a socialist society, the producers of material wealth, are ignored by our leaders, our press, our party and Soviet organs. Though it is their function and duty to hear us and help us resolve our problems

We think we number tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands.

We do not intend to produce

# Russian workers fight for trade union rights



Ukrainian miners (left). VLADIMIR KLEBANOV (right) was diagnosed as paranoid with a mania for "struggling for justice" because he complained of dangerous conditions and speed-up in these mines

VLADIMIR ALEXANDROVICH KLEBANOV was a skilled miner, a shift foreman and design engineer.

As early as 1960 he tried to start an independent trade union among coal-miners at his mine, but the local authorities called this "anti-Soviet" activity and stopped his efforts.

In September 1968 he defended some workers against victimisation. He also complained of the dangerous work conditions in the mine, the long hours and the intolerable quotas.

For this he was put in the Ministry of Internal Affairs hospital at Dnepropetrovsk.

In 1973 he was again interned and declared mentally unfit. But although he was rehabilitated in the following year, he was not able to work: "Since 1973 I have been refused work because in my Labour Book it is noted: 'Dismissed in connection with arrest'."

"On 10 February 1977 I was picked up in Moscow by KGB agents who tried to incriminate me by linking me with an explosion in the Moscow Underground.

Since the founding of the Workers' Group Klebanov has been held in psychiatric hospitals again. He was released in January, but, according to Amnesty International, was re-interned in a psychiatric hospital in Donetsk some time this February.

ACCORDING to the 21st February edition of Pravda, an enterprise in the town of Petrozavodsk last year dismissed a third of its one thousand workers.

The example is not isolated. It is one of those cited in a recent appeal to the International Labour Organisation and to free trade unions in the West signed by 43 Soviet workers. They are the initial nucleus of the newly-formed "Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers in the USSR".

So far the members of the group are all unemployed workers. They describe themselves as part of "that great army of Soviet unemployed, thrown out of the factory gates for exercising our right to complain and criticise..."

According to them they are "an insignificant fraction of the citizens who each day fill the reception rooms of the central bureaux". Their appeals paint a chilling Kafkaesque picture of bureaucratic indifference and brutality, where chance meetings and conversations in the ante-chambers of the powerful provide one of the few chances for organisation... particularly for the unemployed.

Coming from far-flung districts and towns to the seats of central power in Moscow in



Ukrainian miners (left). VLADIMIR KLEBANOV (right) was diagnosed as paranoid with a mania for "struggling for justice" because he complained of dangerous conditions and speed-up in these mines

A supporter of the 'Free Trade Union', Podrabinek, being arrested by KGB officials last year



the illusory hope of finding justice there, thousands of people go through these reception rooms only to face stonewalling by junior bureaucrats, indifference, and often imprisonment.

Now they are getting organised.

When Nadezhda Ivanovna Gaidar went with a complaint to the USSR Procurator General's office in May 1976, police dragged her off there and then to a psychiatric hospital. It was the first case that the group acted on. Workers who had got together in the waiting-rooms of the State departments made a collective appeal for her.

Between May and November 1977 they issued other appeals; here we reproduce part of an Open Letter to 'world public opinion' put out in September 1977. At the beginning of December 1977 their existence became known for the first time in the West; they held an informal press conference.

In February they made an appeal to the International Labour Organisation (a joint governments-employers-unions body linked to the UN) asking for recognition as a bona fide trade union.

So far the group has limited itself to demanding elementary civil rights, stressing that it does not aim at an overturn of the present social order in

the USSR. Because of the members all being unemployed, and because of the totalitarian hold of the bureaucracy, its possibilities of action have been limited: it has concentrated on issuing protests at individual cases of bureaucratic maltreatment of workers who make complaints.

Even that limited activity has brought some members of the group further spells in psychiatric hospitals. To defend it against being stifled by the bureaucracy, the group urgently needs the support of western trade unions. In the last analysis it could be more dangerous for the bureaucracy than the more openly political protests of the intellectual dissidents.

"If we are wrong", the group says, "let us be judged, but openly with the participation of the workers."

"And we are convinced that the workers will judge not us but the Gladishevs, the Shishkovs, the Filatovs, Pankratovs, and Rekunkovs [all leading bureaucrats] — and put them in the dock instead".

If the idea of independent trade union activity gains a hold in the Russian working class, then this assessment will rapidly be proved right — and the openly political question of the overthrow of the bureaucracy will arise very quickly!



Members of the Union at their Moscow press conference in December

## Complain — and you're locked up

Miners, engineers, collective farm workers, teachers, doctors and nurses, and factory workers from every part of the USSR — nearly half of them

women — put their names and addresses on the February appeal to the I.L.O. These are the experiences of some of them...

VALENTIN TIKHONOVICH POP-LAVSKY was sacked on the orders of the manager of the Pistanov concrete works. He was told this and was beaten up by police from the town of Klimovsk in front of his wife, their two children, and his father.

The KGB together with police officers arrested him after he addressed an appeal to the Central Committee of the CPSU in June 1975. After a short hearing he was sentenced to 15 days in jail.

When police and KGB agents burst into his apartment and tried to arrest him again in February 1977, Poplavsky's neighbours helped beat them off. "Without doubt", says Poplavsky, "they were trying to connect me with the explosion in the Underground."

ANNA SERGEYEVNA FUFAYEVA was also dismissed in 1975. She had complained about irregularities in wage payments and unsafe work conditions. In order to intimidate her and to undermine her reputation among her fellow workers, she was jailed for 10 days, ostensibly for hooliganism and drunkenness.

In fact she has worked for around 30 years and has received government awards for exemplary and conscientious work.

Following this she was hounded from her flat and forbidden to practise her profession despite a recommendation for a high-ranking scientific institute that she should be allowed to.

VALENTINA NIKITICHNA IZVEKOVA is a mother of two who has been without work since 1975, when she denounced one Chmakov, President of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies of Chernigov, for corruptly administering state housing for his own profit.

Valentina Izekova was sentenced to four months' imprisonment after which she could find no work. Chmakov was sentenced to three months in a prison hospital and then re-instated as a factory manager.

MARIA IVANOVNA DVORETSKAYA, "a worker in the Dzhetsis factory in Alma-Ata" appeals on behalf of her husband. "I appeal to world public opinion to help me, a semi-

literate woman, to gain the release of Fyodor Pablavich Dvoretzky, my husband and the father of our three children, who was shut up in Ministry of Internal Affairs Special Psychiatric Hospital no. 2 on 6 May 1977.

He is being held in a special psychiatric hospital because when working as a compressor operator in Ilyinsky district, together with some workers of a creamery, and again later at a shoe factory, he signed statements to the Society for the Protection of Public Property regarding thefts and fraudulent wage payments to non-existent workers.

He was tried secretly without witnesses. Although I was present at the court they would not allow me to defend him. The psychiatrist V T Lomakina ruled him to be mentally unaccountable and socially danger-

...working in more than 150 towns and districts in the country"

high flown words. We will simply describe our ordinary, inhuman misfortunes and sufferings. Today we are suffering — tomorrow any Soviet citizen may become a member of our group and think as we do.

Quite simply — the ruling elite is doing everything it can to break us up and suppress us morally and physically.

With whatever problem a Soviet citizen appeals — to the Procurator's offices, the people's courts, the ministries, the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet, the press, the All Union

Central Council of Trade Unions, right on up to the Central Committee of the CPSU — they always proceed, not from the law, but from the personal motivations of this or that custodian of the law.

We are middle aged people who have behind us no less than ten years work experience in various enterprises. We were leading workers and quite naturally we have a real right to think and speak on our own behalf and on behalf of our fellow workers.

Any worker will join our ranks

immediately if he so much as criticises wasters of socialist property, poor work conditions, low pay, high rates of injury at work, increased work loads and norms of output, leading to wastage and low quality of products, the continual rise in the price of basic necessities and foodstuffs and all that they describe in our country as 'shortages' and 'the difficulties of life'

From an open letter to 'world public opinion', September 1977.

# Garners strike: picketing is the key to victory

DESPITE THE defeat of the Claridges strike, the Garners Steak Houses workers are still holding firm after 14 weeks on strike.

Stephen Corbishley talked to Manuel Gonzales, a member of the strike committee.

Manuel has worked at Garners for 15 months, and has been in the catering trade over seven years. During the strike he has been arrested for 'threatening behaviour' on the picket line.

"Our conditions are poor", he told us. "I start at 9.30am, work till 3pm, and then re-start at 5pm till 12.30pm or 1am. The overtime is compulsory. For 55 hours I get £39, and take home £28.43.

"We pay for our own laundry, buy our own work clothes, and there is no changing room. The food we are given is poor, but I avoid eating at work, except for a cup of coffee or bread and butter".

The union first started organising in 1975, and by the middle of 1976 it claimed 30% support. "The union could not get recognition because of pressure from the branch managers who were afraid the union would take the control of distributing tips out of their hands.

## Survey

"The workers were always complaining about the tips. Sometimes £1,000 would be collected in a week. But managers would keep the money under their control and often divided it up on the basis of 50% for the managers, and 50% for the rest".

Despite the opposition to the union from branch managers the company began to get tough with the managers themselves, and the feeling for a union began to build up. So Garners boss Cyril Margolis organised a survey, which rejected the idea and went for an internal company committee, because many workers were intimidated by the control that the work permits system gives to the employers.

The internal committee had seven members: 5 managers, one waiter and one cook. "And it started to become active. Asking for more wages, better food and conditions. Margolis did not like the internal committee. So many managers were punished by being moved to smaller steak houses where the tips were less.

"They lost money. This pushed more people into joining the union, and by the middle of 1977 over 50% had joined. In November 1977 some branch managers boycotted a wine-tasting session. Nine were sacked. But the union forced Margolis to take them back".

On 12th January the TGWU organisers called a meeting at 1am, which lasted until 4am. But Margolis found out, and watched those going in to the meeting.

In the meeting, "the officials committed themselves to everything. Someone from the Regional Committee promised to cut off electricity, gas and water. I knew that they could not do it. The trouble is that they promise but do nothing".

Next day the TGWU sent a letter to Margolis asking for

formal recognition, but at the same time he started to cut down on supplies to the branches. "We even had to throw customers out because we had no food to serve them. So on 26th January we demonstrated outside the head office.

"Next day Margolis sacked 84 of us. A number of branches had not supported the demonstration because the workers had been threatened with the loss of work-permit recommendations".

"After the strike committee was set up the strike has gone better. The unions are ruled by bureaucrats who do not want to do anything, and until we elected the strike committee nothing was done".

The TGWU is paying only £6 strike pay. Manuel spends over £4 a week travelling to and from home, with other expenses on top of this.

For this reason, "I moved a resolution in my branch, the International T&G branch, 1/647, for blacking, a regular mass picket, and a regional levy. The Branch Chairman and the full-time official, Abrahams, got the part about the levy thrown out".

What of the future of the strike, we asked. How do you think you can win?

"I knew it would be a long time. Margolis is anti-union. And even though he is losing 50 to 60% of his business, he has given those who stayed in a £5 rise, under the guise of travelling allowances. But it is felt very strongly by the strikers that Margolis is getting help, maybe from NAFF, maybe from Trust House Forte, I do not know.

"But without help it will be very difficult for us to survive. The levy is the main thing, because we are not getting much money in from outside, but the sub-committee of the Regional Committee recently absolutely refused to agree a levy".

## Blacking

"To win we need to organise mass picketing. But the union is afraid of mass picketing since Grunwicks". Blacking is essential — and it could be effective: the T&GWU has a strong hold in the supply industries.

"Recently we held a 24 hour picket of the head office to identify names of suppliers, because at the moment all supplies to the steak houses are going through the head office".

Manuel's last comments were: "A lot of socialist papers have just reported our strike saying what we are doing and what are our demands. But it is important to get workers to understand what we are fighting for and what our policies are. You need to tell people what we want".

Donations should be sent to the Garners Strike Fund, c/o TGWU, room 84, 12-13 Henrietta St, London WC2. The strike committee has asked especially for support on the picket lines at five main restaurants from 11am to 3pm and 5.30pm to 11pm, each day of the week.

The five are: 399 Oxford St, 40-41 Haymarket, 56 Whitcombe St, 243 Oxford St, and 29 Cockspur St.

The major picket takes place from noon on Saturdays at 399 Oxford St.



--"Exactly what criticism is constructive and what destructive?"

--"Simple: criticising yourself or someone below you is constructive. But criticising someone above you is always destructive." (From Rohac, Slovakia, 31 August 1966.)

# How factory managers rig union elections

We have all been dismissed for denouncing abuses or criticising managers at our places of work: pointing to wastage of good materials, cases of corruption, false statements, seriously dangerous working conditions, gross infringements of labour laws and so on...

On the one hand the Party and the Government call on all soviet citizens to put things right when necessary wherever they are — in production, in public and in social life. On the other hand the organs of power deal with the greatest severity with precisely those who scrupulously observe the law and who agitate in the interests of production following the appeals of propaganda campaigns.

All our efforts to obtain justice before these organs have been in vain.

All of us independently presented ourselves before the central organs of soviet power: to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet, to the Council of Ministers of the USSR and to the All Union Central Council of Trade Unions — but we were ignored.

The authorities always apply the same solutions to the problems we raise: they give us evasive answers, they send us from one office to another. If we appeal to higher authorities, rather than act in a

constructive way they use impermissible methods against us, because we have dared to exercise our right to complain. Under the pretext of registering us for interview with those in charge, they seize us one by one and in groups, sending us to police stations and psychiatric hospitals...

It is only after having publicly denounced the arbitrary and brutal acts of which we have been the victims that we were invited to be heard by the editorial board of *Izvestia* and by a Committee of the KGB. There were promises of support.

*In fact we were tricked.*

In seeing us one by one and making promises the *Izvestia* editorial board only had one thing in mind: to find out who was the ringleader; and the members of the editorial board did their best to create divisions and to sow discord and distrust among us.

The KGB organs were in a fever to find out our real numerical strength and the addresses of the authors of the collective complaint so that in the end they could expel them from Moscow or have them locked up in psychiatric hospitals...

[The appeal then goes on to describe some of the things its authors find intolerable about Soviet trade unions]:

IN our country there are no organs which objectively defend the interests of the workers.

The Soviet trade unions do not defend our rights. They do not have the necessary authority by virtue of the fact that the key positions are occupied by Communists, in fact by people who have failed to rise up through the Party organisations. They are always members of the technical and supervisory staff of the works. In cases where such people are not re-elected for another term they find themselves once again taking orders from one or another factory manager. If only for this reason they always do what management wants.

The trade union elections are a formality: the chairmen of the trade union committees are chosen and designated by the management of the factory, the party organisation and the district committee of the CPSU.

This occurs as follows: according to the rules, one delegate is elected to the electoral college for every ten members of the union.

Everything is perfectly democratic so long as ... the delegates are chosen at a general meeting in front of everybody.

In practice, in order to guarantee support in advance, the management and party committee resort to

a trick: the delegates are chosen on a shop or section basis. The members of the senior staff — engineers and technicians — hold a meeting beforehand at which the union chairman, the party committee and the manager of the enterprise suggest how the outcome of the elections might be 'effected'.

Finally the elections take place on a shop or section basis. It is always the head of the section or shop who 'recommends', that is to say who put the names of those he likes on the voting list. These show him their gratitude then by proposing his candidacy and that of the foreman; in each section some other member of the staff is put up on the pretext of some special expertise. The members of the senior staff choose their own delegate so that at the end of the count when there are ten times as many workers as staff it is practically the entire senior staff that is presented for the electoral college, that is all those who do not have the workers' interests at heart.

The workers' delegates receive free bonuses and they are offered lavish meals of scarce produce and alcoholic drinks.

Nomination to the praesidium takes place without any call for candidates: the management of the works and the representatives of the District Committee, of the city union, and the party organisation then proceed to draw up a list of candidates, that is to say they put on the slips the names of the candidates they want.

Other names are not put on the list. Consequently, the election of future members of the trade union committee is assured in advance.

The election of the chairman and the sharing out of responsibilities takes place around a table heaving under the weight of food and drinks bought on expenses, to the noise of toasts and the smashing of glasses.

The 'representatives' of the factory-level trade union organisations elect the delegates to the regional bodies, and so on.

From the Appeal to the International Labour Organisation, February 1978.

The extracts from the September open letter are taken from *Socialist Challenge*, 20 April 1978. The extracts from the appeal to the ILO are translated from *Cahiers Samizdat*, February-March 1978. The account of the history of the Free Trade Union group is based on a briefing put out by *Amnesty International*.

ous and recommend that he be isolated in the MIA Special Psychiatric Hospital at the prison in Alma Ata."

NADEZHDA IVANOVNA GAIDAR went with a complaint to the USSR Procurator General's office on 7 May 1975. With the help of the police she was taken immediately from here to a psychiatric hospital.

At the hospital they began at once to give her injections of the drug minazin. The head of the hospital ward said: "We will not make any diagnosis of her. We have made a note that she is suffering from nervous exhaustion brought on by her quests for justice.

"To keep her from complaining any more we will keep her here for a while and then we will send her to Kiev via a special detention point. Here too they will hold her for a while".

When Gaidar's acquaintance V A. Lebanov came to ask after her, he was told: "Then next time she'll link a little before going to complain".

She was transferred from Moscow to a psychiatric hospital in Kiev, from which she was released after 10 months.

**THE LABOUR, Tory and Liberal parties recently launched a joint anti-racist campaign. And even on the left it seems to be a common idea that the best way to deal with the National Front and their kind is to have the broadest unity of all parties which reject fascism and extreme racism.**

As Kim Gordon of the Socialist Workers Party and the Anti-Nazi League put it: "Yes, we'll even have Winston Churchill if he's still alive".

Proof for this idea seems to come from World War 2. Wasn't it the united democratic forces, behind Churchill and Roosevelt, which rid the world of the Hitlerite menace? Wasn't that war the sort of crusade of democracy against fascism which we need today?

In reality, the policy of the workers' movement sinking itself into a general campaign of "democracy against fascism" helped the rise of fascism and the unleashing of World War 2. In Germany, the strongest workers' party, the Social Democrats, kept calling on the police to deal with Hitler's thugs. They advised the workers not to fight the fascists on the streets, and to support Field Marshal Hindenburg for President instead of splitting the anti-fascist vote.

Hindenburg was elected — and in due course he called Hitler to power!

In Spain not only the Socialists but also the Communist Party called on the workers to support the Republican bourgeoisie in the name of the struggle against fascism. In the name of unity, they suppressed factory occupations and land seizures, refused to support independence for Morocco, and shot down Trotskyists, Anarchists, and left-wing Socialists. The result was Franco's victory.

France was the other great country of the People's Front against fascism. There, the Parliament elected in 1936 with a People's Front majority ended up, in June 1940, voting full powers to the Nazi stooge Pétain!

## Crisis

**In the last analysis, both fascism and parliamentary democracy are methods of the same exploiting class — the capitalists — in order to control the working class.**

Parliamentary democracy controls the working class by drawing the labour bureaucrats into an alliance with the state; fascism, which becomes a serious force in times of crisis when the capitalists can no longer afford to bribe the labour bureaucrats with small concessions, mobilises desperate 'little men' to crush the workers' organisations.

The bourgeoisie does not always support fascists. But as soon as fascism grows beyond the scale of crackpot sects, it starts getting support in the police and the armed forces. Measures taken by the state against the fascists are usually fictitious, and always much milder than its simultaneous attack against the socialists and communists who are fighting fascism.

If the workers' movement ties itself to the middle-class democrats and liberals, it ends up paralysing itself (for the liberals don't approve of driving the fascists off the

# THE BIG LIE OF WORLD WAR TWO

Very often the National Front reply to the cry "NF Nazis" by saying "No, we're British patriots."

And, too frequently, there is no real answer from anti-fascists. They go along with the assumption that fascism is something uniquely German and British patriots can't be fascists. Indeed they often use that assumption to try to gain support. They call people to fight the NF by saying "This is the same enemy as we fought in the war"

Yet the British state forces which in 1939-45 are supposed to have saved the world from fascism, today help to save fascists and beat down the left!

COLIN FOSTER shows that the representation of the Second World War as a fight of democracy against fascism is a nationalist myth — which like all nationalist myths only helps to boost chauvinism, racism, and, in the last analysis British fascism.



streets, or opposing all immigration controls), failing to give socialist answers to the crisis that breeds fascism (for the liberals find that divisive) — and driving the desperate and discontented into the arms of the fascists, who then seem to be the only really radical party.

If the middle-class democrats at any time do actually fight against fascism, then of course socialists will fight alongside them. So revolutionary socialists fought against Franco in the Spanish Civil War — while at the same time fighting for the workers to take power out of the hands of the liberal-Stalinist Republican government.

**But the Second World War wasn't about democracy and fascism.**

After Germany was defeated in the First World War, the British, French and US left it ransacked, bled dry, and stripped of its colonies. As a result, capitalism developed in Germany with even more severe crises than elsewhere, which drove the German bourgeoisie first into fascism and then into war, to gain new

territories and new markets.

It was joined by Japan, the latest-developing great capitalist power, which wanted to challenge the US-European monopoly of colonies and spheres of influence in the Far East.

The biggest imperialist powers, Britain and the USA, were not prepared to let Germany and Japan expand at their expense.

## Rival

The Second World War was about the rival economic interests of the big international exploiters, not democratic or fascist ideology. Britain went to war to defend the military dictatorship in Poland, not Czech democracy. Among the Allies were Chiang Kai Shek's China and Vargas' Brazil, both extreme right-wing regimes. The governments-in-exile supported by the Allies were also often very right-wing: for example, the Greeks, the Yugoslavs, and the Poles.

South Africa, too, was on the supposedly 'democratic' side.

Italian fascism was courted by the British and Americans — "even when the issue of the war became certain", wrote Churchill, "Mussolini would have been welcomed by the Allies" — and the US made agreements with the Pétain government and worked with the Pétain administration in the French colonies in North Africa.

Under the Darlan and Giraud regimes in North Africa, anti-Semitic laws were kept on the books, and (as local US army chiefs complained) "Fascist organisations continue their activities and victimise our former French sympathisers some of whom have not yet been released from prison... French soldiers [were] being punished for desertion because they tried to support the Allied forces during the landing".

All this time, Britain was maintaining regimes of more or less open racist military dictatorship over hundreds of millions of people in its colonies.

The war was not mainly a battle between democratic and fascist powers. The USA

kept out of it until Japan attacked its bases in the Pacific in December 1941; both Britain and the USA refused to open a 'Second Front' until June 1944.

Up to 1943 Britain did no more than defend itself against bombing and defend its interests in North Africa and Asia — and watch with secret glee as the German army despoiled and decimated the Soviet Union.

20 million Russians — including seven million soldiers — died in the war. American and British casualties were much smaller: 405,000 American and 375,000 British soldiers killed.

From 1943 it became clear that Germany would lose the war — mainly as a result of the heroic resistance of the Russian people. Britain and America became interested in a more aggressive strategy — not so much to defeat fascism, or even to defeat Germany, as to gain themselves a good share of the spoils of victory and suppress the danger of revolutions following on the war.

The first example of this policy was Italy. In July 1943 the Fascist Grand Council and officers led by Marshal Badoglio overthrew Mussolini. Badoglio bargained for terms with both Germany and the Allies. He reached agreement with the Allies, but meanwhile the German army had seized most of Italy.

In the Allied-Badoglio controlled areas, all publications, meetings, and political activity were banned. Resistance partisans were disarmed and often imprisoned; the north, where the Resistance was strongest, was left in the hands of the German army.

## Fascist

In Germany too, after the Anglo-American victory, a fascist government was initially kept in power, under Doenitz. The Doenitz government was soon disposed of, for the sake of appearances, but 700,000 German troops were kept in military formation by the British for possible use against the Russian forces.

In many parts of Germany the British and Americans found that spontaneously-created workers' councils had taken over as Hitler's power collapsed. The councils were dissolved, trade union organisations were suppressed, and a total ban was imposed on political activity.

There was the same sort of clash between the Anglo-American armies and working class anti-fascists in Belgium. In November 1944, the Belgian Resistance, defying their Stalinist leaders, refused to obey orders from the occupying forces to hand in their arms. The Resistance leaders re-established their control only after Belgian police, supported by British troops, had shot down demonstrators in the streets of Brussels.

In Italy, too, the working-class resistance had been disarmed mainly through the efforts of the Communist Party — whose preaching of "anti-fascist unity" gained weight from the prestige of the USSR. After Italian CP leader Palmiro Togliatti returned to Italy from Moscow in April 1944, the CP gave full support to Badoglio and the monarchy.

**[TO BE CONTINUED]**

## NAC Conference

# Changing the laws, or local campaigns

SHOULD WE FOCUS ON CHANGING the abortion law, or on local campaigns about NHS facilities? That is the main debate coming up at the National Abortion Campaign conference on 29-30 April. For the first time, NAC does not immediately face the threat of new laws to restrict abortion rights.

Posed as 'either-or', the alternative is a false one.

There is no chance of getting positive legislation for women's right to choose through the present Parliament. The anti-abortionists have a majority, the Parliamentary timetable is crammed, and at present NAC isn't able to mobilise the tens of thousands on the streets that could change the balance of forces.

So for the present, a tactical focus on getting "women's right to choose" endorsed by law can lead to time-consuming quibbles over the exact wording of an abortion rights bill, or to tailoring NAC's aims to what is judged to be acceptable to MPs.

An example of this danger is the debate over time limits for late abortions. This is an unhelpful debate since it falsely polarises the issue along the lines of: are you prepared to campaign for abortion up to 20 weeks, 28 weeks or 9 months?

It obscures the point that women don't positively choose to have late abortions, rather than early abortions, which are safer and less distressing. It is restrictive legislation and medical practices which cause the delays which lead to late abortions. Very few women would choose late abortions up to 9 months even if they had the legal right to do so.

The crucial question here is who decides? Should the state have the right, after a certain point, to impose its will in a situation which affects women's lives so crucially? To give the state that right is to assume that women can not be trusted to make rational responsible decisions about their own lives, that they need protecting from themselves.

Of course at the moment the state does have that right. Any fight to secure a woman's right to choose must involve the repeal of existing legislation, taking abortion out of the area of criminal law, and making it mandatory on the NHS to provide adequate facilities. The resolutions for the conference from Jill Butler, Berry Beaumont and Rose Knight and from Toni Gorton and Faye Thompson spell this out. At the same time they recognise that tactically now is not the time to make positive legislation the major focus of the campaign.

The exclusive focus on schemes for changing the law is represented by the Abortion Law Reform Association and, at the opposite pole, there are some women in the campaign who react against what they see as the dangers of getting sucked into Parliamentary manoeuvring.

A resolution coming from the NAC Sheffield day school calls for 'dynamic militant local campaigns around specific local issues' instead of campaigning for changes in abortion law.

It clearly is important to take up the ludicrous anomalies that exist under the present law. In some areas, like Birmingham, it is almost impossible to get an abortion on the NHS because of the right-wing attitudes of top consultants in the local hospitals. But to see a national

campaign as being built up purely by the accumulation of small local campaigns is to sidestep the inadequacies of the present legislation. It merely replaces Parliamentary pressure group politics with local pressure on AHA's.

Indeed, such an approach is more likely to mean the campaign limiting itself to what seems achievable in the locality, and to demoralisation.

One important factor in denying women access to abortion is the cuts in public spending, especially on the Health Service. Several resolutions recognise this by calling for NAC, while naturally focusing its campaign on cuts which specifically affect a woman's right to choose, to adopt a position of opposition to all cuts. This will mean that abortion facilities are not counterposed to other services by saying 'cut spending in this area, not in abortion facilities'.

In the 'Action' section of the Conference, there are a couple of resolutions which are especially deserving of support. On the elections, there is a call for a vigorous campaign to raise the abortion issue and demand that MP's take up a public stance. It is especially important, given the overwhelming support by last year's Labour Party conference for a woman's right to choose, to take up the question with Labour candidates.

There is a call for a trade union conference on abortion in the autumn, which should be taken up by all trade unionists who are serious about fighting for women's rights. At the moment there is a vast amount of passive support in the labour movement for abortion on demand, as shown by numerous trade union conference resolutions. This must be translated into action, to put an end to attempts at restrictive legislation and go forward to a woman's right to choose.

Gerry Byrne

## NUJ Conference

# The Naming of the Name

THE 1978 conference of the National Union of Journalists, held in Whitley Bay last week, will be remembered mainly for the The Naming of The Name.

Colonel Hugh A Johnstone of Signals Intelligence is perhaps now better known than a certain Sam Silkin, alias the Attorney General, who would have kept us in the dark.

Admittedly, Conference wasn't quite as brave about it all as delegates will like to remember when they recount the week's events to their grandchildren. On the Thursday, under the attentive eyes of two Special Branch officers, Conference voted not to debate a resolution naming the colonel, and instead discussed another which was less explicit.

But three delegates, struck by the farce of constantly talking of 'Colonel B' when The Name was clearly printed on the order paper before all of us, blurted it out — and for their pains were mildly reproved by the chair. It was only the following day, after the Name had been splashed all over the newspapers, that it was officially pronounced.

On other issues, too, delegates shied away from the difficult decisions.

With Executive backing, the conference rejected wage restraint — but also rejected the unifying demand for automatic cost-of-living increases.

In another debate, the NUJ retreated into its shell: a call to open discussions with print and broadcasting unions with a view to merger was defeated, a step back from the decisions of previous years. A proposal to recruit workers in advertising agencies was also thrown out, this time on the grounds that the professional integrity of the union would be brought into question.

On race, two detailed composites were carried, outlining practical steps to eliminate racism in the press. But an amendment calling for a campaign against 'air-time' for the National Front and other racist organisations was thrown out.

The union's code of conduct was greatly tightened up — but the conference went on to connive at the Executive's suppression of 'embarrassing' complaints lodged against Fleet Street journalists for racist reporting.

Perhaps the biggest victory of the week was the passing of a motion from Book Branch pointing to bias in the reporting of events in Northern Ireland, and calling for an end to censorship, suppression and distortion of news. Not a strong motion — but a far remove from recent years, when any mention of Ireland threatened to mobilise lynch-squads.

The two most urgent issues from the NUJ point of view were technology and the closed shop.

The introduction of new typesetting and printing processes will completely change the face of the news industry within the next few years, and will throw many thousands of skilled printers onto the scrap-heap too — unless a united battle is fought for work-sharing without loss of pay and for workers' control of production.

The conference shrugged off such ideas, while at the same time rejecting the line of the far right, which was that journalists should grab whatever benefits they could at the expense of the printers. The attitude adopted was half-baked, really deciding nothing, though the motion passed must have been the longest in the union's history.

Over the last year the NUJ has become involved in a series of increasingly bitter struggles over the closed shop, the best known being the Darlington strike, which was lost. Sixteen motions and 23 amendments had been submitted on the subject. A dithering debate ended with a vote to remit the whole subject to the National Executive — the body whose misleadership had just produced the Darlington defeat.

On this, as on so many other occasions during the week, the big decisions were tidily shelved.

JAMES RYAN

## THE QUOTE THAT NEVER WAS

A copy of a letter sent to Militant

Dear comrades,

I write concerning a report of the 1978 LPYS conference which appeared in *Militant* issue 399 (March 31, 1978). This report 'quotes' the speech I made at the conference moving resolution 49 on Racism and Fascism. The 'quotation' runs as follows: "Gordon Brewer [Edinburgh North] claimed that the LPYS had played no role in fighting racism and called for blacks to organise separately".

This is a complete and utter misrepresentation of the speech I made at the conference. The smear on myself personally does not bother me, however presumably the 'quotation' is intended as a smear against *Workers Action*, the tendency whose politics I put forward at the conference.

Firstly, it is absurd to say that the LPYS has played 'no role' in fighting racism. In its own inadequate way, the Church of England has played a role in the fight against racism. The point is not whether it has done anything, it is whether what they have done is politically correct.

It is the same with the YS National Committee. No-one denies the existence of YS leaflets against racism, or

that the YS has campaigned against racism. What I pointed out in my speech was that the YS had not played a role in driving the fascists off the streets until round about the time of the demonstration in Lewisham.

I pointed out that when it came to taking direct action against the National Front it was the black youth that had given a lead to the YS NC and not the other way round, and I pointed out that the whole emphasis of the position of the YS NC and of *Militant* had shifted under the impact of the lead given by the black community and the revolutionary left.

Anyone who doubts this need only leaf through a couple of years' back issues of *Militant*.

As to the point about calling on blacks to organise separately, this is a complete fabrication. The position of *Workers Action* is to call for labour movement support for the black self-defence groups set up to defend the black community against the fascists. We argue that concretely that is what building workers' self-defence means. As far as I understand that is now also the position of *Militant* on the question.

To imply, as you clearly do, that I

argued for black self-organisation as an alternative to the YS doing anything to fight racism is a disgusting slander.

All this would not be so bad if the reporters had been attempting to give a characterisation of the politics of *Workers Action*. If your reporters cannot understand what we are saying then we cannot blame them, although a minimum of political honesty will keep them from deliberate distortions.

However, you claimed to be giving a report of a speech made at a conference. If a fabricated speech was attributed to one of your own comrades in the columns of the capitalist press, you would be the first to point out the cynical way in which the bosses are prepared to misrepresent socialist ideas.

To do the same thing yourself is a thousand times more disgraceful. It is your elementary duty as conscientious journalists, never mind proletarian militants, to print an apology for this piece of distorted reporting.

GORDON BREWER

## THE UNIONS



# How the educators should be educated

TEACHERS have been taking a caning this last year or so.

The Labour Government, as well as making massive cuts in educational expenditure, has also started putting the pressure on to make schools and colleges concentrate more on meeting the 'needs of industry'.

In plain terms this means students who are good profit-making fodder. In practice it means tighter discipline, less academic freedom, and altogether a more traditional approach.

To justify their tightening up, the government have orchestrated a campaign, moraning about 'falling standards' and blaming progressive methods and teachers. In fact this is little more than a cover, but the left-wing teachers reacted like little boys caught with their fingers in the jam — we often had little to say because we had no clear answers to the reactionary onslaught from the 'Black Papers' and the Right.

To tackle these problems, the Socialist Teachers' Alliance is holding a two-day conference this weekend (29-30 April) in London.

Questions they will be trying to answer are: how can we combat the myth that education by itself leads to social equality? Who should determine what is taught in schools? To whom should teachers be accountable? What are and what should be the connections between school and work? Isn't it about time the working class had a say in what they should be taught, instead of it being a matter for bickering between teachers and employers?

IAN HOLLINGWORTH  
(For further details of the conference, ring Jan or Clara on 01-348 2888).

## Bakers Union accepts Spillers closure

**AFTER THE eleventh-hour fight-back, the 59th-minute sell-out...**

Four days before 23 Spillers bakeries were due to close on April 22nd, the Bakers Union leaders threatened an overtime ban unless the closures were halted.

Then, on the day before the closures, the overtime ban was called off — with the closures still going ahead. Bakers' Union leaders proudly proclaimed that 2000 jobs had nevertheless been saved.

Bakery employers agreed

to introduce regular five-day working from May 14th, in place of the present system of working rest-days for a normal six-day week. Also, £4 of previously-negotiated supplements will be consolidated into basic rates.

### Promise

It is promised that this will create vacancies for 2,000 of the 8,000 workers being sacked by Spillers;

but the press reports didn't indicate any guarantees on this. The *Financial Times* said that "the total hours worked are unlikely to fall because of overtime worked to make up for worked rest-day pay".

Meanwhile, further redundancies are likely as the bakery employers rationalise in the wake of the Spillers bread closure. At least 6,000 workers have already learned to their cost that the Bakers' Union leaders can't be trusted to save jobs.

## HOW THE SOLIHULL FOREMEN'S STRIKE WAS BROKEN

**THE FOREMEN'S STRIKE at Leyland's Rover plant, Solihull, ended on Tuesday 25th April. They returned to work without winning anything at all.**

400 foremen struck on Tuesday 18th in sympathy with 25 foremen in the paint department who had walked out in protest against the 'continuous production' system.

'Continuous production' came out of Solihull management's efforts, a few months ago, to get a night shift in the plant. The great majority of the workers refused to accept a night shift, and eventually the management settled for 'continuous production' instead.

The 'block slips' during which the track had been stopped for all the workers to take a break were done away with. Now the track runs continuously, nine hours a day, and

workers are replaced by relief men during their breaks.

The foremen, however, still want night shifts, because under a national agreement they would get very high rates of pay for night work. They resented the continuous running, and eventually struck against it.

Their strike failed because the rest of the plant worked through it. The foremen's jobs were done by superintendents and shop stewards. The superintendents are in the same union — ASTMS — as the foremen, and the dispute did not have official union support.

It is not surprising that the majority of the workers had little sympathy with the foremen. Leyland foremen generally side with management against the workers, giving them good cause for hostility; and their job amounts to very little in terms of useful work.

In addition, the workers could not fail to react angrily to any attempt to reopen the issue of a night shift.

What is more surprising is that revolutionary socialist militants in the plant supported the idea of working through the strike with superintendents doing the foremen's job. Pat Hickey of the International Marxist Group, who is a steward at Solihull, told *Workers' Action* that he was against any support for the foremen.

The foremen's action meant pushing for a night shift; moreover, the situation of a few hundred foremen trying to impose their will against agreements made by 8,000 workers at Solihull could not be tolerated.

As far as we understand the circumstances, this attitude seems doubtful to us. Certainly the foremen's strike seems to have been a case of blind, stupid selfishness at the expense of any consideration for the wishes and interests of the majority of workers. It would make sense to argue strongly against them going on strike, and even to say once they were on strike that there was no very good cause for general sympathy with their aims.



Socialists can't have much sympathy with foremen. But we can't approve of lumping them together with the bosses, and still less of making them a prime target of hostility rather than the bosses. Especially where they are unionised, they can and should be won to some sense of solidarity with other workers, against the bosses.

To approve of the jobs of trade unionists in dispute with the bosses being done by black-legs — and that's what the superintendents standing in for the foremen amounted to — is a different matter from disagreeing with what those trade unionists are doing. And it would seem likely in the long run to further reduce the chances of trade union solidarity, already seriously damaged by the foremen's strike.

## EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to *Events*, Box 1960, 182 Upper Street, London N1, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

**SATURDAY 29 APRIL.** March Against Racism: meet at Balham tube station 12 noon, rally in Brockwell Park. Sponsored by All-Lambeth Anti-Racist Movement and other organisations.

**SATURDAY-SUNDAY 29-30 APRIL.** National Abortion Campaign national conference: from 10am at Sheffield Students' Union, Groves Building, Weston Bank, Sheffield.

**SATURDAY-SUNDAY 29-30 APRIL.** Socialist Teachers' Alliance Open Conference on the Politics of Education. In London: details, 25 Highgate West Hill, London N6.

**SUNDAY 30 APRIL.** Carnival against the Nazis. Organised by the Anti-Nazi League. Assemble 11am, Trafalgar Square; march to Victoria Park.

**MONDAY 1 MAY.** London May Day March: 1pm from Charing Cross Embankment to Hyde Park.

**FRIDAY 5 MAY.** 'What Programme for Socialist Revolution?' Debate between Spartacist League/Britain and the International-Communist League. 7pm at Essex Road Library, London N1. Admission 20p.

**SATURDAY 6 MAY.** 'The Crisis Intensifies: Which Way Forward for the Working Class?' Revolutionary Communist Day school. Saturday 6th

May, 10am to 6pm (social in the evening). Write for details to: Dayschool, RCG Publications Ltd (A), 49 Railton Rd, London SE24 0LN. Registration £1 (50p students/unemployed).

**SATURDAY 14 MAY.** Grunwick solidarity conference: 11am to 5pm at Wembley Conference Centre, Empire Way, Wembley. Trade Union and Labour Party branches can send two delegates: fee £1 per delegate, to the strike committee, Trades & Labour Hall, 375 High Road, Willesden, London NW10.

**SATURDAY-SUNDAY 17-18 JUNE.** National conference of the Working Women's Charter campaign, at Manchester Poly, Cavendish House, All Saints, Manchester. Further information: Pat Cross, Flat 2, 49 Spring Bank Rd, Hull (telephone Hull 443 243).

'REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PAPERS No. 2' — Theoretical Journal of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency. Special Issue on Ireland. Articles on British Imperialism and the Irish crisis, and the revolutionary position on National Self-Determination. Available from BM RCT (WA), London WC1v 6XX. Price 50p plus 15p postage. Cheques & postal orders payable to RCT Association.

*Building Worker* bulletin no. 10 — April/May 1978 — now out, price 2p. From *Building Worker*, 17B Studholme St, London SE15.

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## A fund drive for

## workers' ACTION

LAST WEEK we launched our fund drive with £100 from a Midlands reader. At a gathering of *WORKERS' ACTION* supporters last weekend, we collected £913.60 — and a London reader added £86.40 to make it up to a round £1000. That makes our fund total so far £1100.

It's not likely that money will continue to come in at the same rate after this flying start! But if a steady flow can be kept up, then we can not just keep pace with rising prices, but make real steps forward in the production of the paper.

Send contributions, large or small, to: Fund, Box 1960, 182 Upper Street, London N1.