

THE ISSUE IS: TRADE UNION RIGHTS

workers' ACTION

No.42 Jan.20th - 27th 1977 10p

IN LINE WITH many other trade unions throughout the world, the Union of Post Office Workers decided by a unanimous vote of its executive to hold up mail and telephone calls to South Africa for a week in solidarity with the anti-apartheid struggle of South African trade unionists.

Now the Appeal Court has stepped in to grant an injunction to the so-called National Association for Freedom to prevent the UPW from carrying out its actions.

The principle at stake for the working class is nothing less than the fundamental issue of the autonomy and independence of the trade union movement. The important question is not whether it should be the Attorney General or the Appeal Court who should dictate to the trade union movement. The question is, can any section of workers be ordered, either by a Court or by Parliament, to continue working in what such a body chooses to define as a "normal" manner.

Labour Attorney General Sam Silkin knows the issues. He refused to ban the UPW boycott because he is anxious to avoid a collision between the Government and the Unions — on an issue which the Tories could have used to rally the "law & Order" lobby against the Government.

The Appeal Court, in granting the injunction to make the UPW's industrial action illegal, has notched up another victory for an extreme right wing group of legal vigilantes which uses the courts in support of the South African regime.

Of course this is not admitted. The representatives of the South African baas-class claimed smugly that such trade union actions would have absolutely no effect on South Africa. But, giving judgment on the request for the injunction in the Appeal Court, Lord Justice Lawton made it clear, "For seven days, very great harm indeed will be done to the business world of this country who have dealings with South Africa". And what goes for one side of the trade with racism will certainly apply to the other.

Lawton's statement also exposes perfectly the class nature of the issue. However wrapped up in mind-bending legal technicalities, the issues are really simple: the capitalist courts and law are being used to ensure uninterrupted trade and exploitation, and are therefore directed against the workers' organisations both here and in South Africa.

The implications of the case go far beyond the question of 'blacking'. The Appeal Court in reality is saying that Post Office workers — and a good many other public sector workers too — have no right to strike. All the arguments used against the union this time and in the case of the Grunwick's dispute referred

WHO DECIDES — JUDGES OR WORKERS?



South African workers face tear gas, bullets and torture — not just court injunctions...

to the wilful detention of mail, not "blacking actions".

The attempt by the ultra-right to use the class laws of Britain in support of the race-and-class laws of South Africa, to impose on the UPW a little of the kind of repression meted out with vastly greater brutality in South Africa, serves also as a practical illustration of the real community of interest that binds the world's working class.

Those hypocrites who claim that "This is a legal sue, it has nothing to do with South

Africa" fail to explain their silence when the UPW conducted a similar ban on France in 1973... when there was a Tory government.

The UPW's planned action was in fact part of a worldwide campaign in support of the fight of black workers against apartheid and for the right to strike and to form free trade unions.

It is ironic and shameful that the major British contribution to this campaign should have been stopped in its tracks by a piece of paper

issued by the Appeal Court. Trade unionists in South Africa (and in some of the countries where action was taken last week in support of them) face far worse penalties than court injunctions or contempt of court penalties.

The best way for trade unionists to demonstrate who should decide on their industrial action, the courts or the working class, is to ignore the Appeal Court's injunction and go ahead with the action they had planned.

For the members of the UPW, this is the second time

in recent months that a Court has stepped in to order them about. The first time was during the Grunwick's dispute, when they had begun to give solidarity action to strikers at a mail order firm. That time, too, UPW General Secretary Tom Jackson backed down, after early brave words about going to jail "if I have to".

The trade union movement cannot afford to play with words. An important principle is at stake: not only the right to act in solidarity with South African workers, but the right to take industrial action at all.

CYPRUS REFUGEES BECOME DETAINEES AND NEXT DEPORTEES

Some of the Cypriot 'refugees' who came to Britain at the time of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus are being turned into 'detainees' with a view to them becoming 'deportees'.

Having entered, mostly, on visitors' permits they have to apply to have their permits renewed. An unknown number of such Cypriot immigrants are having their renewals turned down, thus turning them into 'illegal immigrants'. Numerous others are being harassed by the Home Office to return to Cyprus.

What have they got to return to? Many of them come from villages whose make-up has changed completely: Turkish villages which are now designated 'Turkish', or Greek villages now 'Turkish'. The deported Cypriots are forced to return not to their homes, but to refugee camps.

The manner of the deportations is reinforcing and sanctioning the division of Cyprus that drove these people abroad in the first place.

A recent case highlights all the brutal features of the deportations, which are being carried out under the 1971 Immigration Act. Labour opposed this Act when the Tories brought it in. Now the Labour Home Office searches out victims for deportation.

The case concerns a couple: the husband is Turkish, his wife half Greek, half Turkish. Together with their small daughter, they don't fit into either of the rigid categories that Cyprus has been carved up into. No matter, they are to go back there.

Last weekend the Home Office asked the Haringay Community Relations Council (CRC) to bring in the woman so they could discuss the position of herself and her daughter. On arrival she was promptly detained and imprisoned. A request to be allowed home to get fresh clothes was turned down — and countered with a demand that the 5-year old child be brought in.

To their great credit, the CRC officials point blank refused, and instead hid the girl. They have made no secret of the fact that they have hidden her, and see it as a means to force a confrontation with the Home Office and publicise the issue of these deportations.

The deportations are also being tackled by the Cypriot Defence Committee, who are planning a public demonstration on 5th February. They want all Cypriot refugees to be recognised as such and not as 'long term visitors'. They are campaigning for all these Cypriots to be allowed to stay as long as they wish and be granted work permits. "These rights" they say

Home Office to send back Rhodesian draft-dodgers?

THE 1971 Immigration Act could have been written with Rhodesia in mind. It set up a category of people called "patrials" who are distinguished by having, as a minimum, one British grandparent.

Thus white Rhodesians who have decided to call it a day and think white South Africa's future prospects don't look too good either can enter Britain without a question being asked. And in the near future we may even see these parasites being handed large sums of government money to help them "re-settle" as thriving members of Britain's exploiting class.

It's a different story for non-patrial Rhodesians. One of them has just spent several weeks in jail under threat of deportation back to Rhodesia — which he left to avoid being conscripted into Smith's

SMILES AT THE NEGOTIATIONS, DEATH ON THE STREETS

"Amnesty [for political prisoners], real liberty for the coming legislative elections, and the possibility of agreement between the reformist forces of the regime and the democratic forces". Those were the aims Spanish Communist Party leader Santiago Carrillo set for the negotiations between the opposition 'Democratic Coordination' and the Suarez government. Coming out of the talks, the opposition leaders smugly declared that they had been "very positive and encouraging".

To workers taking the fight for democratic rights into their own hands, now, the regime presents a different face. On the same day as the Government-opposition talks — January 11th — police were attacking a procession of 30,000 people at the funeral in Sestao, near Bilbao, of Juan Manuel Iglesias, a 15-year old youth killed by police during a pro-amnesty demonstration in Sestao two days earlier.

80,000 workers also struck on January 11th. Buses and lorries were commandeered and blocked the main road to Bilbao for several hours.

Even a rally called by mayors in the Basque country, on January 16th, was banned by the police. The rally was moved to a different site after police roadblocks prevented people reaching the original venue. 6,000-strong, it demanded

an amnesty for political prisoners, recognition of the Basque national flag, autonomy for the Basque country, withdrawal of the civil guard, and official status for the Basque language.

But the CP not only puts its faith in negotiations with Suarez, it even eliminates itself from the negotiation. Carrillo resolved a problem for the government, which was unwilling to meet an opposition delegation including CP members, by agreeing to a sub-commission of four for the negotiations.

The four represented the Socialist Party (PSOE), the Liberals, the Christian Democrats, and the Basque bourgeois nationalists.

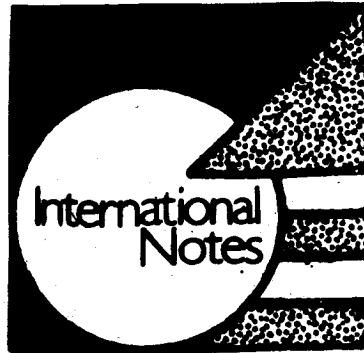
Already the commission of nine, from which they were selected, had, in October, excluded the Maoists, the Workers' Commissions, and the UGT trade unions from the negotiations with the government.

Undoubtedly the government will make some concessions. Just a few days ago it re-shuffled the top command of the army to weaken the position of the Francoist old guard. But the concessions come only at the price of the complete self-cancelling-out of the workers' parties, leaving the workers who want to fight for more than those carefully-metered concessions in the lurch.

BAADER LAWYER NOW FACES CHARGES

KURT Groenewald, defence lawyer for Andreas Baader of the "Red Army Fraction", now faces charges himself — under a specially enacted law — of supporting his clients' hunger strike and helping to "maintain their consciousness as political prisoners". On March 21st he is due to appear before a Hamburg court charged with giving "criminal support" to his clients. If sentenced he could get anything from 6 months to five years.

Fellow lawyers of Groenewald have also been charged; so have his secretaries and even the office cleaner. His secretary's personal



diaries were confiscated, and all the people mentioned in them visited by the police.

Groenewald is a well known civil rights lawyer in Germany. He has now been excluded from the Baader trial (Ulrike Meinhoff, the other defendant, was found dead in her cell in dubious circumstances), and disbarred from legal practice.



PUTTING A STOP TO PICTURES LIKE THIS

PRESS and media censorship by the Israeli military authorities has been stepped up. After a deputation from the foreign press association to the military spokesman's office, the outcome was reported to the Association's annual meeting in Jerusalem on January 16th.

The Association's chairman Steve Delaney, resident correspondent of NBC Television, concluded of the Army: "These people understand us perfectly well. But they are determined to use the press corps, not as a conduit of truth but as a tool to be managed."

"The reason I cannot take a film crew into Nablus when the heat is on is quite simple. They do not like the pictures coming out of there, and that's all there is to it."

Unlike the riots on the West Bank last Spring, when television

cameras were allowed in, during riots last month in West Bank towns reporters were sometimes allowed in, but cameras hardly ever

Military authorities tried to argue that the cameras "provoked their own stories". True — in the sense that the news of the events helped to spread the struggles. But did Arab youngsters really stage their own deaths at the hands of the Israeli occupation troops just for the benefit of news cameras...?

Meanwhile, the Syrians have imposed a draconian press censorship on the Lebanese press, once famous for its breadth and independence from Government control. The worst-hit victims are, of course, the left and the Palestinian resistance.

Bloody Sunday DEMONSTRATION

1.30pm. SUNDAY JANUARY 30

Assemble SHEPHERDS BUSH GREEN. W12.

nearest tube SHEPHERDS BUSH (Met. & Central lines) bus nos. 105, 207, 72, 12 & 88



Symbolic picket of Trafalgar Square - 12noon

Agee Tribunal

The Appeal Tribunal hearing on Philip Agee, the American journalist who is facing deportation, was adjourned last Thursday after four days' sittings — which served to expose the appeal procedure under the 1971 Immigration Act as a failed public relations act and little else.

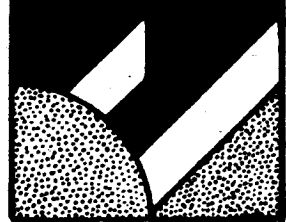
Mr. Agee, who has written material exposing his former employers the CIA, still doesn't know on what specific charges he is subject to deportation as a "danger to national security"; indeed, Home Secretary Merlyn Rees personally stepped in last week to order the 3-man appeal panel not to disclose the charges to Agee, who was obliged to read a 500,000 word statement answering every conceivable charge arising from any of his actions!

Agee's hearing has been adjourned to a one-day sitting on February 3rd, when witnesses from America will be present to answer the charges that have never been laid.

The appeal of Mark Hosenball, the Evening Standard reporter who also faces deportation, began on Wednesday. No doubt he also is presumed guilty, unless he should be able to prove that he is innocent of charges that he doesn't know.

PUTTING THE SQUEEZE ON THE LABOUR LEFT

Editorial



LAST WEEK, leaders of 34 unions listened to the Labour Party's General Secretary Ron Hayward, appeal for money to cover the Party's debts.

Most of these union leaders responded by saying it was "difficult to make decisions" to give donations when there was a visible division between the Government and the NEC.

These bureaucrats speak for themselves alone! As far as the mass of the rank and file is concerned, there is widespread support for many of the decisions of the NEC which depart from the monolithic "social contract bloc" of the Government and the TUC.

On November 17th about 80,000 trade unionists demonstrated in London on a work-day against the social service cuts. This demonstration was co-sponsored by the Labour Party NEC.

In fact the differences between the NEC and the policy of the Government (well publicised as they usually are these days) are increasingly

providing a point of political focus for the rank and file, both in the Constituency Parties and in the broad trade union movement.

What irks the trade union bureaucracy is not that the NEC's alternative policies are especially radical. In fact, in all essentials it is the official TUC policy that the TUC itself has in practice abandoned.

Stifle

What irks them is that the NEC's debates make it more difficult for them to stifle revolts of the trade union rank and file with the handy appeal for "loyalty to Labour".

The trade union bureaucracy and the high-ups of the Labour Party and Government derive a lot of strength from presenting themselves as the sole brokers for working class aspirations at the level of government and society-wide advances and reforms. Their message has been: if you want

it, you'll have to come to us for it.

The line of the NEC, critical of the Government and of the unions, appears as a challenge to that monopoly — even despite the fact that the Tribunitites' appetite for a serious fight is non-existent.

Of course the veiled threat to the Party's finances if the NEC isn't whipped into line is a bluff the Party can safely call. (And NUPE's Alan Fisher didn't even go along with it, saying it had been easier to get his executive to come up with more money, because he had been able to show that the NEC had a policy independent of the government.)

Votes

But the financial hints were only part of the Unions' squeeze on the Labour left.

Gormley of the miners' union and Roy Grantham of APEX also attacked "infiltrat-

ion" into the Labour Party, and the attempts of local parties to unseat their Labour MPs.

Until a few years ago, the trade union bureaucracy had traditionally always acted as the guarantors of the right-wing domination of the Labour Party. Then in 1968, with "In Place of Strife", things began to change, and since then we have seen a short, exceptional period in which major sections of the trade union leadership moved to the left.

As such, that period has been at an end for some time now, and certainly didn't last beyond the end of the "debate" on the Common Market.

But the trade union leaders did not all suddenly change direction. And in their votes for the NEC, many of the big unions like the T&GWU and the AUEW continued to cast their vital block-votes for left wing candidates not just from their own ranks (like Alex Kitson) but also in the Constituency and women's sections.

Last week's squeeze on the Left is the first big indication that the trade union leaders are going to shift their votes to bring in a permanent right

wing majority on the NEC as a stick against the Left. (Journalists like Peter Jenkins of *The Guardian* have been urging this for some months now.)

Slavish

According to such a scenario, if the trade union leaders cannot manage to get this year's NEC to discuss National Organiser Reg Underhill's report on "infiltration", they will make sure that the composition of next year's NEC is such that the report will be discussed — and acted upon.

And the same goes for the threatened MPs: if the TUC can't get this year's NEC to support the right wing sitting MPs against their constituency parties, then they will make sure that they get a slavish enough NEC next year.

Defend Bevan! Oppose bans and proscriptions!

THE Labour Party NEC has again rejected any attempt to get rid of Andy Bevan as National Youth Organiser. All the same, he has been suspended from his job following a refusal by members of the National Union of Labour Organisers at Transport House to work with him.

NULO hotly claim that "it's nothing political": it's just that they feel that such a well paid

post should have been offered to one of their members, not to Andy Bevan.

Fleet Street have been open in saying what these Transport House officials obviously think. "Sack him for his politics" demands the Telegraph. "Sack him" recommends *The Guardian* and, always mindful to be a shade more subtle, adds that it should be done "by investigating the Underhill Report on

"Entryism", determining then that the Militant tendency is really an organised party within a party and then, having established that Andy Bevan is a leading supporter of Militant, question his bona fides as a member of the Labour Party".

The fact that the issue of Andy Bevan's suspension is closely linked to the question of the Underhill Report might tempt some — the supporters of the Militant tendency above all — to keep their heads down. Others might be taken in by NULO's fatuous claims.

What the Left should, however, do immediately, and what the LPYS should do immediately, is launch a big campaign for Labour Party democracy and against the spectre of the reimposition of bans and proscriptions. It should clearly be



Bevan

stated that the ranks of Labour should be open to all shades of opinion and organised tendencies within the labour movement, including the Communist Party. Bevan's own method, of denying that Militant is any sort

of organised tendency at all and agreeing to sever his connections with it, is a recipe for retreat and defeat.

Workers Action has already made it clear that while it supports Bevan against the attacks made on him by the Right and NULO, it believes that he has weakened his own case for democracy by accepting a non-elected post of this kind. Had the LPYS been given a chance to vote [or at least be among those allowed to vote] for the National Youth Officer, they would almost certainly have supported Andy Bevan. That much would not have been different. But they would have been in a much stronger position defending the principle of elected officials open to be recalled — for every branch of the labour movement.

HEAVY BLOWS STRUCK AT HEALY'S SLANDER CAMPAIGN

AT A packed-out meeting on Friday 14th at Friends Meeting House in London, heavy blows were dealt to the slander campaign which Gerry Healy's WRP has been conducting against veteran Trotskyists Joseph Hansen and George Novack.

The nasty tales of the WRP, accusing Hansen and Novack of being GPU agents who took part in the murder of Leon Trotsky — tales backed by people of doubtful political backgrounds and surrounded by Stalinist-type innuendo — were yet again shown to be paranoid and poisonous, with no basis in fact.

Chairperson Tariq Ali, introducing the meeting, described it as being "in solidarity with Joseph Hansen and George Novack". Yet from the speeches of two of the USFI representatives, Tim Wohlforth and Ernest Mandel, one might easily have got the impression that the meeting was in fact a recruiting rally for the USFI.

Both these speakers dwelt on the fact that Healey's accusations had surfaced at a time when the USFI is, "enjoying immense growth, huge influence etc".

Slightly more to the point, Wohlforth went on to relate the slander campaign also to Healy's response to the decline of his own organisation. Mandel, on the other hand, said not



Healy

only that he was not here to defend Hansen and Novack but "to defend the FI" but also claimed that Healy's slanders were the logical outcome of being "in sects rather than in the FI" (i.e. the USFI — whose importance on a world scale he greatly exaggerated).

Thus the USFI's current conception of the international revolutionary party as an all-embracing federation

of the 'broad Trotskyist movement' was paraded again; and anyone who didn't agree was presented as treading an inevitable path to Healyism.

In their message to the meeting, the USFI's British section, the IMG, were just as blunt. "The object lesson of Healy must stand as a clear warning to all those forces calling themselves Trotskyist... separated from the Fourth International and (which) justify this in terms of basic revisions of programme. We would be less than honest if we did not already see some of the deformations amongst some of those organisations which have come out in support of Hansen and Novack — like the OCRFI, Pablo's grouping and even to some extent the Workers' Socialist League in Britain.

But the IMG is being less than honest in the very vagueness of these remarks. The strictures levelled thus amount to no more than "join us or you'll end up like Healy"; and the list of potential victims of the 'Healy disease' is compiled in order to avoid the explicit criticism of the OCI (ie the OCRFI) which they have been called upon to make.

The fact is that the OCI, whose leader Pierre Lambert shared the platform at Friday's meeting with the IMG et al, is guilty of far more than

simply being outside the ranks of the USFI. Nor is it simply that because of this it might, sometime in the future, find itself acting like Healy's organisation. The OCI has in fact issued slanders against a small group in France similar to those of Healy against Hansen and Novack. Not only that, but it has engaged in systematic physical violence against this group, and even against anyone who dares to come to its defence or so much as pick up one of its leaflets.

In view of this, it was pretty sick to hear Lambert proclaim self-righteously that "Healy's methods are contrary to all methods of the workers' movement". And far from any dissociation, by the rest of the platform from Lambert, Mandel went out of his way to complement the OCI on an old campaign to release Russian dissident Leonid Plyushch.

All reference to Lambert's infringements of workers' democracy were likewise deleted from the shortened version of the statement signed by the I-CL in Britain and 7 other international organisations (see WA37) which was printed among the messages sent to the meeting. (The manoeuvres in the USFI which lie behind this were described in WA41).

Despite this slipperiness on behalf of the IMG, the meeting was useful in combating the Healeyite smear campaign. The USFI should note, however, Mandel's own words that in the long run Healy's lies will boomerang on him. Any defence of workers' democracy based on less than 100% honesty is itself treading a murky road.

NEW PAPER LAUNCHED TO MOBILISE LABOUR YOUTH

ABOUT 40 Labour Party Young Socialists activists met in Sheffield on 15th January to plan a new campaigning paper in the LPYS, "Left Action". The aim of 'Left Action' will not simply be to criticise LPYS policy on this or that point, but to help mobilise Labour youth against unemployment, against the fascists, against the British presence in Ireland, and for women's rights. It will also be fighting for democracy in the LPYS.

An editorial board of nine was elected, and the first issue of 'Left Action' will be appearing soon. Moves to amend the political platform in the initial appeal for 'Left Action' were narrowly defeated, but it was agreed to schedule a conference in May where the whole policy of 'Left Action' will be open to discussion.

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WITH THE introduction of new anti-discrimination laws, women have more equality, on paper, than ever before, in Britain as in other advanced capitalist countries.

But their real inequality is sharper now than before the laws were introduced. Social Contract wage limiting has halted progress towards equal pay. Unemployment has hit women twice as hard as men. The cuts in social services have forced women back into the home, to look after the young, the sick and the old.

Abortion rights, far from being extended, face attacks both through the right wing backlash and through the cuts in health service facilities.

The way forward now, is to build a mass working class

Women's Liberation Workers' Revolution

based women's movement. This is the issue which should be central at the Rally for Women's Rights called by the Working Women's Charter Campaign for 26th February.

The situation today is parallel with conditions in the Weimar Republic in Germany in the 1920s. Many of the clauses of the Weimar Constitution that

guaranteed women the legal and political equality for which Social Democracy had fought remained scraps of paper because of the impotence of the working class movement and the chaotic state of the economy

In order to assess the real position of women in the first years after the war and in the period of inflation, the fact that

women are forced out of their jobs is much more crucial than the fact that they were granted formal equality. It showed that even when the women's movement had won women the right to work, to be protected in their work, and to have equal status with men in law and politics, this was not enough to realise their emancipation; and that in times of economic crisis the rights they had won would be lost once more.

The struggle for women's emancipation can only be successful if it takes its rightful place as an integral part of the revolutionary struggle of the working class.



This question of strategy was debated out when both a modern working class movement and a women's movement emerged for the first time in Germany, in the late 19th Century.

Women's oppression pre-dates capitalism by many centuries. With the growth of capitalist large scale industry, women were drawn back into social production — but without being relieved of their burdens inside the family. Defined as economically subordinate within the family, they were employed at lower wages than men.

The Lassalleans, the pioneers of the German working class movement, opposed women's entry into industry, as reducing

men's wages and disrupting working class family life. They proposed "wages for house-work".

Clara Zetkin, representing the Marxist wing of the German labour movement, argued that "Capitalism could not do without female labour within industry. On the other hand, the abolition of female labour would once again return women to their former dependence on their husbands."

"The only possible way to get rid, not of female labour as such but of the damage arising from its conditions under capitalism, was to socialise the means of production. Complete emancipation would come with labour emancipation. The first essential step in that direction was to organise the industrial woman worker — to educate her politically and economically."



Immediately, Zetkin argued, the working class had to set its sights higher than bourgeois formal equality for women. Social Democracy should demand special protective measures and "positive discrimination" to counteract the social oppression of women and create real equality for them in industry and the labour movement.

Both German Social democracy and the Russian Bolsheviks set up special organisations for work among women.



ABORTION: NEW THREATS AND NEW CHANCES

THE Tribunal on Abortion Rights, called by the National Abortion Campaign for 29th January, will take place against the backdrop of further attempts to restrict even the limited rights to abortion provided for in the 1967 Abortion Act.

The Tribunal was called to hear evidence on the abortion situation around the country after the NAC's decision to boycott the Select Committee looking into abortion.

This decision was taken on the basis that, whatever the evidence presented to it, the Select Committee — given its anti-abortion composition, would recommend in favour of further restrictive legislation.

This was fully vindicated when the Select Committee reported. And now many of its recommendations are being taken up in a Private Member's Bill sponsored by Tory MP William Benyon. These include the reduction of the latest date for abortion from 28 to 20 weeks. At present, fewer than 1% of all abortions take place after 20 weeks; but often in these cases the abortion is most desperately needed, for instance because of a risk to the woman's life.

The Bill would also place restrictions on what doctors would be allowed to authorise abortions. It stipulates that the

two doctors must not be connected with each other, and that they must have been qualified for more than 5 years. [This means that if the woman's own doctor is newly qualified, she must see a total of three doctors.] This, coupled with the increasing delays caused by cuts in the NHS, will mean that women will be forced to have much later abortions, which are less safe and convenient. If the provision against abortions after 20 weeks also goes through, delays like this will mean that more women who would otherwise have been allowed an abortion will be refused on the grounds of being too late.



The Bill is also intended to be a major attack on the charitable sector, such as the British Pregnancy Advisory Service and the Pregnancy Advisory Service. Between them these two organisations perform 60% of non-NHS abortions. Many women have to use these clinics because of the scarcity of NHS provision.

Under the spurious pretext of ending 'profiteering' and 'exploitation', the Bill is attempting to put these clinics out of business by refusing to allow their counselling services to be funded by money made from

abortions.

If the proposer and the backers of this Bill were genuinely trying to end exploitation, they could have joined the National Abortion Campaign to fight for free and freely available abortion on the National Health for anyone who wanted it, so no one would have to use the safety net provided by the private and charity clinics! They might, too, have campaigned against the whole medical industry, which exploits sickness for private gain...

The NAC Tribunal must serve as a focus for the opposition to this latest attempt to chip away at the limited provisions of the 1967 Act. But it cannot limit itself to such a defence.

Much of the evidence presented to the Tribunal will highlight the pathetic inadequacies of abortion facilities at the moment and the crippling limitations — and humiliations — imposed on women who decide not to continue a pregnancy.

It will be small comfort to the women denied an abortion under this Act to know that there is a campaign going on to defend the status quo.

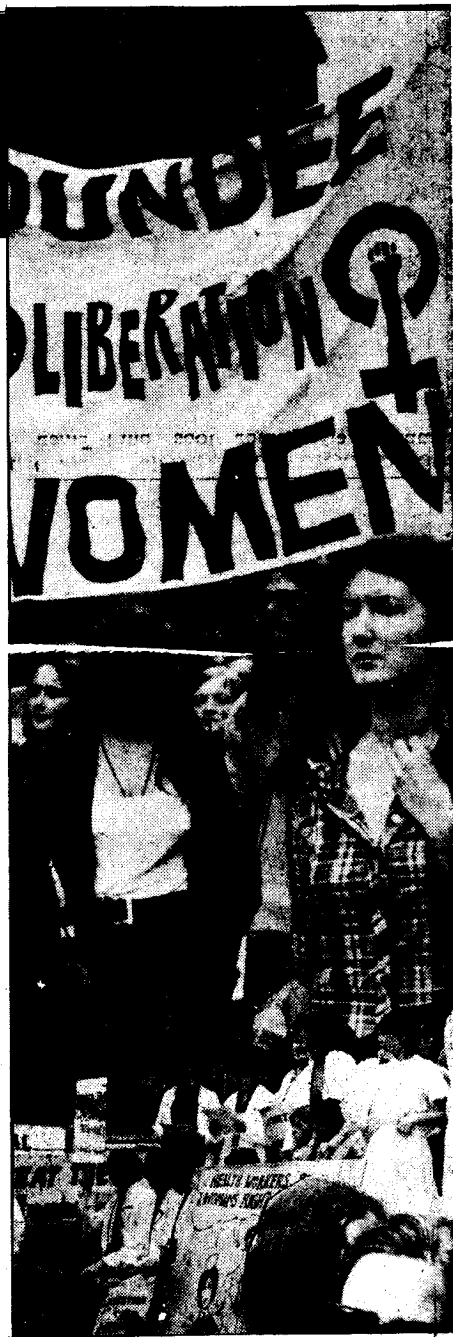
Unfortunately, NAC has lost some good opportunities to promote an active campaign around the collection of evidence for the Tribunal. However,

the Tribunal itself can still mark the start of a new fight for abortion rights in the labour movement. The evidence it will hear must be used to give the abortion rights fight a fresh impetus.

The Labour Party, the TUC and many union conferences have passed resolutions supporting abortion on request, but have taken little active part in the campaign. They must be pushed to throw their weight behind the fight against any legal restrictions on free abortion on demand on the NHS. This must be linked with the fight against the cuts in the Health service, and for adequate funding of facilities guaranteed against inflation.

On the voting on the James White Bill and on the reconvening of the Select Committee, Labour MPs were given a free vote on the grounds that abortion was an issue of personal morality and not a political issue. Labour Party members must argue that their MPs vote in accordance with conference policy and the interests of the working class. The only people with a right to a personal choice in the matter of abortion are women themselves — without cajoling, red tape, cross-examination by doctors or legal restrictions.

GERRY BYRNE



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They demarcated themselves very clearly, however, from the bourgeois feminist movements of their time. In Russia the bourgeois feminists supported the Kerensky government against the Bolsheviks; in Britain, the bourgeois majority of the suffragette movement combined their demands for women's rights with priority for "final victory" in the First World War against Germany. Thus they showed, as clearly as possible, that the women's question could not transcend class struggle.

With the defeats of the revolutionary working class movement in the '20s and '30s, the proletarian women's movement was eclipsed. Stalinism replaced communist traditions of fighting for women's emancipation with a new idealisation of 'motherhood' and of the family. From the late 1960s, with more women going out to work than ever before, and the ending of post-war capitalist stability, a new women's movement has emerged.

Developing separately from any Marxist proletarian party and alone a mass Marxist party like the early German Social Democracy or the Bolsheviks it is not clearly crystallised into feminist and Marxist wings. With an overall petty bourgeois orientation, it includes — as well as socialists — anarchists, reformists and feminists. A major segment of the women's movement defines



itself as "socialist-feminist". But this definition is self-contradictory, in that it evades the issue of the centrality of the class struggle, in the women's question as elsewhere, and the need to build a revolutionary workers' party.

We must have the perspective of building a revolutionary socialist (or "communist") women's movement, organisationally autonomous but politically under the leadership of a revolutionary party. But this cannot be a slogan. In the absence of a revolutionary party such a slogan is entirely ultimistic, advancing the word communist without meaningfully demonstrating what it means.

The perspective needs to be spelled out concretely in relation to the needs of the struggle. Alongside specific political demands, we must raise the generalising slogan of a mass working class based women's movement, focusing on the need to orientate to working class women — who have shown (particularly in recent years with struggles such as at Trico) the potential out of which can be built a revolutionary women's movement.



This can be concretised at present mainly through the fight to build the Working Women's Charter Campaign, which distinguishes itself from the rest of the women's movement by a positive orientation, both politically and organisationally, to working class women.

The Charter cannot be restricted to a fixed, minimal set of demands which we keep because they have credibility in the trade union movement. The Charter must be seen, not as a thing in itself, but as a subordinate part of building at rank and file level.

Otherwise we allow the Charter to become a reformist block to building a fighting women's movement.

For that reason we must fight for a complete revolutionary socialist programme within the Working Women's Charter Campaign, and in particular for the Charter to be amended to relate more effectively to the current tasks of the class struggle.



This position has met with two objections.

From one direction it is criticised by sectarians who oppose positive discrimination in favour of women, or women's caucuses in trade unions, as adaptations to feminism. And they say that a charter that doesn't include a demand for working class rule is reformist.

But such a demand, written into the Charter, will in no way guarantee the movement a revolutionary character; and it is totally ultimistic to say that unless a movement has a fully formed revolutionary consciousness, it should not undertake any struggles.

From another direction, those who call themselves "socialist feminists" question the concern with 'working class women'.

But socialists, while recognising the special oppression of women, cannot see women's activity as the central question. The central material factors in history are those of the class struggle. It is only in conjunction with this struggle that women can overcome their oppression.

ONE YEAR ON FROM THE SDA
FEB 26th
1977
11am
A RALLY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS



IT IS five years since the Equal Pay Act was introduced and one year since the Sex Discrimination Act was passed. Has it been one year of equality?

The facts speak for themselves:

■ Despite the EPA, women still earn only half the wages of men. A recent Woman's Own survey reports that two thirds of women do low paid jobs which cannot be compared with men's work. Therefore they are not covered by the Act.

■ Of the women covered by the Act, 10% are still not getting equal pay.

■ The General and Municipal Workers' Union: "Even with the union's backing, many women lost their claims because of the loopholes in legislation, often provided by ambiguous wording and arbitrary and erratic decisions by tribunals."

■ The Labour Research Department: 72% of equal pay applications and 73% of SDA applications were dismissed in the first six months of the legislation.

■ Equal Pay and Opportunity Campaign: "Dissatisfaction with the legislation is due to the high rate of failure when cases are taken to tribunals and the lack of effort on the part of many unions to positively encourage women to stand up and fight for their rights."

The women at the Trico factory in West London refused to rely on legislation. They took strike action and boycotted the tribunal. Their victory proved their argument that: "Pressure from the labour movement and the women's movement brought about the EPA. Only our own action through the union will ensure that the Act is enforced."

Trico is not the only dispute at which women have been at the forefront. There have been at least ten equal pay disputes, fights for the full £6 and 4½% such as at Orlakes at Dagenham; against redundancies, at EOS Banbury; for safety conditions, the cleaners at North East London Poly; against hospital closures — the EGA, and East London hospitals.

These struggles have strengthened the fighting spirit among women workers which began with the great GEC and Ford strikes in 1968.

For the majority of women the legislation has done nothing to make their daily lives easier. It has not provided those facilities that allow them to work — increased child care, free abortion and contraception on demand and on the NHS, financial independence, equal education and adequate maternity provisions.

These things are totally ignored by the SDA. The reality

is that women's rights are under fire as cutbacks in social expenditure, and unemployment, push women back into the home.

■ Provisions for childcare are under attack. For every 200 under-fives, there is only one nursery place. Last year 37 local authorities dropped their allocation of funds, leaving nurseries empty or unbuilt and nursery nurses unemployed.

■ Further restrictions on women's rights to abortion have been adopted by the Government in the past year.

■ Unemployment stands at over 2 million (included women who wish to work but are not included in the official figures). Women are particularly hit: women's unemployment has risen by 89% compared with a rise of 60% in men's unemployment.

■ Proposals for child benefits to be paid to the mother were slashed from £300 million to £95m.

No section of the working class — male or female, black or white — should take responsibility for economic problems not of their making.

The National Union of Public Employees states: "Cuts is one of the areas where women are being worst hit at present, both as workers and wives and mothers — being forced back to take an increasing responsibility for children, the old and the sick."

The acceptance that women should make these sacrifices weakens and divides the working class in its fight against cuts, unemployment, rising prices and ever decreasing real wages.

When the Government brought in the EPA and SDA it was greeted by many as a step towards equality for women.

It is time to take stock. The evidence is mounting that the battle for equality and independence, far from being over, has only just begun.

■ The Rally on Women's Rights will draw together the experiences of all those fighting for women's rights. By drawing the lessons of the last year we can carry the struggle forward and begin to counter the mounting attacks.

■ Participating in the Rally will be trade unions, women's groups, campaigns for women's right to abortion, nurseries, financial and legal independence, child benefits and many more. Through speakers, theatre, exhibitions, stalls, literature etc., those organisations can exchange their experiences and begin to organise joint action on a national scale.

WIN MASS SUPPORT
FOR RALLY

■ Get your union branch, Labour Party, women's group or political organisation to support the rally.

■ Fight for financial support for the Rally and distribute mobilising literature.

■ Send a representative to the Rally Planning Committee.

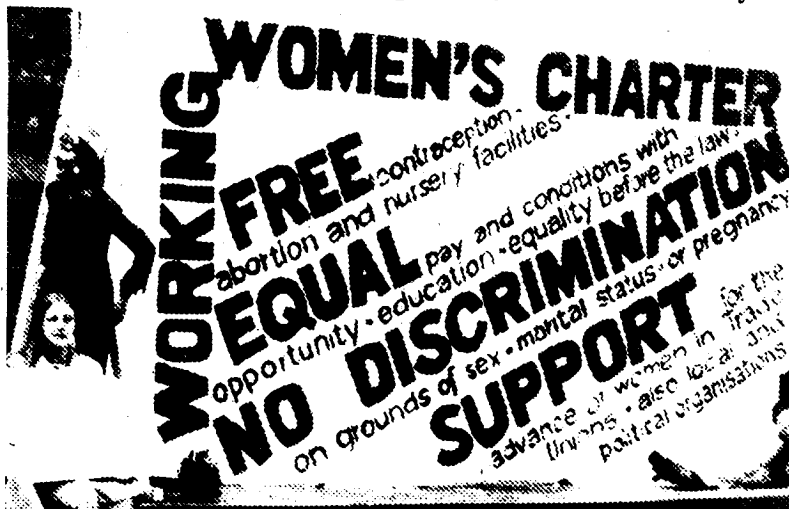
■ Hold conferences and meetings on the legislation and women's struggles in your area.

■ Help organise Women's Rights Committees in your own area with the support of the labour movement. Through these committees, monitor the employment position of women and the impact of the legislation.

Draw up reports and prepare exhibitions so that the evidence gathered in your area or union can be available at the Rally.

Use the Rally as a basis for a fight in your union to extend the struggle for women's rights.

The Rally will be held at Alexandra Palace London N22 [Wood Green Tube, No. W2 bus]. For more information contact the Secretary, Mandy Swell, 33 Weymss Road London SE3. Tel: 318-3763]



Angola is known — rightly — in the labour movement for its victorious struggle against colonialism. But less is known about the emergence of independent councils of 'Popular Power' in Angola and their suppression by the Stalinists in the MPLA.

We continue our publication of the interview with Paulo Quicuchi, a member of the Angolan Trotskyist group GRS, which took place with a member of the German Spartacusbund in August 1976 and has been published by the Spartacusbund as a pamphlet.

Previous excerpts have described how the organs of 'Popular Power' developed in 1974-5 and were crushed in the civil war period of 1975-6. In the passage translated here, comrade Quicuchi describes the independent proletarian activity which still existed after the civil war, and analyses the reasons for the defeat of the 'Popular Power'.

As we noted in relation to the previous excerpts, Workers' Action does not necessarily agree with all comrade Quicuchi's analyses, but we publish this interview to give otherwise unavailable information and as an act of solidarity with the proletarian revolutionists in Angola facing the MPLA's repression.

PART THREE

THE destruction of the workers' independent organs was a heavy blow to the workers' movement and the revolutionary process. Nevertheless, it did not signify that the Stalinists had control of the whole movement. They had control of the independent organs of the workers, but not of the revolutionary workers themselves.

The Stalinists were able to gain control of the workers' organs not through an ideological victory over the left, but more because of the objective conditions of the civil war.

And immediately after the end of the civil war, in February—March 1976, the workers' movement began to move and form itself again and the first strikes and demonstrations took place.

One of these was in protest against another of the MPLA's bureaucratic measures: the closing down of the radio broadcast *Kudibanguela*. This daily programme had originally been in the hands of the Maoists, and it had taken the side of the independent workers' movement throughout the revolutionary process, reporting workers' struggles in detail, publicising the declarations of the neighbourhood committees, and resolutions and messages of solidarity with striking workers. In the late summer of 1975 the MPLA replaced the Maoist editors with its own people; now the programme was discontinued. (Already under the Provisional Government there had been attempts to put a stop to it. The MPLA supported that move; but at that time, a large demonstration forced its continuance.)

Control

In February 1976 the workers' movement mobilised once again to demand that *Kudibanguela* be restored to stand on the side of workers in struggle. This time, according to the information which we have from Angola, the demonstration was repressed and finally dispersed.

This demonstration showed the continuing mass antagonism to Stalinist attempts at control.

There were also various strikes, for example at Grupo Cuca, at the offset machine factory, at a factory making coffee sacks and at a whole number of other factories, against the attempt by the MPLA to replace the elected workers' commissions with factory managements appointed by the government.

But it is important to note that this movement is not limited to the urban proletariat. The agricultural proletariat is becoming ever more integrated into the general movement of the proletariat. The workers in the coffee, cotton and sisal

plantations of Catete and Carmona have come into struggle and demanded the foundation of cooperatives, instead of the division of the land and its distribution to the petit-bourgeoisie, which was the original project of the MPLA.

These struggles were also suppressed, and many of the leaders arrested. Nevertheless, the MPLA saw itself forced to create cooperatives for production. (This also corresponded to the Stalinists' programme.)

Limited

Q Today in Angola the arrests are continuing. What do you think are the possibilities for action by the most advanced sectors and the groups of the far left under the present conditions?

THE repression is continuing at the moment. Not too long ago Nito Alves (the Angolan Stalinist leader) gave a talk on a Saturday evening on the television and announced that the following Monday there would be a number of arrests. And so it was!

But despite the continuing imprisonments, I get the impression that the chances for action are opening up.

These will depend on the ability of the far left groups (which still exist) and the most advanced sectors of the working class to develop a concrete political perspective based on a correct analysis of the general situation and the relationships in the state apparatus and the workers' movement. Such a perspective must contain concrete proposals for the workers' movement, solutions to its problems, and furthermore a clear position on the People's Republic of Angola, on the government and on the MPLA.

As soon as groups such as the Grupo Revolucao Socialista overcome the disorganisation and disorientation brought about by the repression and other factors, real chances to act will open up, even if they are much more limited than in the earlier period.

This presupposes a totally conspiratorial structure which can withstand the threatening repression and also function and undertake at least a minimum level of intervention.

Q What were, in short, the causes of the defeat in Angola? In my own opinion, the central cause of your defeat by the MPLA was that the workers, as you reported, understood the situation in August-September 1975 to mean that they had to make a choice between a victory in the civil war, with the MPLA, on the one hand, and an advance of the revolution on the other hand.

What, at the time, appeared to be the possibilities of arming the peoples' militias independ-

ANGOLA: THE MPLA AND THE WORKERS

THE TWO DUTIES OF SOLIDARITY



ent of the MPLA? In particular, what possibilities were there for contact with the soldiers of the FAPLA [the MPLA army], or were they isolated from the advanced workers?

YES, that was precisely the cause of our defeat.

There was indeed a considerable isolation of the workers' movement from the military sector of the MPLA (the FAPLA). We hardly did any political work within the FAPLA. There were in fact comrades of the far left in the FAPLA, but too few to be able to play a role in the arming of the people's militias. This was the great problem of the far left and the main cause of our defeat.

The Stalinists easily won control of the FAPLA through certain key positions they held in the General Staff. In this way they were able to bring the military apparatus onto their side. And with the military apparatus they had won 90% of the battle.

It was impossible to arm the people's militias with the 100-200 comrades in FAPLA who stood on our side. What was decisive was the general staff of the FAPLA; access to the arsenals was in the hands of the Stalinists.

Cities

Q What was the level of politicisation of the ordinary FAPLA soldiers? Were they not for the most part recruited from among the peasants?

YES. As I said at the beginning, the MPLA, from 1961 onwards, based itself mainly on the peasants. The majority of FAPLA soldiers were thus peasants, though there were workers among them. Especially after 25th April 1974 (when the Caetano regime in ruling Portugal fell) and then from August '74, there was heavier recruitment in the cities, with training camps established close to the towns.

The ordinary soldiers of the FAPLA had virtually no political preparation. They knew only the programme of the MPLA — the struggle for national independence and national liberation, and later

the struggle against the agents of imperialism, the FNLA and UNITA. That was about it. They had the illusion that Angola could reach complete independence with the MPLA, and that with this their whole problem would be solved.

When we put forward the slogan of the people's militias we wanted precisely to overcome this limited level of consciousness. Our project contained the idea that the people's militias would fight side by side with the FAPLA in a parallel action, with FAPLA cadres training the people's militias militarily, who for their part would then be able to engage in common actions with FAPLA.

The defence of the neighbourhoods and the whole of Luanda should have been put in the hands of the people's militias (with a number of FAPLA units in support), freeing FAPLA units for action at the front against FNLA & UNITA.

With this project of the FAPLA soldiers entering the militias and the workers entering the FAPLA units, we also had the idea of introducing political discussion into important parts of the FAPLA.

Q I think as a result of this discussion we now have a more exact knowledge of the workers' movement in Angola, and it is a further substantiation of the theory of permanent revolution.

Secondly, we can and must draw the lessons of the defeat of the far left in Angola. The necessity of the independent organisation of the workers' movement and of the revolutionary organisations — independent of petit-bourgeois organisations like the MPLA — was shown once again.

Thirdly, we have as a result of our talk more exact information about the present situation in Angola, a situation characterised above all by repression against the independent workers' movement and the vanguard organisations. From this a number of tasks arise for us, to inform others in our own country and internationally about this repression in Angola.

I DO NOT want this discussion to finish without aiming an

appeal to all comrades for solidarity with the workers' movement in Angola. Many comrades are in prison in Luanda. There are the revolutionary Marxists of course. Also we will not forget the Maoist comrades, who also played their role in the revolutionary process in Angola.

The freeing of the imprisoned comrades is our first task today. Many may face the same fate as the FNLA/UNITA mercenaries who were executed in the summer of 1976. We hold this sentence on the mercenaries to be correct; they earned it. But our imprisoned comrades are being placed on the same level by the MPLA, especially when it remarks that the intervention of South Africa in Angola was the work of the far left (!). The consequence of this accusation is that death sentences for these revolutionaries are quite possible.

Aimed

Whether or not various individuals or organisations agree with our analysis of the current situation in Angola, if they have not quite abandoned the principle of proletarian internationalism they should fight with us to free these comrades.

What can they do? In every country, information must be made available about the situation in Angola and the repression. International appeals should be organised and sent to the embassies of Angola and to the Government of Angola.

This government we support, arms in hand, against imperialist aggression and the imperialist powers. We will, however, expose with all our strength the bureaucratic measures of the government, which are aimed against the interests of the Angolan proletariat and against the advancement of the revolutionary process. We will indict them for this — and today the repression in Angola is the central point of our indictment of the People's Republic of Angola.

I call on all comrades to stand in solidarity on the side of the imprisoned fighters and to support the struggle against the repression in Angola.

NUM chiefs accept Coal Board's divisive deal

IN A CLOSE VOTE, 14-11, the NUM Executive accepted the NCB's offer of retirement at the age of 62 for miners with 20 years' underground service, falling to 60 within two years. Instead of the 100% of full pay that the union was demanding, the present offer allows for only 80% of full pay and a £500 tax-free lump sum on retirement.

When the agreement became known there was immediate anger on the part of many miners, particularly surface workers. Engine winding men in 22 pits in Yorkshire struck for a day.

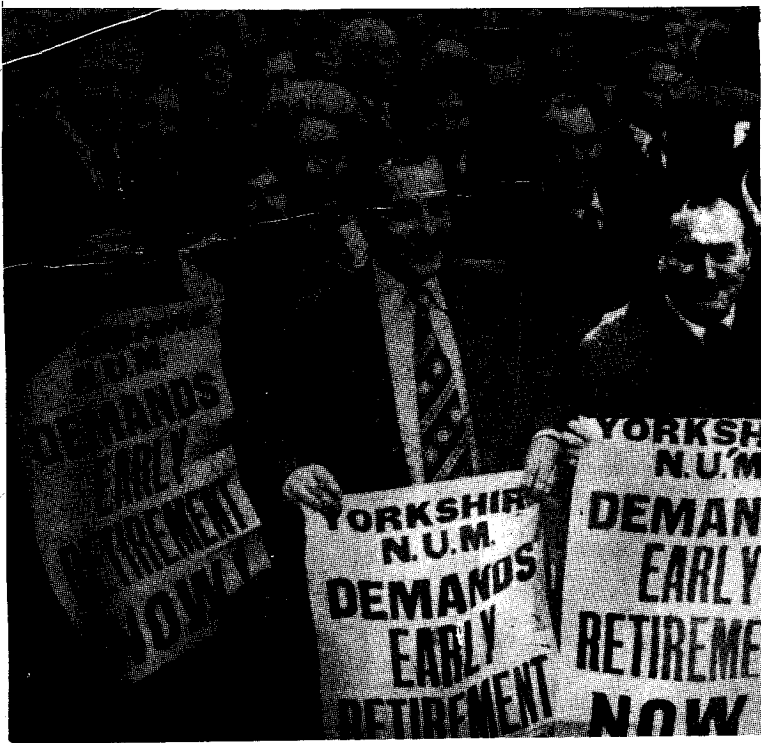
The scheme is to operate from August 1st, "incomes policy permitting". The Executive instructed Joe Gormley to see to it that the scheme would be extended to surface workers too, as originally envisaged in the union's claim. While Gormley has been saying that the NCB is prepared to come to some similar agreement, the NCB has been busily denying this.

Unfortunately, the NCB's account is likely to be closer to the truth. The EC's instruction to Gormley, like Gormley's own statements, is calculated to gloss over the fact that the surface workers' interests have been ignored. Indeed, the TUC economic committee has said that it is opposed to the surface workers' claim! They think it might open the flood-gates for other workers.

By a vote of 17 to 6 the Executive agreed to ballot the members on the offer. Militants should cast their votes against the offer — as inadequate, and as a step to splitting up the ranks of the miners.

There is another step in dividing the ranks which Gormley, Clarke, and other right-wingers on the Executive have been talking about for some time now: the reintroduction of "an effective productivity bonus scheme".

Writing late last year in the NUM's paper, *The Miner*, Gormley stated his view on the productivity deal he felt necessary: "I would like a genuine production bonus scheme, which has national criteria which can be applied to the specific and peculiar conditions existing at each colliery".



The sting is in the tail! The fact that the "criteria" will in reality not be national is obvious from the end of the sentence. It was made even more obvious by the following remark: "It is impossible to take factors which vary from face to face and pit to pit into consideration from a national viewpoint".

So we're back to the pit-by-pit productivity scheme the NUM

members threw out last time. Gormley is hoping to get it through this time, and he is banking on two arguments: an appeal on the basis of increasing wages even within the TUC limit; an insinuation that better productivity can pay for a better retirement deal, perhaps this time including the surface workers, who make up between 15 and 20% of NUM members.

CPSA backs down from clash with Govt

The ban on preparing statistics, imposed by Dept. of Employment members of the civil service union the CPSA, has been called off by an almost unanimous vote of the Union's executive. Thus, despite the success of the Union's other industrial action against the cuts (in the DHSS, where 1,400 extra jobs were won) the CPSA has capitulated for fear of a "confrontation" with the Government.

The only vote against the ending of the ban came from a right wing Executive member who wouldn't vote for the capitulation because it was proposed "by commies".

The unholy line-up in favour not only included Communist Party members but also a member of IS, Mike McGrath, the candidate of the Redder Tape grouping in the union.

The Executive's capitulation to Government threats to sack employees involved in the ban on preparing statistics has led to a calling off of a similar ban in the DHSS planned for January 24th. The long-running overtime ban is also in danger of being undermined by demoralisation at the lack of a lead from the union Executive.

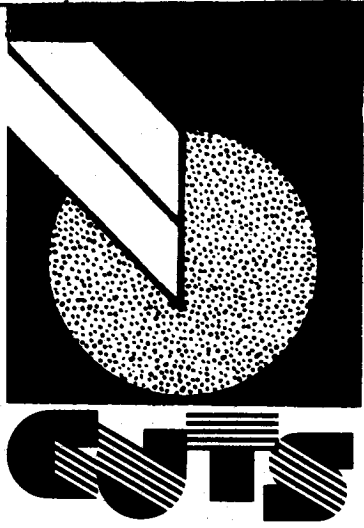
STEPHEN CORBISHLEY



THE UNIONS



EGA LEADS LONDON HOSPITALS FIGHT



THE SCHEDULED date of closure for the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson women's hospital in Camden, North London, is now less than one month away.

The Area Health Authority have said they will begin moving equipment out on 28th January, in preparation for closure on 15th February — and they might try a surprise move at an earlier date. The EGA workers, who have occupied their hospital and intend to continue running it themselves, need support for mass pickets on those dates. They are also organising a 'Save the EGA' delegate conference on 12th February.

Their determination to resist has been strengthened by reports of the wards being prepared at Whittington Hospital to receive the EGA patients. Large rats are still to be seen there, even though the rat holes have been cemented up.

The weakest point in the EGA workers' campaign is, however, the lack of support from trade unionists at Whittington Hospital. The principal union there, the GMWU, are refusing to back work on the wards being prepared for EGA patients.

Information, and credentials for the conference, from: Arthur Churchley, EGA Hospital, Euston Road, London NW1.

MARY CORBISHLEY

The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson struggle is the spearhead of a sharpening situation over the cuts in London Hospitals.

Workers at the Prince of Wales hospital in Tottenham, North London, had a half-day strike and demonstration on Monday January 10th, against the run-down and threatened closure of the hospital.

At St Bartholomew's teach-

ing hospital, 500 ancillary workers went on strike last week, and were supported by industrial action from other hospitals. When three porters were suspended after refusing to carry patients' files, which is not their job. The porters have now been reinstated. New rotas for kitchen staff and porters, which would have meant the workers losing £6-£12 a week in overtime pay, have been withdrawn by the hospital administration.

At St Marks Hospital, which supported the action at St Bartholomew's, the ancillary workers are refusing to serve private patients in protest against the closure of a NHS ward.

And in East London:—

All outpatients in the area are being closed, with the exception of the East Ham Memorial Hospital, where they are shutting down two wards. There was a promise of a new hospital at Woodside, which was used as an excuse for shutting down the children's hospitals at Balsam Street.

Needless to say, Woodside has not been built yet. Poplar Hospital has been closed for two years. Plaistow Maternity Home is getting the chop, and the Seaman's Hospital has only two wards left.

The nurses at Plaistow Maternity Home were told by the hospital management that if they went to any public meetings about hospital closures, the public would not take kindly if they protested, and anyway it would spoil their 'career prospects'. The decision to close Plaistow was sprung on them, they were being played off against the staff at Forest Gate maternity, which was also under threat. Now Forest Gate is the only maternity hospital in Newham.

Little Ilford — test case for NUT crackdown

MILITANT TEACHERS will be picketing the National Union of Teachers headquarters on January 28th, when the case of 30 East London teachers suspended from union membership comes up on appeal.

The teachers, from Little Ilford school, were suspended for taking unofficial 'no cover' action against the cuts. It is a test case for democracy and the possibilities of militant action within the NUT.

But one of the 30, acting individually, has just lost her final appeal. And there is talk of preparing a high court action against the NUT Executive: a move which would run counter to the basic socialist principle of the independence

of the trade unions from the state.

And the NUT Executive themselves are digging in. In an unprecedented move, they have passed a resolution of censure against two of their own members, Dick North and Beth Stone (both members of Rank and File, a left caucus in the NUT) for supporting teachers on a previous picket on the union headquarters who occupied the Executive chamber in protest at the Little Ilford suspensions. Letters have gone out from the President and the General Secretary of the NUT to all schools in the Greater London area just to hammer the point home.

Maximum mobilisation on January 28th is therefore urgent.

NALGO TO BAN OVERTIME IN FIGHT TO STOP 100,000 JOB CUTS

DESPITE A DECISION to continue supporting the Social Contract, delegates at last week's conference of NALGO (National and Local Government Officers) did vote for an overtime ban.

The mood of many of the delegates was clearly militant, with widespread anger at the Executive's inaction over the cuts. The closeness of the Social Contract card vote was an indication of that feeling, with 276,071 voting against and 334,046 for.

One of the things that will have angered delegates recently is the revelation by a union inquiry team that the number of jobs to be axed as a result of the Government's cuts is likely to be as much as five times what the Government admitted.

According to NALGO, it now looks as if the cuts will directly cause the loss of between 50,000 and 100,000 jobs. This is the big issue in the union. The overtime ban resolution came from Strathclyde region, and was linked with a protest against the estimated 11,000 jobs to be lost in Scottish local government.

workers' ACTION supporters' groups

BASINGSTOKE, BIRMINGHAM, BRISTOL, CAMBRIDGE, CARDIFF, CHELMSFORD, CHESTER, COVENTRY, EDINBURGH, HUDDERSFIELD, LEICESTER, LIVERPOOL, LONDON, MANCHESTER, MIDDLESBROUGH, NEWCASTLE, NEWTOWN, NORTHAMPTON, NOTTINGHAM, READING, ROCHDALE, SHEFFIELD, STAFFORD, STOKE.

Write for details of meetings and activities to:
WASG, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27

WORKERS IN ACTION

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENTS in companies throughout the country are facing a crisis. Publication of that respected organ of their trade, Personnel Management, is threatened — because the journalists who produce it are on strike.

However, Workers' Action is in a position to pass on a message of reassurance to worried company directors everywhere from the magazine's publishers: Personnel Management is really totally unnecessary. Mercury House (who also produce Boat, Hot Car, and Car Mechanics) made their own personnel managers redundant a couple of years ago. And they had no difficulty in chopping their workforce by half and giving the remainder the worst pay and conditions in magazine publishing.

But on January 4th, the 25 members of the Mercury House NUJ

Journalists claim 25%

chapel walked out over a claim for improved conditions of employment and recognition of a post-entry closed shop. The company has responded by sacking the whole chapel.

The strike is officially backed by the NUJ, but nevertheless attempts at national level to gain the support of other print unions have met with a frosty response. The TUC has apparently been spreading the word that it finds the strike

embarrassing, and wants it called off.

In fact, contrary to their own avowed intentions, the Mercury House chapel has disturbed a nest of hornets. Their claim includes, besides improved conditions, a demand for pay increases of roughly 25%, or £15 a week. They maintain that this has nothing to do with their strike, because this aspect of the claim has been referred to ACAS. They believe that it does not infringe the pay code because it is covered by Schedule 11 of the Employment Protection Act, which came into force at the beginning of this year. This provides that low-paid workers may claim the general terms and conditions of employment prevalent in comparable companies in the same geographical area, irrespective of the pay restrictions in force.

Schedule 11 has not yet been tested in practice, but the TUC and the Government would undoubtedly prefer that it never is. They are faced with a dilemma. If ACAS upholds the NUJ's interpretation of this Schedule, then many thousands of underpaid workers will be entitled to fight for increases way above the pay limit. But if the Mercury House claim is rejected, yet another piece of the Government's much-trumpeted industrial legislation will be shown to be worthless.

Meanwhile, eight other chapels in the magazine and book branches of the NUJ have submitted claims explicitly outside the pay limit, despite the opposition of the union's National Executive. These claims reflect an important shift of opinion among the rank and file against wage controls, and attempts are being made to coordinate these claims (ranging from £10 to £15 a week) and provide support in the event they lead to industrial action.

Nevertheless it is unlikely that serious struggles will erupt. Book publishing managements in particular have in the past shown themselves prepared to evade the pay restrictions in order to avoid confrontation. Last year, for example, Penguin Books paid its journalists increases of up to 20% (£14) while at the same time maintaining that they were acting within the £6 limit.

This was achieved through juggling grading systems and through annual increments — devices well known to white collar workers, but not applicable to the manual workers employed by the same company. Another condition for the success of this manoeuvre is that the terms of the settlement are not publicised and therefore brought to the attention of the Department of Employment.

Already this year in another book publishing company the NUJ chapel has succeeded in winning a settlement worth more than double the current pay code within the first two hours of negotiation. But these are the lucky few. For most workers — in publishing and outside — the only way to beat the pay code is to confront it head on, seeking the widest possible unity with other sections of workers. Action will necessarily be unofficial in most cases, and for that reason limited in a weak industrial sector such as publishing.

At the same time, a campaign must be launched for a decisive rejection of all pay codes at the next NUJ national conference. Magazine branch has already taken a step in the right direction by refusing to allow the name of one sitting executive member to go forward on this year's ballot paper. He abstained on an executive vote over endorsement of the 4½% limit, and has rightly been made to pay for this with his seat.

JAMES RYAN

GMWU SETS BACK CLEANERS' STRIKE

"I now advise you that I will be writing to all interested parties informing them that the dispute is over. ... Please remove all GMWU placards and posters being displayed at Holbrook".

So wrote Bill McColl, GMWU London Region official, to the strikers who have been picketing the Holbrook Annexe of North East London Polytechnic since September 30th in a struggle against working with lethal asbestos and against the use of non-union contract labour.

But the dispute was not over on December 2nd when, full of crocodile tears and oozing with head-masterly paternalism, Bill McColl wrote to the pickets. It is still going on — giving this GMWU official a chance to turn his backstabbing words into deeds.

Last Thursday, (13th Jan), when the Poly management made a major move to by-pass the cleaners' picket by setting up Portakabins in nearby Greengate car park (so as to re-start classes previously held in the picketed annexe) the 5 pickets whistled up 20 supporters and met the delivery drivers and crane driver with a mass picket.

For two hours the various drivers talked with the pickets, agreeing not to cross their line. Then they went away.

But the Poly management was armed with its letter from the GMWU saying the dispute was "over". And after a couple of telephone calls, they had the drivers back and through the picket line.

The cleaners have suffered a major setback. The Poly's determination to beat them is shown by their willingness to close the Holbrook annexe and spend £15,000 rather than concede.

IAN HOLLINGWORTH

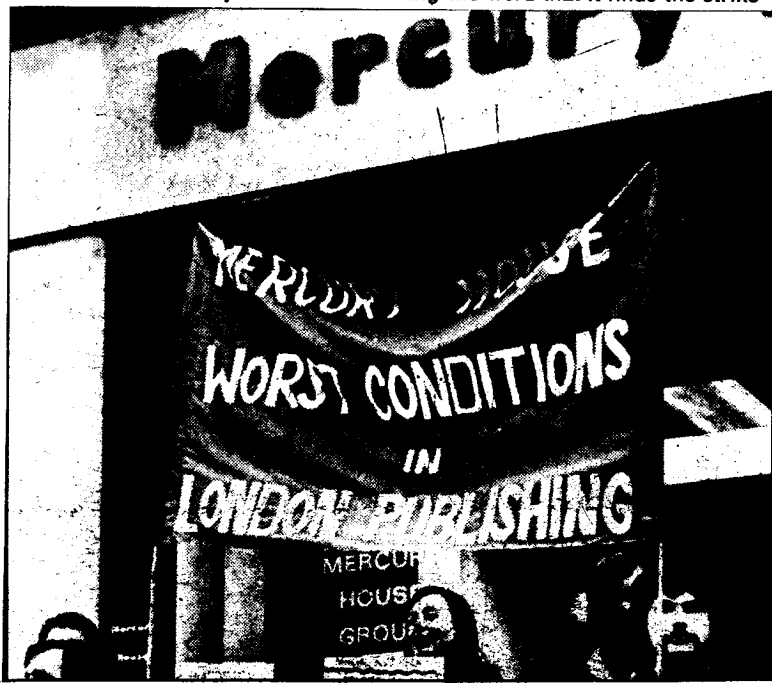
"WE'VE HAD ENOUGH", TORY STUDENTS TELL STRIKERS

ASTMS TECHNICIANS at Birmingham University have been on strike for 15 weeks, demanding that the University management implement the 1974 holiday agreement, as many universities have already done, thus giving them another five days holiday a year. The technicians maintained their picket over the Christmas period, and the university's oil and coal supplies are now running very low. Heating has been turned down, and the University management has told lecturers to bring in electric fires and students to wear warm clothes.

Morale among the technicians is high, and they are determined to win the claim in full. However, as the picketing is beginning to bite, the Liberals and Tories who lead the Students' Union are proposing, at the next Union General Meeting on Wednesday 19th January, that the union reverse its policy of support (albeit token support) for the technicians, on the grounds that the students have suffered enough.

Also at the same time as scabbing on the ASTMS, the Students' Union leadership has just arbitrarily cut the wages of the Student Union catering staff. It has done this by closing the refectories half an hour earlier and not allowing the staff their half-hour cleaning-up and meal-time. Thus, at one blow, the bureaucrats have cut the wages of their staff and worsened facilities for students. The left on campus has started a campaign to win support for the workers and to restore their wages to the level before the cuts.

It is no surprise that the union leaders have picked out the most vulnerable sector to make the cuts — that is, women workers, who are not unionised and who would find it most difficult to get another job.



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 inclusion in the following week's paper.

SATURDAY 22 JANUARY. London Spartacist Group forum "For Revolutionary Regroupment". Speakers include Rainer Baier, Trotskyist Faction recently expelled from the German Spartacusbund. At the Roebuck, 108a Tottenham Court Rd, W1.

TUESDAY 25 JANUARY. Cardiff Workers Action readers' meeting. "Fight the Cuts" — 7.30pm, Rhymney Hotel, Adam St.

FRIDAY 28 JANUARY. East London Workers' Action readers' meeting: "Hazards at Work". Speaker: Neal Smith. 7.30pm, 'Eagle & Child', Wood Grange Rd, E7 (near Wanstead Park BR).

FRIDAY 28 JANUARY. Little Ilford teachers' appeal: picket from 4.30pm (to be confirmed) at NUT headquarters, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1.

SUNDAY 30 JANUARY. Bloody Sunday Commemoration demonstration. 1.30pm, Shepherds Bush Green, London.

MONDAY 31 JANUARY: Manchester workers' Action readers' meeting on "Nationalism and the Crisis". 8pm at the People's Centre, Moss Lane East, Moss Side, Manchester 16.

FRIDAY 4 FEBRUARY. Revolutionary Communist Group meeting on "Women's Oppression under Capitalism", a launch 'Revolutionary Communist' no. 5. Speakers: Olivia Adamson, Carol Brown. 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.

THURSDAY 10 FEBRUARY. LECAC public meeting on Little Ilford. Details from 01-515 4496.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY-SUNDAY 18-19-20 February. "Portugal-Chile-Britain" Conference, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. Details from John Hoyland, 6 Southcote Rd, N19 (607 4845).

SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY. LCDTU conference. Credentials from J Hiles, 137 Wanstead Park Rd, London.

SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY. "A Rally for Women's Rights", at Alexandra Palace, Wood Green, London N12.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 5-6 MARCH. Second Socialist Teachers' Alliance conference. Creche, pooled fare. Details from 01-986 0570.

HUGE MARCH SUPPORTS SHEFFIELD STEEL STRIKERS

ON WEDNESDAY 12th January, 4000 marchers in Sheffield expressed their solidarity and support for the 480 workers at Edgar Allen Balfour group Capital works, facing redundancy threats.

The march was part of a half-day stoppage in support of the strike action at the Capital works. Called by the local Confed, it gained support from other workers in the Edgar Allen Balfour group and most of the major factories in Sheffield. At a rally after the march, a motion was passed unanimously to carry on the blacking of EAB products throughout the area. A collection raised over £500, including donations from Liverpool dockers and North Derbyshire miners.

The fight must be extended. AUEW branches are being balloted on 5p levy per member to support the strikers. As a leaflet put out by supporters of Workers' Action explained, "The Confed should call a local labour movement conference to thrash out the policy for fighting redundancies. By demanding "Open the Books", the EAB workers can see just exactly what state the firm is in. If it is as bankrupt as it claims, then they should demand nationalisation without compensation.

"This demand, backed up by work-sharing on full pay and the threat of occupation if the redundancies go ahead, is the way to carry this fight forward".

JOHN CUNNINGHAM

Behind closed shutters at Haskins

AT 7.30 LAST Wednesday morning, the caretaker of Haskins Shutters Ltd, Basingstoke, opened up the doors as usual. 40 bright-eyed workers eagerly followed him in to start the day's toil — the business of occupying the factory and locking out the management.

The occupation was the workers' answer to management's threat to solve an industrial dispute by closing down the factory. The workers had been on strike for 7 weeks after 55 were locked out for working a standard performance of 100%, the level at which the incentive bonus scheme began, as they were entitled to do under works rules. This 'anarchistic' move on the part of the workers had been the result of management infringements of an enabling agreement on consultation and the bonus scheme signed in September.

The last straw was the issue of a notice which was attached to the clock cards of all reporting for work on November 29th. This stated: "In using this clock card I acknowledge receipt of the company letter dated 24th November 1976 and agree to comply with the company requirements as outlined therein", that is, that the management interpretation of the above agreement would be fulfilled without question.

There followed seven very cold weeks on the picket line with little support from outside of Haskins.

Management's response to the occupation has been a letter sent to all strikers, the nub of which was "You are asked to seriously consider the situation

and to resume normal working in accordance with your contract of employment. Moreover, if you decide not to do so and do not present yourself prepared to work normally as from 8am Wednesday 19th January 1977, you will be treated as having repudiated and terminated your contract of employment as from that date".

This attempt at coercion from the managing director, one A R Wizard, has produced nothing but a greater determination to carry the occupation through to a conclusion in favour of the workers. A.J.

WORKERS' ACTION readers can contribute to this struggle in two ways. One, by sending financial contributions to F Kitson 13 Lundy Close, Basingstoke. Two, by working to organise blacking of the following firms in the same group as Haskins Shutters:

G Brady & Co (Manchester), F Ainsworth Ltd (Oldham), G Brady & Co (Glasgow), Brooks & Co (Manchester), Dixon Powner & Sons (Leeds), Irvings Blinds (Manchester), David T Bicket & Sons (Cardiff), Potter Rax Ltd (London), Roller Shutters Ltd (Birmingham), Hoggett & Matthews (Bath), Sefton-Wellington Ltd (Liverpool), H Teale & Sons (Lower Morden, Surrey), Joseph Walton & Sons (Nelson, Lancs), Arthur Williamson Ltd (Manchester), Leonard Bradbury Ltd (Manchester), J Duncan Ltd (Oldham), H Luke Ltd (Sale), Leroy's Ltd (Manchester), W A Goddard Ltd (Manchester), Star Process Engraving Ltd (Manchester), Royal Photo-Litho Ltd (Leeds), Brady Transport Ltd (Coventry), S L Dowell Transport Ltd (Coventry), Finham Finance Ltd (Coventry).

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