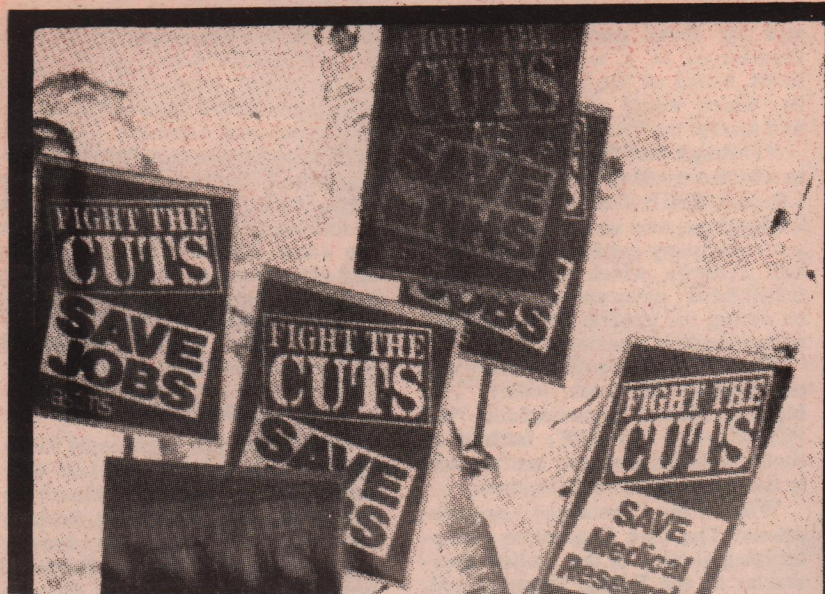


workers' ACTION

No.37

Nov.26 - Dec.1

10p



The Observer, 21.11.76

"Unemployment at 2,500,000 by 1980 is predicted in a gloomy confidential paper produced by the Labour Party's finance and economic affairs committee..."

"It argues: 'In a most extraordinary fashion it is being argued that such [public expenditure] cuts would both reduce unemployment and reduce the public sector borrowing requirement. This argument is almost identical to the disastrous advice given by the Treasury in the 1920s and 1930s, and could not be farther from the truth. Cuts in public expenditure would increase unemployment and would eventually increase the public sector borrowing requirement'".

Ruskin College Trade Union Research Unit document published last week:

"Unemployment will stick at close to its present level — a million and a quarter — until next autumn".

Financial Times, 22.11.76:

"A wider-ranging package of economic measures with larger public spending cuts is being discussed in Whitehall than was being considered earlier this month..."

"The size of the package being considered has apparently grown from the range of between £1 billion and £2 billion or more though it may come in two parts, next month and in the spring..."

"This would have certain political attractions and could anyway fit in with talks over the shape of the next stage of the pay policy".

Guardian, 22.11.76:

"An economic review by the National and Local Government Officers' Association says... Cutting expenditure does not mean that resources are necessarily transferred; they may just be unemployed or remain unavailable. People axed by public sector cuts may simply seek work elsewhere in the public sector..."

Guardian, 22.11.76:

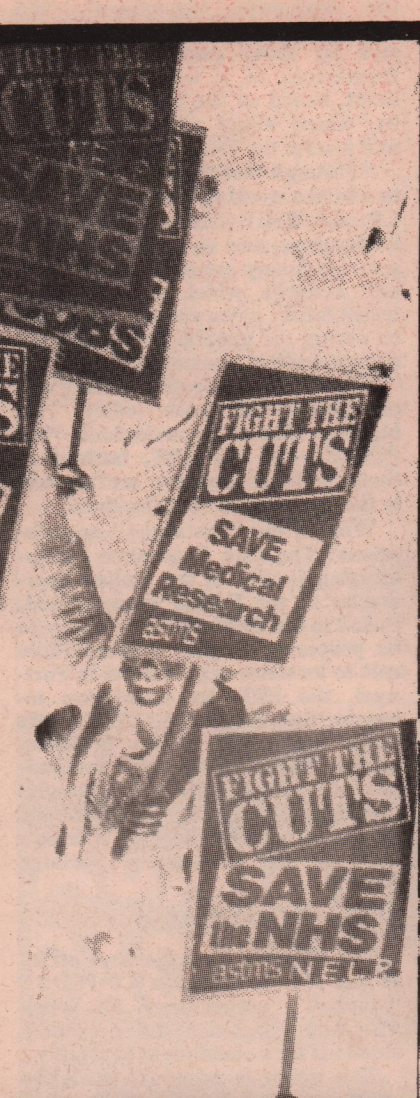
"Cuts in public expenditure designed to make Britain's economy strong and its finances healthy in the eyes of the International Monetary Fund, can have lethal side-effects, according to Dr Peter Draper of the Department of Community Medicine at Guys Hospital, London".

Guardian, 22.11.76:

"People on hospital waiting lists are going blind while they wait for treatment, according to Mr Peter Mills, MP for West Devon. He is demanding immediate action from the Secretary for Health to cut waiting lists in Devon..."

Tribune, 19.11.76:

"East Midlands: Leicester are cutting down on concessionary fares for pensioners and increasing rents. Lincolnshire are spending less to maintain old people's homes and children's homes. Northampton is stopping all new housing work. Nottingham is cutting public transport services".



ON NOVEMBER 17th about 80,000 workers marched against the Government's policy of cutting social expenditure. It was the biggest march London has seen since the Kill the Bill marches of 1971.

Moreover, as many of those participating came as delegates from workplaces — from hospitals, schools, colleges — and from trade union branches, the 80,000 officially represented a few million trade unionists. Most of the marchers came, of course, from the public sector unions, those hardest hit by the Government's policy. But delegations came from the NUM, from the AUEW, and many other unions.

And, given the tremendous feeling the trade union movement against further cuts, this demonstration could have been much bigger if the unions had called for a one-day strike, or at least promised to support members taking the afternoon off.

Most of the unions backing the demonstration, however, did very little either to publicise it or to help build it. But the turn-out exposes how untrue are their excuses of "no widespread support".

Let's ask a simple question. Could the TUC organise a march of half this size in favour of the Social Contract? No, it could not! If there were such a march, its tiny ranks would be made up of the trade union leaders alone.

This anti-cuts march was led by a banner whose message was absolutely clear: "Fight the Cuts, Save Jobs". That policy, if fought for vigorously



AFTER THE GIANT CUTS MARCH:

NOW SUPPORT THE FIGHT ON THE GROUND

by the TUC, could produce mobilisations ten times this size! And that would shake the Government, as well as encouraging the grass-roots resistance that alone can defeat the government's plans.

So the picture is clear: inactivity and treachery from the TUC leadership and a willingness to fight amongst the rank and file. The sponsors of this demonstration warned the Labour Government that it was "Time to Change Course". Quite right! But this message is just as applicable to the trade union leaders themselves. At the last TUC Conference all of them accepted the Social Contract. It is "time to change course" for them too.

The sponsors of this demonstration likewise supported the social contract. In many cases because they said that

even if real wages would fall the 'social wage' would not, and even if both these fell employment levels would not. Yet what is the situation? Real wages are down, the 'social wage' is being slashed, and unemployment is rising.

Yes, the Government are responsible. But — as everybody knows — the Government could not survive without the support of the trade union leaders. It is fundamentally the trade union bureaucracy that is responsible for the present defeats of the working class. 80,000 pairs of marching feet tramp out an unmistakable message to these leaders: we are on the march, we are ready, stop this treason!

When Norman Atkinson came onto the platform at the Central Hall, Westminster, at the end of the march, in order

to speak on behalf of the demonstration's co-sponsor, the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, he could not be heard for shouting and booing. The audience wanted to know how he had voted on the question of the cuts.

The incident highlights the degree to which the internal life of the Labour Party is increasingly becoming a point of focus for the working class.

Until now the public sector white collar unions, many of whom, like NALGO, the CPSA, NATFHE, the SCS and the NUT, have claimed to be "non-political", have kept rather a low profile on the central economic questions. The running has been made by the big industry-based blue collar unions of the engineers, the transport workers, miners, builders, etc.

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On 16th November, the Spanish Cortes (Francoist 'Parliament') approved by a large majority the Suarez government's political reform project. A new Assembly is to be elected before June 1977, the lower House (Congress) on proportional representation, the upper House (Senate) on a constituency majority vote system.

This proposal will be put to a referendum before the end of December.

Revolutionary socialists certainly cannot approve or vote for Suarez' attempt to organise a gradual transition from Francoism to 'strong' bourgeois democracy. Even the 'Democratic Coordination' — a coalition of the Communist Party, the PSOE (Socialist Party), and several bourgeois opposition parties — has declared it will call for abstention in the referendum.

Manoeuvring

The 'Democratic Coordination' bases its opposition to Suarez' plan on the lack of democratic guarantees for the conduct of the referendum and election campaigns, and the failure to move to widespread legalisation of the opposition parties.

However, it cannot be guaranteed that further manoeuvring, and a few sops from Suarez to the Democratic Coordination (or perhaps to parts of it) may not persuade the DC (or parts of it) to enter into the government's scheme. In any case the DC is fulfilling the essential task the regime requires of it: controlling and subduing the militant activity of the working class.

The government is also working on plans for trade union reforms. The draft law prescribes that unions must be entered into a state register in order to be legalised, and that they cannot be bound to a party. The opposition has been prepared to enter negotiations with the government about these proposals.

Prior to the one-day general strike of 12th November, the autumn had seen a series of important strike movements: for increased wages, for amnesty for political prisoners and for victimised industrial militants, for trade union rights, and against police repression. The Madrid postal strike and the general strikes in the Basque country were the high points. But, instead of being the militant culmination of those struggles, the 12th November strike was carefully limited by the CP and PSOE leaderships to a protest gesture.

Confidence

Such mobilisations can have an effect in increasing the confidence of the working class and its arsenal of weapons for struggle. However, the Spanish ruling class, with a lot of assistance from the capitalist classes of Western Europe, is proceeding with considerable clarity and firmness of purpose, and there is no guarantee at all that it will fall. The potential of the workers' struggles

SPAIN

WHICH STEPS TO WORKERS' POWER?

will be dissipated unless revolutionaries know how to intervene to generalise, lead forward, and develop political consciousness in those struggles.

The problem for revolutionaries is to relate to the current struggles for democratic rights and economic demands in such a way that the democratic demands are steps towards mobilisation for workers' power, not means to avert and dispel that mobilisation.

The call for a General Strike was widespread among the advanced workers of Spain even before the recent mobilisations. Revolutionaries have to take up that call and use it to focus the struggle for a *working class* overthrow of Francoism, as opposed to a cold capitalist-controlled dismantlement. But how to do that without limiting the general strike mobilisation, and the workers' councils which it could probably would generate once seriously underway, within a bourgeois-democratic perspective?

Syndicalist

The popular call for a 'General Strike to overthrow Francoism' adds nothing to the spontaneous consciousness of the workers' vanguard and does nothing to give clear political direction to the general strike call. But to call for a general strike for workers' power would not only imply syndicalist illusions in the general strike (a general strike in itself is not a sufficient weapon to attain workers' power), it would also mean ultimately attempting to skip over the necessary struggle for democratic rights.

Since it is easier to do that with phrases than with deeds, such a slogan could only disorientate those revolutionaries attempting to use it — like a man attempting a gigantic leap who 'ignores' gravity until he breaks his neck because it does after all exist!

The general strike call must be grounded on today's felt needs in struggle in such a way as to make it a *bridge* towards revolutionary struggle.

The precise forms of a revolutionary socialist policy in Spain can only be determined by revolutionaries active in Spain. But a first approximation would run as follows:

"We propose a workers' united front for precise demands, most urgently the 8-hour day and 40-hour week, political and industrial amnesty, free trade union functioning, freedom of press, assembly, and association, and dissolution of the special repressive bodies of the Francoist regime. We fight for the CP and PSOE to break with the bourgeoisie and engage themselves on the path of independent working class mobilisation for these demands.

"We advocate the most decisive proletarian methods of struggle for these demands: a general strike. That is the only way to ensure a radical overthrow of Francoism which really gains democratic rights for the workers, not a cold bureaucratic dismantlement retaining severe restrictions on workers' action.

That general strike would open new political perspectives. We would fight (as we do already round major struggles) for the creation of workers' councils, and we would fight for a government of those workers' councils. Initially, no doubt, the CP and the PSOE would command a majority in the councils. They would

work for a coalition government with the bourgeois 'opposition'. We would fight against that perspective, and for those parties to commit themselves to a workers' government, based on the workers' councils, which would arm the workers and disarm the Francoist state.

"Through that fight we would aim to win the working class base of the CP and PSOE from the reformist leaderships, and so ensure that it is a *revolutionary* government of workers' councils which succeeds any transitional government established during the general strike, and not a come-back of reaction".

The Maoists in Spain certainly will not pursue any such policy. The biggest Maoist organisations, the PTE-ML and the ORT, faithful to their Stalinist heritage, are already in the Democratic Coordination.

What of the "Trotskyist" organisations? The Liga Comunista (sympathising section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, linked to the USFI minority) seems to be preparing to play a comparable role to its sister organisation in Portugal, the PRT. Its orientation towards the PSOE-led UGT trade union federation, which in many parts of Spain is very feebly implanted, rather than to the more strongly established Workers' Commissions, seems to parallel the PRT's orientation to the Portuguese Socialist Party.

Guarantee

The LC calls for a general strike as the way to install a CP-PSOE "workers' government"... which will then guarantee the necessary elections for a constituent assembly.

This policy is no doubt modelled on Bolshevik policy in 1917, when Lenin and his party demanded 'All Power to the Soviets' and a Constituent Assembly, and explained that

Soviet power was the best way to ensure the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. The Bolsheviks, however, explained that Soviet power — to ensure bread, peace, land, and workers' control — was their aim above and if necessary against the Constituent Assembly.

The Soviet power eventually dispersed the Constituent Assembly; and Rosa Luxemburg and the German communists, in 1918-19, drawing on the *whole* Russian experience up to and after October, defined the National Assembly in Germany as the centre of bourgeois power, counterposed to the nascent proletarian power of the workers' councils.

Subordinate

After 1917, the communist movement — most clearly the Left Opposition led by Trotsky — clearly rejected the idea of mixing workers' revolution and bourgeois democracy, expressed in the old Bolshevik formula of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry".

Revolutionaries in Spain *should* raise the democratic demand for a Constituent Assembly — but, at the same time, explain very clearly that the struggle for the Constituent Assembly is only a subordinate, tactical episode in the struggle for workers' power. The LC's policy amounts to calling for the workers' organisations to take power — and then hand that power back to bourgeois democracy: an operation which the CP and PSOE could perform most adeptly.

Instead of making democratic demands a path to working class mobilisation, the LC makes working class mobilisation, and even a "workers' government" (though a CP-PSOE government with a programme of convoking a Constituent Assembly would be a *bourgeois* government, not, as the LC calls it, a workers' government), a path for attaining bourgeois democracy.

Mistakes

The LCR-ETA6 (sympathising section linked to the USFI majority) does not copy the LC's orientation to the UGT: but it too appears to be emulating its Portuguese sister organisation, the LCI, which in the last year has turned sharply to the right in order to come closer to the PRT (see WA22).

Though less categorical than the LC, the LCR-ETA6 has increasingly been adopting a similar policy on the general strike question.

In Spain, unlike Portugal, the revolutionaries still have time to make mistakes and learn from them. But the first necessity for learning is a clear criticism of the mistakes that were made in Portugal. The USFI majority has not done that; still less has the minority; and nor, yet, have their Spanish co-thinkers.

Colin Foster

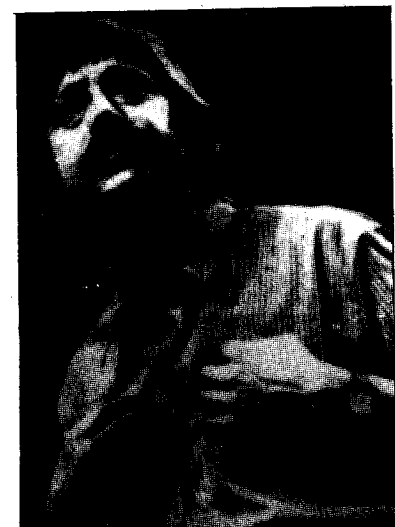
In April 1974 the convocation of the Constituent Assembly was an urgent demand of the Portuguese left. In November 1975 (above) building workers blockaded the Constituent Assembly. What role can the call for a Constituent Assembly play in Spain today?



BANNED — THE SINGER AND THE SONG

WOLF BIERMANN, a poet and singer who has been a thorn in the flesh of the East German bureaucrats, has been deprived of his East German citizenship and will not be allowed to return to East Berlin at the end of his current concert tour in West Germany.

Biermann, who comes from a family of Hamburg Communists (his father



Wolf Biermann

was executed by the Nazis for trying to prevent supply shipments getting to Franco in 1936), chose to go and live in the GDR (East Germany) in 1953, feeling it incorporated the ideas of communism. But for the last 10 years Biermann has ruthlessly attacked the East German bureaucrats and their claim to be "Communists".

Though wrongly believing that such a process could come about through the reform of the ruling party, Biermann sees the need to remove the bureaucratic elements without a return to capitalism.

Since the mid-1960s Biermann has been forbidden to perform in the GDR, though his records are sold in thousands to socialists in West Germany.

Biermann is also little loved by the professional anti-communists in West Germany; he has made it clear that, despite all that has happened to him, he retains his belief in communism; and, "despite all adversities and difficulties in my personal fate, I hold the GDR to be the better of the two German states." This cuts the ground from the pretext for his expulsion — that he has a hostile attitude to the GDR.

His enforced stay in West Germany will no doubt be presented by the GDR authorities as a desertion of the GDR; they will attempt to isolate

International Notes

his views from the workers of East Germany by pointing to him as one who criticises from a safe position in the West (a situation he has never wanted and indeed attacked violently in one of his songs).

Biermann summed up his position last year, on being refused permission to travel to an anti-Franco rally in West Germany. He wrote: "I hold this recent prohibition to be a provocative snub to all those communists and anti-fascists who have prepared this rally in Offenbach against the Franco regime. I feel it opportune to make it public on this sad occasion that more than a year ago [on 24th May 1974] Löffler, the Secretary of State in the Ministry of Culture, communicated to me a stinking offer that I would be allowed to leave the GDR. I have the firm intention of continuing to live in the GDR. My relationship to this state is characterised by critical solidarity."

GISCARD CRACKS DOWN FOR THE SHAH

On 2nd November the head of the Iranian secret police [SAVAK] operations in France was shot and wounded in Paris. An organisation called the «Reza Reza International Brigade» [Reza Reza was an Iranian revolutionary killed by the regime] claimed responsibility for the shooting. Immediately, French police went into action, anxious to show the Iranian government they meant business.

In a dawn swoop the next day, police hauled in a number of politically active Iranian students. Two, Nader Oskoui [a student visiting from Los Angeles for a seminar] and Reza Takbiri [a Paris student] were charged with attempted murder. Four others [including Oskoui's wife] were immediately deported, after being forced to sign a statement authorising the French police to hand them over to SAVAK if they ever return to France. Oskoui's parents, flying from Iran to Paris on 8th November, have disappeared.

The charges against Oskoui and Takbiri are based on identification by a policeman also wounded in the shooting — though the same man had initially said that the two people involved wore masks. The four who were deported were not charged with anything, and clearly the French authorities had no evidence on which to bring them to trial.

In fact the incident is being used as an excuse for a full-scale witch-

hunt against politically active Iranian students in a bid to curry favour with the Iranian dictatorship. There have been very large scale economic deals between France and Iran recently, with President Giscard d'Estaing personally visiting the Shah to cement the deals.

If there is no opposition to the witch-hunt in France, the two students being held could face very tough handling; given their flimsy evidence, the French authorities could decide not to risk a trial but to simply hand them over to the Iranian regime — and as far as the Iranian authorities are concerned, trials are dispensable and the two are already as good as proved "guilty of terrorism", which carries the death penalty in Iran. The official Iranian press is already crying for blood and printing fantastic stories about how the two were involved in an "international terrorist gang".

To protest against the French witch-hunt the Committee Against Repression in Iran [CARI] is calling a picket outside the French Embassy in London on Wednesday 24th November, demanding that the two be released immediately, that the four who have been deported be allowed to return to France, [they are now in Sweden], an end to the witch-hunt, and the expulsion of all SAVAK agents from France.

(Contact CARI at Box 4, 142 Drummond Street, London NW1.)

Stop the Dublin hangings

NOEL AND MARIE MURRAY, two young anarchists, are still waiting in jail to hear whether the Dublin Supreme Court, which sat on November 1st-3rd, will confirm the sentence of hanging passed on them by the Special Criminal Court for alleged involvement in the killing of a policeman during a bank robbery.

The Murray Defence Committee is continuing its efforts to save the Murrays. On 21st November it picketed the Labour Party conference in Dublin. A member of the Defence Committee described the issues as follows, in a letter to a Workers' Action supporter:

"Of course, it's not being helped by the amount of confusion about the political importance of this campaign. Apart from trying to save the lives of two comrades — regardless of their political affiliations — the issue is of tremendous political importance. ... The government has pinned so much on it — by stupidity or accident or design — that it will be a big defeat for it to back down, and political suicide if it doesn't. There is a .001% chance of the Supreme Court deciding against hanging, but we reckon that it is too slim to pin any hope on. We are not relaxing, preparing for a major campaign".

It is vital that all labour movement bodies be on the alert to respond if the Dublin government attempts to go ahead with the hangings.

Send resolutions against the hangings to Liam Cosgrave, Government Buildings, Dublin, with a copy to the Murray Defence Committee, 155 Church Rd, Colbridge, Co. Kildare.

FROM PAGE ONE

This demonstration was not only led by the white-collar public sector unions, but it clearly confirmed the trend already visible at the last TUC, for those unions to 'go political'.

What they should do now is take a leaf out of the book of the union that initiated the November 17 demonstration, NUPE. The National Union of Public Employees took the initiative at the last Labour Party conference to propose a policy for the Labour Party as a whole. It won — and in some measure this demonstration (certainly the NEC's support for it) is the result.

NUPE had posters and stickers printed for this demonstration warning the Government that it was "time to change course". The success

WHAT TO DO AFTER THE BIG CUTS MARCH

of its resolution at the Labour Party conference gave a special authority to this call.

So what's stopping the other unions who are not affiliated to the Labour Party from doing that? Nothing. Not only would the tearing off of that hypocritical and silly "non-political" mask be a step forward, but making that change would permit the local branches of these unions to play their part in fighting the Government

through the mass party of the working class.

Such affiliations would in no way express an increased support for the Labour Government. On the contrary, it would express the wish to track the fox down to his lair. In many constituencies, the General Management Committees have virtually no contact with the trade union branches — and certainly no formal, official contact with mandated deleg-

ates. If the fight which exists in the trade union branches — particularly in the white collar public sector unions — is taken into the local Labour Parties, it could well turn the tide of constituency attitudes and with that provide an invaluable base for a struggle against the government-appointed executors, the local authorities.

This in no way implies shifting the struggle from rank and file trade union and workplace action to the cold halls of the Labour Rooms. It means simply that the entire Labour Movement must be pulled into the fight; and that we refuse to allow any area of the Labour Movement to become the exclusive domain of those attacking us.



The precondition for any successful fight against the cuts and against the other anti-working class policies of the Government is what everybody calls "an alternative strategy".

What is the "alternative"? These must be the main lines of our fight back:

■ Labour councils should refuse to implement the cuts. They should take Clay Cross as their model, using the facilities under their control in the interests of the working class. They should refuse to make interest payments [which are a large part of local authority spending].

■ United Front fighting anti-cuts campaigns should be formed relating directly to workplace organisation, but embracing the trades councils, Labour Parties, LPYSSs, trade union branches, women's organisations, tenants' associations, community groups and working class political parties.

■ Workplace level organisations, particularly in the public sector, embracing all unions present, should decide on sanctions to ward off cuts — most importantly, overtime bans and policies of no covering for unfilled vacancies, and industrial action in the event of unilateral action by management.

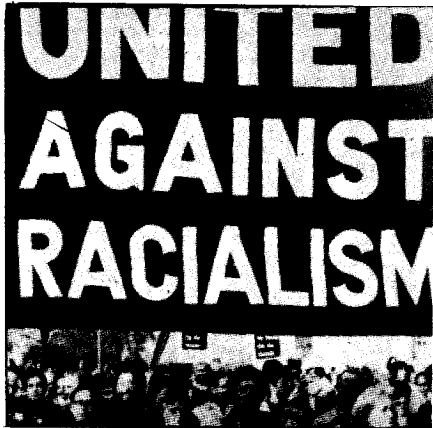
■ Social Services should at the very least be protected against being eroded by inflation. They should get more money automatically when prices go up. At the same time we demand crash programmes of expansion in those areas to meet the need of the working class — from the pocket of the bosses!

■ To relieve the crushing interest burden on the social services, the banks and financial institutions should be nationalised — without compensation.

■ To unmask the greed and irrationality of the bosses, we demand from the bosses, and their state: Open the books to workers' inspection.

■ All defence expenditure is inevitably money spent on sheer waste or on attacking the working class at home and abroad, and on the colonially oppressed peoples. It is against the interests of the working class for a single penny to be spent this way.

■ No to the Social Contract!



LAST SUNDAY'S joint TUC-Labour Party march was the biggest demonstration yet against racialism, 20,000 strong.

It also showed that trade union executives made little effort to mobilise for the demonstration, and that the Labour Party NEC's official anti-racist campaign is going to be very low-key.

According to policy passed at this year's Party conference, the Labour Party is committed to campaign for the repeal of the 1968 and 1971 Immigration Acts. The TUC also has carried resolutions opposing the 1971 Act.

But on the platform was Home Secretary Merlyn Rees, who has started his new job by implementing the Act's provisions on deportation to expel Mark Hosenball and Philip Agee, who have been exposing the activities of the CIA, particularly in the Third World.



Rees was rightly booed and jeered by a large section of the rally. But the other platform speakers had nothing to offer but the most vague and general declarations against racialism.

Lord Pitt was paraded to make his usual appeal for blacks to join the police, to praise the memory of Martin Luther King and the race relations legislation, and to lecture black people on shouldering their responsibilities. Only one speaker (Dipit Ray) made an oblique reference to police harassment of black people, and only Tom Jackson, referring to Grunwicks, made any mention of the fight-back by black workers.

Joan Lester — ignoring the Labour Party conference resolution's support for black self-defence and recognition of "the responsibility of the labour movement to defend the livelihoods and

lives of all workers" — attacked the idea of confronting the fascists head on. We could "never fight intolerance by adopting their methods". How she thought sweet reason would stop the fascist mobs and save the lives of black people attacked on the streets of Britain, she did not say.

Local LPYSSs and Labour Parties must, however, work to organise the people who mobilised for 21st November, to involve them in active and effective campaigning against racialism based on the principles of:

- No to immigration controls;
- Racists and fascists out of the labour movement;
- No platform for fascists;
- Labour movement support for black self-defence.

RYAN DANIELS

The politics of the 'Peace Movement'

THIS SATURDAY (27th), the Metropolitan Police, doubtless with the backing of the Home Secretary, will lift the ban on using Trafalgar Square for demonstrations on the question of Ireland.

The reason for this apparent change is quite simple. The British state machine realises that, unlike past proposals for demonstrations, this event will contain not an ounce of opposition to British imperialism. Not one voice will call for the withdrawal of troops, there will be no demands for an end to the Orange state, not even the absurd "Trade Union defence force" or the wishful-thinking "Bill of Rights" (the property of imperialism's apologists) will be acclaimed by this rally.

The march and rally will be the "People's Peace Movement" in action. What will the march consist of? There will, unfortunately, be large number of confused, well-meaning churchgoers who will be led through the streets singing hymns and praying for peace. They will be led by two British 'celebrities'.

There will be Jane Ewart-Biggs, widow of the British Ambassador in Dublin during whose office the 26 Counties government, hand in glove with Britain, imposed harsher repression on Republicans and socialists. The second leading light will be the religious fanatic

Lord Longford, whose other chief role in demonstrations has been leading agitation against abortion rights.

Under the influence of the "opium of the masses", the marchers will be assured that they are doing their bit for peace.

Workers' Action has a straightforward message for



these people. The "People's Peace Movement" cannot help the struggle for peace in Ireland any more than the British Army in the Six Counties is a peace-keeping force. The reasons for the struggle in Ireland are real political ones. The first steps to real peace lie in an end to British interference in Irish affairs

and the smashing of the six-county set-up.

The history of British rule in Ireland is long and brutal. The division of Ireland has seen the harshest forms of oppression used on Catholics in the "Northern Ireland" statelet. These problems cannot be overcome by pious hymn-singing. They will only be overcome by actively struggling against the conditions which give rise to violence and oppression.

A just and lasting peace will not be won by the "People's Peace Movement". Already those who have borne the brunt of army rule in the Six-County state have shown what they think of the movement. The people of Andersonstown and the Falls Rd have shown a real awareness that the "peace people" are merely stooges of British rule.

The Communist Party and their allies in the Official Republican Movement have at various times applauded the 'peace people' as progressive. Likewise the 'Militant' tendency have praised, with workerist sycophancy, the fact that the 'peace marches' have contained thousands of working class housewives. Even elements of the women's movement may have been hoodwinked by the image of the 'peace movement' being 'all women together'.

To the Stalinists and their left-reformist allies we issue a

challenge. You have three options open to you. You can ignore the demonstration and show that you have no interest in the struggles in Ireland. Or, worse, you can join the peace marchers, whose spokespeople have openly declared their support for the "forces of law and order", i.e. imperialism.

The alternative is to oppose the efforts of the British ruling class to retain and strengthen its grip on the Irish people. That means supporting the picket at Speakers' Corner which has already been sponsored by various left and Irish Republican groups in Britain.

Anything less than wholehearted support for this picket — organised under the slogan of "Peace through Freedom" — would be a betrayal of the hundreds of Irish republicans and socialists who are carrying on the struggle against British domination. To refuse active support would be yet another episode in the black history of the British working class's scabbing on the fight for an independent socialist Ireland.

These will be the watchwords of the "Peace through freedom" rally, assembling at 11.30am on the 27th, at Speakers' Corner:

- Ireland unfree will never be at peace.
- The first step to peace — troops out now!

SOCIALISTS AND NATIONALISTS

YES TO AN INDEPENDENT QUEBEC



THE Parti Quebecois, victor in last week's general election in Quebec, was founded in 1968 as the party of national independence for Quebec. Its leader, René Lévesque, had been a minister in the Liberal provincial government from 1960 to 1965, and it also absorbed the previously-existing small (and decidedly right wing and clericalist) pro-independence groupings, the RN and the RIN.

Taking up populist or social-democratic policies, the PQ gained 23% of the votes in 1970, 30% in 1973, and 41% (with a clear majority in the Assembly) last week. The FTQ (Quebec Workers' Federation) officially supported the PQ last week; the other two trade union federations in Quebec, the CSN (Confederation of National Trade Unions) and CEQ (Quebec Teachers' Federation) gave implicit support to the PQ by concentrating their attacks on the Liberals.

Mixed

Despite its working class support, the PQ is a firmly pro-capitalist party. Its perspective for Quebec is a "mixed economy" closely linked with English-speaking Canada in a monetary and customs union. In his 1968 book "Option Quebec", Lévesque deals with the problem of a flight of capital from an independent Quebec by saying that "a favourable climate for investment" would have to be created.

The PQ voted for the anti-strike laws used by the Quebec government against the general strike of the public sector workers in 1972; and it has not opposed the recent new moves by Quebec's Liberal premier Robert Bourassa to ban public sector strikes. The PQ opposes the Canadian government's C-73 wage limit law only because it "infringes provincial autonomy"

The PQ's programme is independence — with the approval of, and under the tutelage of, the Canadian and US capitalists. Thus, with Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau declaring that he will never negotiate separation of Quebec from Canada under any form, the PQ has said that no moves will be taken towards independence before a referendum on the issue to take place in two years' time.

The national question has been a live issue in Quebec for two centuries.

The existence of both the English Canadian and the French Canadian nations is based on the pushing out of the original native population of Canada. The French colonised Quebec in the 17th century, and at the time of England's colonial conquest in 1760 there were 65,000 French people in the area.

In the other major French-speaking area of Canada, Acadia (New Brunswick), the English conquerors followed a policy of wholesale deportation. In Quebec they first attempted a policy of assimilation, then opted for an alliance with the Church hierarchy and the 'seigneurs' (landlords).

The major revolt against

English colonialism, in 1837-8, was put down by military force, with the assistance of the bishops. Continuing resistance to imperialist domination was, however, shown in the two world wars. In 1917 there was a big anti-conscription upheaval in Quebec. In World War 2, conscription agents who came into Quebec were lynched, and over half the Québécois scheduled for overseas service went absent without leave. A plebiscite on conscription for overseas service had produced a 72% «No» vote in Québec and an 80% «yes» vote elsewhere in Canada.

Wages

While the population is 81% French-speaking (with 10% English speaking, and the rest having other first languages: Italian, Polish, Ukrainian, Greek etc), only 18% of private business is owned by French-speaking people. 42% is owned by English-Canadian interests, and 40% by non-Canadian (mostly US) interests.

Wage levels are 20% to 30% lower than for English Canada; unemployment is generally higher (9.7% now), education opportunities fewer. The dominant role of English in industry

and commerce has made the language issue the sharpest focus of Québécois' resentment against their national oppression. There have been strikes by Québécois workers demanding that French be the language of work.

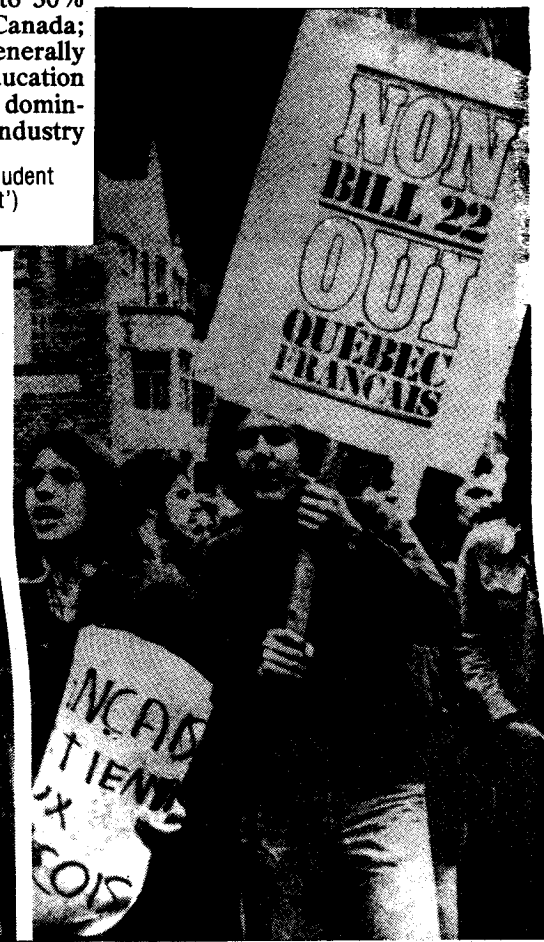
Language, culture, geography and history identify Quebec as a nation — a nation oppressed by English and then English-Canadian imperialism.

Quebec has a large working class, with a slightly higher rate of unionisation than the rest of Canada. But, with the unions traditionally either sections of US unions or Church-dominated, no independent party of labour has ever been created. Canada's anaemic social-democratic party, the NDP, which nevertheless does have some organic relations with the trade unions, has never really penetrated into Quebec.

The French-Canadian bourgeoisie, economically weak and defeated in its major attempts at self-assertion (in 1837-38) has also been feeble politically. From 1936-39 and 1944-59, the provin-

PHOTOS: Left (top to bottom): Pierre Trudeau, Liberal federal Prime Minister; Robert Bourassa, outgoing Liberal Quebec Premier; René Lévesque, PQ incoming Quebec PM.

Below (left to right): French language demonstrations; student activists of the short-lived FLQ ('Quebec Liberation Front')



NO to a 'Scottish break-away'

IN THE LAST TWO issues of **Workers' Action**, we have criticised the politics of the two wings of the breakaway Scottish Labour Party. We declared that "Scottish nationalism and working class politics can no more be blended together than can oil and water".

But, having recognised Scottish nationalism as reactionary, what attitude should socialists take on the issues of 'devolution' or separation for Scotland?

We oppose the separation of Scotland from Britain. That separation would in no way help the Scottish people, and it would tend to disrupt the presently-existing unity of the English and Scottish labour movement.

But it is the working class of Scotland

who must oppose that separation, not the British capitalist state. If the majority of the Scottish people express themselves for independence, they should get it. Then at least separation will give them a chance to see the inadequacy of the nationalist solution through their own experience. To say that the majority wish for independence (however wrong we consider it) should be denied would help the nationalists to rally Scottish people behind them.

Scotland, we believe, is not a nation in the Marxist sense, but it does have some of the elements of national identity. Trade and commerce had developed to some extent before the Union, and there are recognisable economic centres

for Scotland, for example Clydeside. Certain social institutions — for example the legal system and the education system — have remained distinct from England's. There is a degree of national consciousness and national culture.

It is not inconceivable that Scotland could become a nation. As socialists, we would not favour that development; but we would recognise the right of the Scottish people to national self-determination.

The question of 'devolution' and the Assembly is more complex.

In the abstract, 'devolution' could be a reform to extend democracy. Concretely, there is no reason to suppose that the Assembly will bring increased democracy

or any other benefit to the Scottish people. And by giving the Nationalists a stamping-ground and endless material for agitation on the scope of the Assembly's power, 'devolution' can only tend to strengthen nationalism — even though, manifestly, the government is introducing devolution with a view to neutralising the nationalists. From the point of view of the unity of the working class, it is a retrograde step.

Again, we recognise the right of the majority of the Scottish people to have it if they want it.

The same principle applies to the currently contentious question of economic powers for the Assembly. Our voice is against it; we believe the will of the maj-

DUALISM

policy seems unexceptionably democratic; its major effect, however, is to endorse the privileged role of the English language in Quebec.

Sizable struggles have been waged in Quebec for French to be the one official language in official matters and in secondary education, and revolutionary socialists have supported this demand as an expression of self-determination for Quebec. (The Quebec Liberals have now made French the province's one official language, but retain a separate English school system.)

Dissatisfaction with the Liberals' policy on the national question, and their attempts to make workers pay the cost of capitalist crisis — sharpened by exposures of provincial government corruption — finally caused Bourassa to go to the polls early despite the massive majority (102 seats out of 110 in the Assembly) which he retained from the 1973 elections. Now he has been reduced to 34% of the vote and 28 seats in the Assembly.

Tasks

Channelled into the pro-capitalist Parti Québécois, the Quebec workers' discontent with the Liberals has chosen a blind alley — not only as regards anti-capitalist struggle, but even on the national question. The experience of a bourgeois nationalist regime can, however, help push Quebec workers onto the path of independent class politics — for a workers' republic of Quebec — if Quebec revolutionaries are able to measure up to their tasks.

The GMR (Revolutionary Marxist Group, Quebec supporters of the USFI majority) presented 3 candidates in the elections, and the LSO (Workers' Socialist League, supporters of the USFI minority) one. Both opposed any vote for the bourgeois Parti Québécois; the LSO offered critical support to NDP candidates (running in coalition with a front organisation of the Lambertist GSTQ!), while the GMR called on workers to vote only for its own candidates and the LSO's.

cial government was run by the right wing and corrupt middle class rabble of the Union Nationale, under the autocratic leadership of Maurice Duplessis. The Duplessis regime was characterised by nationalist and clericalist demagoguery, and total subservience in practice to US and English-Canadian imperialism.

After Duplessis' death in 1959, and major scandals exposing Union Nationale corruption, politics in Quebec began to move faster. Nationalist agitation increased, fuelled by developments like the Black Power movement in the US. (Nationalists have defined the Quebecois as the "white niggers of North America").

Quiet

A major programme of reform and modernisation was undertaken by the more astute French-Canadian bourgeois politicians, organised in the Liberal Party (one of the two major pan-Canadian bourgeois parties: the other, the Conservatives, has no presence in Quebec), who have controlled the Quebec provincial government from 1960 to 1976 apart from a Union Nationale return to office in 1966-70. One of the figures associated with this so-called "révolution tranquille" (quiet revolution) was Pierre Trudeau, Canadian Prime Minister since 1968.

The high-point of Liberal policy has been Trudeau's programme of bilingualism — making both French and English official languages across Canada. The



ority should be respected.

Powers for the Scottish Assembly to levy extra taxes for Scotland can scarcely help the Scottish people; nor can a provision that government funds for industry or for local authorities should be distributed (or cut back) by representatives of Scottish capitalism rather than representatives of British capitalism. The demand for a fixed proportion of North Sea oil revenue to go to Scotland simply obscures the question of which class should benefit in favour of haggling over the shares of different regions.

To determine the majority will on these various questions, Workers' Action favours a referendum. The idea of a referendum is already in circulation, some-

times from quarters (such as sections of the Tory party) who are going purple in the face at the idea of the 'break-up of the United Kingdom' and want to word the referendum questions trickily so as to do down the Scottish nationalists.

Workers' Action would advocate boycotting such a trickily-worded referendum, counterposing the demand for a honestly-worded referendum: by combining a clear assessment of the will of the majority with an equally clear respect for that will, a great deal could be done to clear away the fog of demagoguery surrounding the issue of Scottish nationalism. And that clearing operation is absolutely vital for Scottish workers fighting against the nationalist diversion.

'CONDEMN THESE METHODS OF SMEAR & SLANDER'

AN INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT ON THE WRP AND THE OCI

THE WORKERS' Revolutionary Party and its paper the "Newline" have devoted much of their recent efforts to an infamous slander campaign against Joseph Hansen and George Novack, two long-standing American socialist activists, and leaders of the Socialist Workers' Party. It is infamous because, as in any police state, the very fact of the accusation becomes the main — and only — "evidence". Rallies have been called on the 36th anniversary of Trotsky's death to be told that Hansen is an 'agent of the GPU', an accomplice, either by criminal neglect or by deliberation, in the Stalinist murder of Trotsky.

This shameful effort is a deliberate technique, borrowed from Stalinism, to create an atmosphere of witchhunt and bigotry among WRP members, directed both at other tendencies in the working class movement and against any dissent inside the WRP. The WRP leadership find this necessary to whip their flagging ranks into line, and to cover up for their ever more gross opportunism, vividly expressed in their uncritical support for Libya's military dictator, Gaddafi.



The trigger for this campaign seems to have come from the Wohlforth episode. Tim Wohlforth was for over ten years the central leader of the Workers' League, the US section of the WRP's "International Committee of the Fourth International" (not to be confused with the international faction founded by J P Cannon in 1953, which in 1963 fused with the "International Secretariat of the FI", led by Pablo and Mandel, to form the present USFI).

Two years ago G Healy, central leader of the WRP, instructed Wohlforth, on no adequate grounds, to subject his companion Nancy Fields to investigation as a possible CIA agent. Wohlforth hesitated: and was expelled from the Workers' League, though even the "ICFI" 'Inquiry' eventually cleared Fields.

Wohlforth wrote an account of these nightmarish events which was published in "Intercontinental Press", a journal on which Hansen and Novack are editors. Healy's response — alleging that Hansen and Novack, with whom he worked closely for over a decade, have been accomplices of the Stalinist secret police for 40 years — has confirmed what Wohlforth's story indicated, that Healy has no sane view of reality.

Workers' Action fully endorses the statement we reproduce below, signed by several revolutionary socialist organisations of different countries. The statement condemns the gangster methods not only of the WRP but also of the French OCI, which was until 1971 the sister organisation of the WRP (then SLL).



Michel Varga is currently leader of the LOR ("Revolutionary Workers' League") of France. He participated in the Hungarian rising in 1956, having, it seems, some illusions in bourgeois democracy at the time. Subsequently he was for 15 years a leader of the OCI.

After expelling Varga and his group, the OCI has denounced him as an agent both of the CIA and of the GPU. While Varga's record is by no means as impeccable as Hansen's, the OCI's denunciations cannot be called other than irresponsible. Certainly there is no adequate evidence. And if the OCI were right on any point, the first question would be why the OCI leadership, with full knowledge, allowed Varga to lead their work in relation to Eastern Europe for so long.

Moreover, the OCI have followed a systematic policy of physical attacks on the militants of the LOR and on militants of other organisations (LCR, LO, Combat Communiste) who have intervened to defend the LOR members.



Joseph Hansen (top) and George Novack

The OCI's methods are no less poisonous than the WRP's. However, a representative of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International at the international conference, called by LO and other tendencies, which adopted the statement, declined to support the condemnation of the OCI. This position can only be explained as an offshoot of the diplomatic manoeuvrings which the USFI minority ('Leninist-Trotskyist Faction') has been carrying on with the OCI.

The organisations signing the statement call on other working-class and revolutionary organisations to add their signatures — and it is to be hoped that the IMG, British section of the USFI, will be among them.



THE UNDERSIGNED working class organisations hereby condemn the slander campaign against Joseph Hansen and George Novack waged by the WRP and those who follow them on this point on the international level.

We characterise this campaign as a poisonous, disruptive, and anti-working class campaign.

Some of our organisations have important political disagreements with Hansen, Novack, and the Socialist Workers' Party — but we fight for our politics with the proletarian methods of principled debate, not the Stalinist methods of smear and slander. The WRP's charges against Hansen and Novack amount to nothing more than the fact that they refused to launch a general witchhunt against the danger of possible Stalinist agents. If that fact convicts Hansen and Novack, then it should also convict James P Cannon and Leon Trotsky himself — who always refused to establish a regime of permanent witchhunt.

Similarly, the undersigned organisations condemn the campaign waged by the OCI, which — without the slightest proof — accuses Michel Varga of being an agent of both the CIA and GPU, and their recourse to physical attacks against militants of the LOR, as well as against other revolutionary militants who tried to intervene in these incidents. We are dealing here too with Stalinist methods that must be banned from the Trotskyist movement, as well as from the working class movement as a whole.

In these two cases, those really guilty of foul dealings are the leaders of the WRP and the OCI, who try to solve political problems through vile slander campaigns.

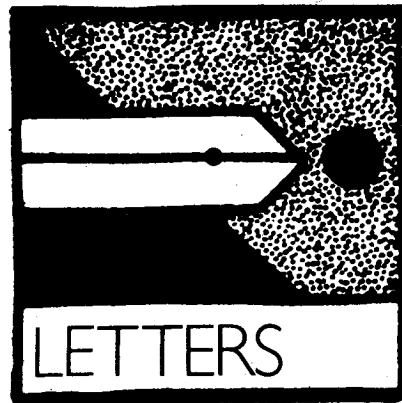
International-Communist League [Britain]; Lutte Ouvrière [France]; Combat Ouvrier [Antilles]; Union Africaine des Travailleurs Communistes Internationalistes; Spark [USA]; Internationale Kommunistische Liga [Austria]; Lega Comunista [Italy]; Spartacusbund [Germany].

workers' ACTION

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Write for details of meetings and activities to:
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Nationalism is a real movement in Scotland

AN ACCOMPLICE,
NOT A VICTIM,
OF ENGLAND



COMRADES,

I read with interest your editorial on Scottish nationalism and the SLP in WA35. While agreeing with your characterisation of the SLP and the opposition to Sillars within it, I wonder if the conclusion of the article doesn't simply miss the essential point about Scottish nationalism.

You say that Scottish nationalism is a 'diversion', irrelevant for fighting the real problems that face Scottish workers; that it will not begin to solve the problems of Scottish workers; and so on.

In one sense, all this is quite true. In the same sense, the comments could as well apply to Irish nationalism. You don't believe that the programme of the Republican movement will 'solve the problems' of the Irish working class, north and south, yet you quite rightly give them your support because they are fighting to free their country from the clutches of British imperialism.

The real problem is whether or not the same can be said about Scottish

nationalism. It is certainly true that the unification of England and Scotland was opposed by the vast mass of the Scottish people; that England waged a war (against the Jacobites) to stamp out resistance to its rule; that the English landlords, after the defeat of the Jacobites, began the systematic destruction of the existing predominant Scottish social system (the clans) in order to turn the Highlands into deserted tracts suitable only for the raising of sheep and deer; and that today, like Northern Ireland, Scotland is a specially deprived area.

All this suggests strong parallels with Ireland, even down to the existence of a current of Scottish nationalism which has paralleled that of the Irish (United Scotsmen, John Maclean etc.) If this is the case, then Scottish nationalism is not simply a 'diversion' from some sort of 'pure' stream of history. It is a historical stage in the development of Scottish society — a stage which is historically progressive compared with the

previous one. No talk about the 'unity of Scottish and English workers' can gloss over that fact.

Trotsky, writing about the separatist movement in the Ukraine during the 1930s, comments that to counterpose to such a movement the abstract unity of the Soviet Union, or even the unity of the working class of the USSR, was to cut across the real movement of the Ukrainian workers and peasants.

Such a 'real movement' is taking place in Scotland today. If the SNP continues to grow at its present rate it will soon become the largest party in Scotland. To read your editorial, you would never appreciate this obviously important development.

When that happens, can we expect WA to suddenly become a supporter of the Scottish right to self-determination, or will you continue to stand aside from the real movement in Scotland, contenting yourself with abstract denunciations similar to the Militant's ones about the Republicans?

Richard Hargreaves

REPLY: Certainly Irish nationalism will not solve the biggest problem of the Irish working class: capitalism. WA gives its [critical] support to the Irish national struggle, however, because that struggle IS directed against SOME of the problems of the Irish working class: partition and British military occupation.

Is the Union of Scotland and England a "problem" for the Scottish working class? The result of that Union has not been colonial wars and oppression and economic devastation such as characterise Britain's domination of Ireland. On the contrary. The Union was followed by the rapid advance of bourgeois economic and cultural development in Scotland. Capitalist development in Scotland — as everywhere else — was not crisis-free or even. It did involve the depopulation of the Highlands (though the landlords involved were mainly Scottish, not English: people like the Duchess of Sutherland). Nevertheless, it has been recognisably metropolitan capitalist development.

Scotland has been a partner in British imperialism, not, like Ireland, a victim of it.

Scotland today, as comrade Hargreaves says, is a relatively "deprived area of Britain" — like South West or North East England. Regionalism or Scottish nationalism is no answer to that problem of uneven development. The difference with Ireland is that we believe that by right Ireland is not, or should not be, an "area of Britain".

□

It is very doubtful that "the vast mass of the Scottish people" opposed unification with England in 1707. In fact England, motivated by military-strategic considerations, gave rather favourable economic terms to Scotland.

The Jacobite rebellions can scarcely be presented as a national-democratic movement. Lowland Scots played a large part in defeating them. Demanding the installation on the joint throne of Scotland and England of the pretender most linked to the maintenance of the remnants of feudalism, and mobilising one of the most backward sections of the population of Britain [the Highlanders], they had a distinctly reactionary character. Indeed, it was soon after the defeat of the 1745 rebellion that Parliament abolished the residues of feudalism in Scotland. Scotland is not an oppressed nation. Indeed, its historical, economic, cultural and linguistic identity is not sufficiently distinct to define it as a fully developed nation of any sort. The disparities between the Highlands and Lowlands are as great as those between Scotland and England. (Why not, if you are to be logical, independence for the Highlands, Comrade Hargreaves?)

□

Scottish nationalism is a reactionary force — especially in its impact on the labour movement. The unity of the Scottish and English labour movement developed organically, and is a positive gain to be defended against the dangers of nationalism. The effect of Scottish nationalism on the political activity of John Maclean was thoroughly harmful, serving as it did only to isolate him from and set him against the task of building a communist party in Britain.

Is Scottish nationalism the "real movement" in Scotland today? The period since the late '60s in Western Europe, and especially in Britain, has seen a developing crisis of the social and political institutions of the bourgeoisie, and severe economic crisis. The labour movement has not yet created a mass revolutionary alternative. In this situation, petty-bourgeois "new party" movements have sizable opportunities — and Scottish nationalism has been given the added boost of the North Sea oil issue. The SLP has, however, been a fiasco, instead of gaining the solid labour movement support we would expect it to acquire if Scottish nationalism were the "real movement" in Scotland.

NOEL TRACY

For space reasons, we have cut this letter and postponed the reply to R G McAuley's letter on "Troops Out" [see WA last week] to next week.....Ed.

A UNIFORM WAGE FOR STATE SECTOR

COMRADES,

We are obviously on common ground on the need to make transitional demands aiming at the dismantlement of the bourgeois state. Your reply to my letter [see WA35], however, doesn't explain why it's necessary to make these demands in respect of the army and the police but not in respect of the bureaucracy. Do you really think they are less insidious than the former or less agents of the capitalist class and hostile to the workers for that matter. If not, why not equal demands at the moment.

It was the need for a programme towards this dismantlement to which I was referring in my letter. I had thought my letter made it clear that I wanted the elimination of the bureaucratic positions along with the elimination of their perks. It still reads that way to me, not as a demand for "workers' control of the rich in the state sector".

There also seems to be some inconsistency in your assertion that you hold to the traditional Marxist stance of refusing approval to any capitalist state budget while at the same time you are insisting on no cuts in public spending except defence. It wouldn't make sense to any average reader of your paper.

But to continue. The idea that a single uniform wage in the state sector is utopian would seem to make Marx a utopian and put me in good

company. Marx welcomed the introduction of a uniform wage based on the average worker's wage for all public officials as one of the major achievements of the Paris Commune. I wasn't aware that he'd managed to abolish the wages system. Clearly Marx either changed his mind or regarded the state sector as somewhat different in this respect. If a single uniform wage for all public officials is the sort of policy a transitional regime would implement then surely it would be a transitional demand in a period of severe crisis in the system.

The fact that it couldn't be enforced at the present time, as with demands on "perks" and retraining for productive work, without a revolutionary upheaval and a resultant qualitative change in the balance of forces is part of what makes them transitional. The same would equally apply to your demands in WA33 and WA35. If they were obtainable without a major battle presumably they'd be reformist.

As for the naiveté of my latter-day "dig for victory" I think it's your naiveté as to the problems which a transitional regime would face which show through. You have chosen a very bad example. In fact the nearest thing any of us in England have seen as to what conditions under a transitional regime would be like is precisely in wartime, only they would be far worse. Given a hostile world the chances of transitional government ever being able to

obtain sufficient foreign currency to continue to import food at the present levels (more than 50% of needs), even if there were willing sellers, is about absolute zero.

Therefore an extension of agricultural land and a more intense cultivation of it is precisely the sort of policy a transitional regime would have to implement. Therefore we would seem to need some sort of transitional demands in this direction.

But I think your major error is implicit in your propaganda rather than explicit. One of the major factors in continuing working class support for the Labour Party is the myth that the state is redistributing wealth in its favour. Until this myth is broken it is difficult to see how the left will be able to make any major gains vis-a-vis the mass of the working class.

By defending public spending without reservations as you do you are perpetuating the myth that it is the working class who have the most to lose. On the contrary, the social services and public spending represent a net transfer of funds and benefits to the middle class. Even on health the middle class get far more from the social services than do workers and their families. Education is far more beneficial to the middle class and one might even say has totally failed the working class. Unemployment pay, pensions etc are more than paid for by the workers themselves.

It's not that we don't want the services, we do; but we must at the same time recognise who are the major beneficiaries. The right in the Labour Party recognised this long ago.

As for the dangers of creating illusions in salvation through more productivity I fully recognise them. They are worrying. But I also cannot see how consciousness of a political and social kind in the working class can increase without some awareness of the greater worth of productive and useful work rather than paper shuffling both in the working class and elsewhere. After all a revolutionary class has also to be a universal class. And again, a transitional regime would face just this problem of production.

We must show that socialism represents an alternative way of tackling the present crisis and not just on the one hand defensive measures for the class and on the other utopian dreams for the future.

might make sense as policy proposals for a workers' state, but obviously measures to curb waste in the capitalist state machine are anachronistic and redundant in a workers' state. None of them could really serve to focus workers' mobilisation now. Some do make sense as demands on the capitalist government: but a capitalist government drive for austerity can only have a reactionary or at best a reformist sense.

The slogans we CAN raise in relation to the bureaucracy are ones like: abolition of the Official Secrets Act; right of public inspection of the workings of the civil service; election of judges and top civil servants.

Marx speaks of "the public service ... done at workmen's wages" under the Paris Commune; but he does not assert that a uniform wage existed, and indeed implies the opposite when he writes of "salaries the highest of which barely amounted to one-fifth of [that] ... for a secretary to a certain metropolitan school board."

JUST WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?

REPLY: Under a workers' state, we would favour cheap government and increased productivity; in such a regime they could be realised to the great benefit of the working class. Increasing the intensity of agriculture would, however, not serve to save an isolated workers' Britain. We couldn't, for instance, dig up the oil or the iron ore we'd need, which would pose much greater problems. The only chance of survival would be to spread the revolution.

We don't endorse capitalist public spending; but we don't reply to it by calls for increased productivity under the capitalist regime or some ill-defined "transitional" regime. If you abolish top bureaucrats' positions, you obviously abolish their privileges too; to raise a separate demand for the cutting of those privileges makes no more sense than an outcry for the slashing of directors' fees and/or dividends.

The problem with most of Comrade Tracy's demands is that it is not clear who is to carry them out. Some

THE LIFE CYCLE OF A MIGRANT WORKER

"A Seventh Man", by John Berger and Jean Mohr; adapted for the theatre by Adrian Mitchell and performed by Foco Novo. At the Hampstead Theatre Club, Swiss Cottage, until 4th December.

JOHN BERGER and Jean Mohr's book "A Seventh Man" attempted to reconstruct the total experience of being a migrant worker in Western Europe. Adrian Mitchell translates this into the theatre by looking at the personal history of a 'typical' immigrant, Georgiou.

Perhaps inevitably, this has the effect of losing some of the sharpness of the book and blurring the lines between the personal and the general.

Two elements, however, stand out particularly well in the presentation. One is the constancy and circularity of the process to which the migrants are subjected. Though the movement from country to town marks a startling break for Georgiou, life in both is marked by repetition. In the country, this is dictated by the pattern of nature; in the town it is inflicted by a relentless combination of man and machine. The life of Georgiou and the others is an endless continuing process of work and sleep in the company barracks, where leisure time is just as oppressive as time spent at work.

The driving force of the migrant is shown, perhaps too simply, as the desire for self-improvement at home, yet in the final scene it is made clear that even if a few may achieve this (and those who don't are forced to go on pretending), the whole cycle does not come to an end.

RETURN

At the end of the play, seeing Georgiou returning home for a holiday dreaming of what his work will eventually bring him, we are told that "The final return is a myth", that others will go even if some return. Yet for the individual migrant, the experience of working in an advanced industrial society represents a breach which makes him unsure of where he belongs and leaves him without a clear identity.

The process shows also the interdependence and connections of the advanced and the backward rural areas of Europe. The migrant is valued only as a source of cheap labour, who has not had money spent on his education, health, etc. To those in the rural areas, the possibility of migration represents a possibility of self-improvement and a chance to escape from a grinding poverty, which is, however, only replaced with another form of exploitation. "To him who has machines, men shall be given; from him who has no machines, men shall be taken away". This theme of Berger's underlies the whole of "A Seventh Man".

Berger was offered the chance to give an adaptation of his book to either the National Theatre or Foco Novo. He chose the latter. This has the advantage that the play will be seen outside the august portals of the South Bank; and Foco Novo deal sympathetically and intelligently with the material. Some parts lack depth in their characterisation; but Stefan Kalipha portrays bemusement, frustration, and hope vividly in the part of Georgiou, and Joan-Ann Maynard sings beautifully the songs in which sections of Berger's text are presented.

Bruce Robinson

DEATH DUST STRIKERS STILL OUT

FIVE CLEANERS at North East London Poly (NELP), Plaistow, have been on strike since the end of September protesting at dangerous levels of asbestos dust in the building. The dust was left by a non-union firm employed by the Poly to fit asbestos sheeting over the summer holidays. When the cleaners discovered they had been cleaning up potentially lethal dust, they walked out and their picket, though not the strike itself, was made official by their union, the G&MWU.

The Poly then called in National Occupational Hygiene Services Ltd (NOHS), to analyse the dust, in early October. They found 4% asbestos among the dust that had settled at ground level — estimated by scientists to be above safety level. There was thus considerable danger to the 330 students and staff at the Poly, not to mention the 30 children aged 2 to 11 who attended the child study unit there.

The Poly bosses, though, were not to be moved. NOHS, after they had checked the dust at ground level, asked the cleaners to sweep up so that they could take "air samples under normal working conditions". Not surprisingly, the cleaners, who have no protective clothing and were now aware of the danger facing them, refused to do so. NOHS then took air samples with the dust undisturbed on the ground. It is these figures that the Poly bosses are using to play down the danger.

The G&M too are backing off support for the cleaners. Bill McColl, G&M regional official, has just negotiated a set of demands with the management which leaves out the crucial demand by the cleaners, that of a comprehensive analysis of dust levels before any further cleaning of the Poly is undertaken. The Poly itself has been shut by the Factory Inspectors since the beginning of November. McColl has adopted a "take it or leave it" attitude to the cleaners over the demands he has negotiated, and is giving passive agreement to the employment of scab firm office cleaning services who are expected to attempt to break the picket line on Monday 22nd.

The cleaners are calling for analysis by the Factory Inspectorate before any cleaning takes place, and that any such cleaning should be monitored.

Send resolutions calling for the strike to be made official to GMWU, 154 Brent St, NW4; resolutions calling for a public inquiry to NELP (West Ham Precinct), Romford Rd, E15; and messages of support and donations to Holbrook cleaners' strike committee, NELP, Holbrook Hub, Holbrook Rd, Stratford, E15. I.H.

POLY STUDENTS PROTEST AGAINST THREATS TO OVERSEAS STUDENTS

On Tuesday 16th November an EGM of the Students Union of Teesside Polytechnic decided to occupy the Poly in response to an LEA-Poly threat to withdraw student status from 55 overseas students if they are unable to pay all their fees. [Over £500 in many cases] by December.

If this threat materialises, these students will be immediately reported to the Home Office and, in accordance with a Department of Education and Science circular of March 1975, deported forthwith.

The occupation was preceded by a campaign against the racist ploy floated by Fred Mulley [then Education Minister] to select students on the basis of colour and nationality by imposing a maximum entry quota on foreign students for all courses in higher education.

However, the day before the Academic Board was due to discuss a quota plan, the fees ultimatum was presented to the overseas students, giving them only six days to pay up the whole year's fees [instead of being allowed to pay over the three terms].

ULTIMATUM

The Academic Board was picketed by students demanding the dropping of the quota idea, and the withdrawal of the fees ultimatum.

After the picket [which was attended by 150 students] the quota plan was dropped, and the pay-up time for fees extended to the end of December.

Feelings were running high at the EGM the next week, and encouraged by delegates from the Middlesex Poly occupation, the vote for an immediate occupation was overwhelming. 120 students moved into immediate action, taking over the Finance and Sales Offices. Then, after obtaining keys, they moved into the Assistant Director's office and the Director's suite.

The Directorate responded in a way calculated to alienate catering staff and the rest of the students. They ordered the immediate closure

of the refectory and coffee bars, giving the pathetic excuse that the Finance Office, now occupied, was the only room in the Poly where cashing-up could be done. A leaflet was put out straight away by the Occupation Committee exposing this trick, pointing out that the Refectory is normally open at weekends, when the Finance Office is closed. Further, the Occupation offered help to cash-up and bank the money if the Directorate was particularly attached to the Finance Office.

On the Wednesday [17] the Directorate surpassed themselves. They threatened to cut off the TV pipeline to the Halls and Residential houses just before the big England/Italy Match. When the occupation didn't budge even after this terrible threat, they withdrew this bit of spite.

In the first two days of the occupation, alternative cheap catering was set up by the students. Round-the-clock bulletins were issued in an effort to inform as many students as possible of every latest development. In addition, documents were produced based on Directorate files connected with the overseas students issue.

This is just one specimen of what the occupation found in the files: "...there is a point at which the proportion of foreign students helps to alter the character of an institution and at which their numbers become too great for the residential capacity of an area. With regard to the former it must be added that the majority of overseas students are in no way inferior culturally or intellectually to

A COLLECTION of photocopied documents discovered by the students during the sit-in is circulating with a note on the cover pointing out that "the implications this document carries can be far-reaching — much further than the issues involved in the current occupation".

The extent of the implications can be judged from this statement in a memo from Clarke to the Director: "Whether or not the increase in fees will reduce the number of overseas applicants next year remains to be seen; what seems certain is that if there were a four or five times increase in fees in the future, as is threatened in some quarters, there would be a drastic diminution in overseas students. Courses consisting largely of [overseas students] might then collapse. This obviously leads one to question the advisability of recruiting too many overseas students".

In other words, in order to protect themselves against a possible future closure based on an as yet only rumoured rise, departments are already being advised to cut back drastically.

our own British students." [Letter from Mr. — ex-Captain. — D.D. Clarke, Polytechnic Secretary and Clerk to the Governor, to G.B. Yeo, Cleveland's Deputy Director of Education, dated 18th August this year].

After two days, a further Union EGM was called to confirm the occupation. Despite the Directorate's ploys; mobilisation by the Tory students; some Engineering staff telling their students to vote against the occupation and letting them out early from lectures so that they could do so; despite all this, the biggest student meeting ever held in Teesside Poly, including nearly all full-time students, voted by 578 to 523 to continue the occupation.

STATUS

Since then, the Director has made ambiguous statements, seeming to back down on the deportation. But a meeting of all those occupying held on Friday night completely rejected the Directorate's overtures and affirmed that the only proposals they would accept would be: No withdrawal of student status and for overseas students to be given all the time they need to pay the fees. Kanme Ademiluyi, a member of the Occupation Committee, said "We are continuing the occupation until all our demands are met in full."

At the time of writing, 20 colleges and universities have sent messages of support.

In a letter to Clarke from the Senior Assistant Education Officer for Further and Higher Education, the writer points out, "The Polytechnic in my view can be accused of being irresponsible in not taking any steps to match enrolments with the available residential accommodation for students".

In other words, in order to build their departmental empires, heads of department admitted an abnormally large percentage of overseas students without being able to provide them with accommodation.

In a letter from the Director to the Assistant Director [Academic], the Director clearly reveals his intention to use the overseas students as a scapegoat and at the same time as a safety valve. "A serious situation is now very rapidly arising in relation to the shortage of student residential accommodation. For this reason it now appears necessary to impose some kind of restriction on what might otherwise be unlimited overseas enrolment".

...and at Middlesex Poly

THE MIDDLESEX Poly students' occupation against the cuts and against the increase in overseas students' fees continues. Last week it was extended to include the Bounds Green site as well as the Edmonton site. Many of those involved are overseas engineering students who have not previously been politically active.

Last week's student union mass

meeting at Enfield voted 380-290 to continue the action. A call from the Broad Left to make the continuation only provisional, with the situation to be reviewed on Monday 22nd, was defeated. Student union representatives are to meet with the Poly Directorate on Wednesday 24th.

Middlesex Poly students have visited other colleges in an effort to spread the occupation. S.C.



A letter to Monty Finniston, retiring chairman of the British Steel Corporation.

Dear Mr Finniston,

In your letter to the ISTC (Iron and Steel Trades Confederation) secretary Bill Sirs, you have accused the steel unions of holding back BSC's development programme by three vital years, and described the industry's strike record as a shaming failure.

I too think the industry's record of resistance to BSC's 'development plans' should be better: but in the opposite way to you! Virtually the only opposition you have encountered over the past few years has been the strike in South Wales and Corby in January this year, the 'work-in' at the River Don works, Sheffield, and a few other struggles up and down the country. But to you even the strike record and resistance to redundancies of the ISTC, which rates zero on both scores, is too much. Even a union like the ISTC, led by the most servile bureaucrats and careerists, which worked hand in glove with you for years, is too much to bear.

You have encountered this scattered and inadequate opposition

Dear Mr. Finniston - out!

despite the fact that you have closed whole works down, and chopped jobs right, left and centre. In my own area, Sheffield and Rotherham, 12,000 jobs in the steel industry have disappeared, never to appear again. What more do you want, Mr Finniston, blood? With the possible exception of textiles, never have so many workers with so much potential power, sat back and done nothing about massive redundancies and cutting back.

Your development programme was, and is, nothing more than a recipe to put thousands and thousands of steelworkers on the dole. As a trade unionist and a socialist I do not believe that the introduction of modern machinery and techniques (which I am all in favour of) should result in workers being laid off. Modern techniques should mean shorter hours, and cleaner and safer conditions of work, not the dole queue.

The industry you have command-

ed for the past few years is in a mess, and whose fault is it? It isn't the workers' fault, who have paid a high price for steel in burnt and disfigured limbs, ruined health, ruined lives through continuous shift working, and sometimes death — ask the wives and relations of the men who died in the Scunthorpe Torpedo tube disaster not long back.

Now you turn round and say we should bear the cost of your crisis, or the crisis of the class you represent — not only that, but when those miserable rejects who claim to represent our interests, people like Bill Sirs, do put up even the most meagre resistance, you rub salt in the wound by condemning even that. Yet you know as well as I do that without Sirs and his ilk controlling and policing the rank and file your plans would have got nowhere.

Now, I understand, you are taking a job in private industry somewhere. I wonder what your 'wage' will be: £10,000, £15,000, or £30,000?

As for myself, I will be getting up at 4.40 again tomorrow morning to do the morning shift. I will also be working Saturday and Sunday because that is the only way I can bring home more than £45 per week. You probably won't understand this, but I feel somewhat bitter.

So do many other workers in the steel industry. One day this bitterness will develop and transform itself into a real fight against your policies and your successor's. When that day dawns there will be a few more redundancies and rationalisations announced. Directors — out! Compensation to former owners — out! Monty Finniston mark 2 or 3 — out!

That is the day when we, the people who make the steel, take over with workers' control. When that time arrives, Mr Finniston, it is you who will be the 'shaming failure'.

John Cunningham

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads, 8p per word; block ads, £5 per column inch. Send copy to 'Events', 49 Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for the following week's issue.

SATURDAY 27 NOVEMBER. Demonstration against racism and fascism and in support of the Bolton 7. Meet 1pm at Queens Park, Spa Rd, near Town Centre, Bolton.

SATURDAY 27 NOVEMBER. "Peace through freedom" counter-demonstration to the Ireland 'peace' march. Assemble 11.30am at Speakers' Corner.

SATURDAY 27 NOVEMBER. Picket of NUT Appeals Committee on the case of the 30 teachers from Little Ilford School. 8.30am, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, WC1.

SUNDAY 28 NOVEMBER. Birmingham Workers' Action readers' meeting — Marxist education series. "The Transitional Programme". 3pm at 102 Teignemouh Rd, Selly Oak.

MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER. Manchester Workers' Action readers' meeting: "Fighting the Cuts". 8pm at the Peoples' Centre, Moss Side, Manchester 16.

MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER. Labour Movement Delegation to Ireland report meeting: "The Irish Question — how women see it". 7.30pm at the Roebuck, Tottenham Court Rd

TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER. LMDI meeting: "The Irish Question — how women see it". 7.30pm at Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street.

TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER. Cardiff Workers' Action readers' meeting on "Russia: Workers' State or State Capitalist?". 7.30pm at the Rhymer Hotel, Adams St.

WEDNESDAY 1 DECEMBER. Central London Workers' Action readers' meeting: "The Communist Manifesto and the March Address". 8.45pm at the George, Liverpool Road, London N1.

SATURDAY 4 DECEMBER. Protest against Bury Council's plans to close Sefton St Old People's Centre. Assemble 12 noon, Sefton St, Whitefield.

SUNDAY 5 DECEMBER. Birmingham Workers' Action readers' meeting — Marxist education series. "The capitalist state and the revolutionary party". 3pm at 102 Teignemouh Rd, Selly Oak.

SUNDAY 5 DECEMBER. Manchester conference "For Freedom in Southern Africa". 10am to 5pm at SOGAT Social Club, 4-8 Gt George St, Chapel St, Salford. Delegates credentials from Anti-Apartheid, 565 Wilmslow Rd, Manchester 20.

WEDNESDAY 8 DECEMBER. Concert for Chile: Karazu and Bob Davenport. 7pm at Friends House, Euston Rd, NW1.

SUNDAY 12 DECEMBER. International Communist League public meeting on the struggle in Southern Africa. 7.45pm at the Roebuck, Tottenham Court Rd.

MONDAY 13 DECEMBER. Manchester Workers' Action readers' meeting on "Women's Liberation". 8pm at the People's Centre, Moss Lane East, Moss Side.

advertisement

"CRITIQUE" nos 1 and 2 have just been re-printed and are available from Critique, 9 Poland St, London W1, at 80p each plus 20p p&p. No.1 contains Jiri Pelikan on Workers' Councils in Czechoslovakia, H H Ticktin on political economy of the USSR, J D White on the historiography of the Russian Revolution, and D H Rubin on Godelier's Marxism. No. 2 contains H H Ticktin on the soviet intellectual, M McCawley on political change since Stalin, D S Law on the 1923 Opposition, J Kavan on Czechoslovakia 1968, and D H Rubin on dialectical relations.

advertisement

FRIDAY 3 DECEMBER. "Marxism against feminism — women's liberation through socialist revolution". During the past five years *Women and Revolution*, a Marxist journal published by the Spartacist League (US), has analysed the material basis for women's oppression and has put forward a concrete program for women's liberation through socialist revolution. Helene Brosius an editor of the journal, will speak. London Spartacist group forum. 7.30 Skinners Arms 114 Judd St, WC1. (Station: Kings Cross).

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WIDIRIKIERS IN

ANCTINDN

WORKERS TAKE OVER AT THREATENED HOSPITAL

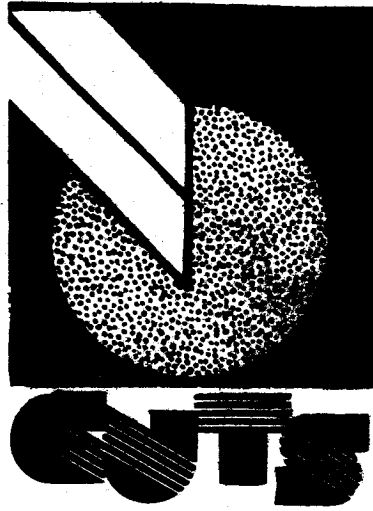
HOSPITAL WORKERS at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital in North London occupied the site on Monday 15th November in protest at the proposed closure of the hospital.

The decision to occupy has been taken early on by the Joint Shop Stewards Committee to prepare for the closure when it comes. They explain in their Manifesto: "It may be now that the Area Health Authority officers will act arbitrarily to close the hospital, as they closed the EGA Maternity Home. The staff are extremely frustrated that the case for maintaining the EGA has never yet been adequately examined by the authorities,

and that all kinds of tricks have been tried to disown and dishonour this unique women's hospital".

All of the workers in the hospital — covered by eleven unions — are supporting the occupation, and very importantly support is also coming from other local hospitals — the Royal Free, University College Hospital, the Whittington, Queens' Square and Maida Vale, some of which are only waiting for the axe to fall on their heads as well.

During the occupation a 24-hour picket is being maintained and the hospital is continuing to run as usual, with one big difference — the workers them-



selves are running the hospital and taking all decisions. There is some friction between management and the workers as the workers are starting to assert their own interests — for example they have withdrawn one of the workers from the project which was working out the move of the hospital.

Aware that the rundown and closure of the EGA and other hospitals are just a part of the massive cuts in social spending being made by the Labour Government, the EGA sent a huge 2000-strong contingent on the national demonstration on the 17th against all cuts in social spending.

The work-in and occupation will continue until the Secretary of State for Health and the Area Health Authority enable the hospital to continue on its present site, by repairing the lift and undertaking needed maintenance. The workers need messages of support and donations. Contact: Joint Shop Stewards Committee, Elizabeth Garret Anderson hospital, Euston Rd, London NW1 (01-387 2501 x 50).

Marian Mound



By JACK SUTTON

[NUPE]

all NUPE members in the MRI and associated hospitals decided unanimously to occupy the hospital Secretary's office. 200 cooks, laundry, domestic and other ancillary staff swarmed into his office, forcing him to leave his morning cup of coffee untouched on his desk. This was swiftly consumed by the catering shop steward, who also disposed of his cigarettes [very bad for your health].

The District Administrator attempted to put management's 'case' to the sit-in, but he was quickly shown the door, as was the hospital person, who refused to bless the sit-in.

Then the crowd moved to Torrance's private rooms near the hospital, putting the fear of God into a private patient who had a sudden relapse of the cheque book. A decision was taken to strike for the rest of the day and to black all services to Torrance until the three members decided whether they wanted to work with him, and until he retracted his insulting remarks about ancillary staff.

News of the MRI workers' action swiftly spread through other hospitals in Manchester, and messages of support came from COHSE and NUPE branches in the South of Manchester, as well as ASTMS members in hospitals in Salford and North Manchester. Laboratory staff in St Mary's Hospital also held a meeting to discuss action and invited NUPE branch officials to address the meeting.

Obviously the sit-in had struck a chord in the minds of many hospital workers who are sick of the way Consultants rule the NHS in the manner of feudal barons. That's why it is vitally important this dispute is won. Not only will it be a victory for Union organisation in Manchester Hospitals, but also it will prove to Management that they will meet bitter opposition if they try to introduce any cutbacks.

Already attempts are being made elsewhere in the region to cut back on staff, especially in Liverpool, where the Unions, apart from NUPE and ASTMS, have agreed to rationalisation plans. A victory in Manchester will give heart to the workers who are fighting the cuts in Liverpool and will show that fighting policies like no cover and occupations can be effective weapons to use against management attacks.

Messages of support to the S4 Three, c/o the Union Office, St Mary's Hospital, Whitworth Park, Manchester 13.

WHEN A CONSULTANT TOOK ON THE PEASANTS...

SWIFT AND TO THE POINT was the response of NUPE members in the Manchester Royal Infirmary when they heard that three operating theatre staff, including a shop steward, had been victimised after going on the November 17th lobby against the cuts. They immediately occupied the Hospital administration block and the Private Rooms of the consultant concerned.

Torrance, a leading abdominal surgeon, had told the three NUPE members, who work as technicians and porters, that he was refusing to work with them. He claimed he had been watching them for the past six months [which is hard to believe as he spends most of his time in the private patients' home] and that the hospital "are getting non-cooperation and rudeness from the ancillary staff".

What arrogance — Torrance had never as much as said good morning to any of the staff involved for the past two years, and he's noted for his rude behaviour to other staff — cursing and throwing scalpels around the Theatre. His cooperation with other staff extends to sending them a postcard from his private yacht in the Mediterranean without a stamp on.

Challenged by the Union, the management said they dissociated themselves from Torrance's actions but, in the interests of "staff, patients, and the men themselves", the three would have to be moved to another theatre. They also said that the men would have to be moved because of the tensions in the operating theatres caused by the ancillary staff's policy of non-cooperation and no covering against the cuts, and because they had gone on the march without asking management's permission and had left the Theatre unstaffed.

As I see it, the day we ask management's permission before taking industrial action we'll be calling each other comrade!

But in any case management's statement was sheer hypocrisy.

They had been warned in writing almost two weeks before the lobby that a delegation would be going from the Theatre. And, despite protests from the Union, management had just recently left another operating theatre unstaffed for three days, including a weekend when it was due to deal with emergencies, because vacancies caused by staff leaving had not been filled.

Following the breakdown of talks between NUPE and the Hospital administration, a mass meeting of

AFTER DAGENHAM FORDS GO FOR THE DOUBLE

TAKING THEIR CUE from their recent victory against the workers in the Dagenham plant, Ford management are obviously hoping for a repeat at the Halewood plant, Liverpool.

A fortnight ago they sent a letter to the Halewood workers demanding an increase in productivity and making threats in relation to overtime. Their attack, backed by the bosses' press, concentrated against the system called 'working the welt' — a system of work sharing to enable some workers, on a rotating basis, to get more time off the line than the Ford bosses 'allow'.

The Dagenham dispute began over similar attempts by workers to retain some minimal control over the speed and time of their work; and a further link is that Staley, the production manager who figured prominently in the Dagenham dispute, is now at Halewood.

Halewood management laid off the whole plant, except the transmission, on November 11th and 12th. The lay-offs arose because of two disputes concerning, respectively, manning levels and victimisation. Management followed this up with a new letter, which again had a go about productivity but also announced the stopping of overtime for last week. For many workers, this meant a wage cut last week of between £10 and £12.

The bosses' offensive didn't stop there. Last Tuesday they suspended 14 workers in the body plant for three days. 12 of the workers were discers, who were suspended for taking 'unauthorised time off' — in this case, time necessary for cleaning up and preparation, as previously agreed. The other two were suspended when they refused to work in insufficient space between the cars on the line — a situation which even the company safety officials agreed was unsafe.

The discers come from a section of the factory that has had a long history of fighting for protection against lead poisoning — a struggle that lead solderers are still waging. The discers have won what protection they have. In the cases involved, the bosses' demand of 'work our way' is directly against the health and safety of the

workers. The workers in the body plant, with the exception of the maintenance, replied to the bosses' attack in kind — by walking out in support of the 14 suspended. The assembly plant was consequently laid off.

The bosses' offensive has remained firm. One of their spokesmen was quoted as saying: "If the men continue to refuse normal disciplinary procedures, we shall continue to suspend them". On Friday afternoon, four more workers were suspended in the body plant — again, for refusing to work in insufficient space between the cars on the line.

In addition to the suspensions, management has been spewing out warning notices for virtually anything. One was given because a worker went to the lavatory after being refused 'permission' for 40 minutes; another for reading a newspaper... during a production hold-up! These are all part of the same offensive.

The bosses have gained confidence not only from their victory in Dagenham, but also from the situation in the present wage negotiations. While the lack of any improvement on the present situation over lay-off pay was an important part in the almost unanimous rejection of Ford's original offer by the workers, the failure to fight for any real improvements in the latest pay negotiations shows clearly, yet again, that the union leadership is not prepared to fight on this issue. Or any other. Most of the Dagenham workers have now rejected the latest offer, but there is still no clear demand on pay and conditions around which to organise a united fight.

The only way to meet the bosses' offensive is head-on — by a workers' offensive. Immediately, this must start with a fight for full support with the struggles at Halewood — against any deterioration in present conditions and against any victimisations.

JOE MACAULAY

23rd. NOVEMBER: Halewood management last night sacked ten of the suspended men; the other four were suspended again. Strike action must meet this victimisation — or it will not be the last this management tries.

Programme sacrificed on the altar of unity

240 LEFT WING teachers turned up for an Open Conference on 20th November. Unfortunately, most were disappointed at the outcome of this first meeting of what is now a

new organisation — the Socialist Teachers' Alliance.

Fundamentally, the Conference fell down on the question of programme. After debate

amongst an ad-hoc committee of left-wing teachers in the period leading up to the conference, a unity resolution was presented to the morning session of the conference for adoption. This resolution outlined areas of work in a very broad sense, without attempting to be a full programme.

Such was the attitude of reverence towards this unity resolution, most notably among comrades of the IMG (International Marxist Group), that even politically crucial amendments, like the demand for work-sharing with no loss of pay in the fight against unemployment, were thrown out. As a result, Conference found itself adopting a resolution with no qualitative political difference from the platform of the already-established "Rank and File Teacher" group — even though the Open Conference originated in a protest against lack of proper policy discussion in "Rank and File".

As a teacher from Manchester said, "until we adopt politics that are fundamentally better than Rank and File, we have no reason to exist as a separate organisation".

The idea of the comrades from the IMG seemed to be "first construct your organisation, then try to give it a political basis".

This, in fact, is the other side of the coin from the sectarianism of IS in "Rank and File". There, if you bring up political differences, you are bureaucratically stifled. Here if you did the same, you were supposedly not interested in 'unity'.

The problem is, unity on what basis? It is not enough just to desire unity, it has to be fought for with a clear policy basis if it is to have any ongoing fighting strength.

However, conference did make the question of programme first priority for a new conference early next year. In the meantime, a coordinating committee was elected, and an editorial board to produce a journal, if possible in conjunction with "Radical Education".

IAN HOLLINGWORTH

GRUNWICKS TRY ON ANOTHER TRICK

GRUNWICKS, the film processing firm in North West London which paid its employees £28 a week and imposed compulsory overtime at a moment's notice, has now found another trick up its sleeve.

The strikers, who have been out for 13 weeks, thought they had gained a small victory when management agreed to go to the government's conciliation service, ACAS, after the Union of Post Office Workers had blacked all the firm's mail (see WA 35).

ACAS said they would ballot Grunwicks employees on the disputed question of union recognition. It turned out that they would ballot all employees — including management — and that they delayed for two weeks. Last Friday ACAS finally turned up.

Grunwicks management refused to let them into the factory to carry out the ballot!

This shows how much use ACAS is; and it leaves the strikers back where they were several weeks ago. The Post Office blocking, withdrawn by UPW general secretary Tom Jackson when Grunwicks went to ACAS, must be restored until the strike is won.

In connection with the strike, Brent Trades Council has called for the sacking of the local Chief Superintendent of the Police. The recent arrest of nine pickets at Grunwicks followed on an attack on the Right to Work marchers, harassment of the local black community, and many arrests under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Pete Firmin

PRENTICE PEOPLE COME UNSTUCK

WHAT APPEARED to be a very smooth attempt by Prentice supporters to reinstate themselves on the committee of Newbam North East Kensington ward has backfired on them. The local Executive Committee have now declared the results of the vote at the October meeting null and void and have suspended the newly elected chairman and secretary [Ray Massey and Eddie Lee] from the Party.

The grounds for this decision were as follows:

1. There was no notice given in the normal branch circular to members as required by

party rules.

2. Certain persons had circulated an unofficial notice to selected members of the branch.

3. There was at least one person at the meeting who was not a member of the constituency party, and who came to orchestrate the events which took place.

In fact this visitor, who was not introduced at the beginning of the meeting, ultimately revealed himself as J M Lewis of Oxford CLP. There is, however, reason to believe that he has been an active member of the SDA. I.H.

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