

# the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party 20p



## Stop British war moves!



## No to Labour's patriotism!

*Inside:*

Women ~ Rulecan fight for jobs  
Unions ~ NUPE, AUEW, CPSA, Tebbit  
Ireland ~ Kincora, Pope, PTA and IFM  
Racism ~ WAR, the TUC, NHS and US

*Plus* Reviews, letters

# Health workers face the big stick

For the most part the Government has got away with making derisory pay offers to public sector workers. It has managed to dissipate rank and file anger by resorting to arbitration procedures in the case of civil servants and teachers. But in the NHS, the 4 per cent offer has infuriated health workers and even moderate trade unionists are talking of taking action. It is this mass discontent which has forced the leaders of the main unions involved – COHSE, NUPE and NALGO – to talk tough. What are the prospects for victory in the NHS?



THE GOVERNMENT IS out to get the NHS. The capitalist class no longer needs and can no longer afford even the basic services provided by the NHS during the past decade. The long-term strategy is straightforward – reduce the NHS to an institution that only the most desperate and needy would want to use and force those who can afford it into the private health sector. During the past year the privatisation of the NHS has been stepped up. In London several hospitals are to be sold off; in Chelmsford NHS premises are to be turned into a private clinic for sports injuries. Last month Tory health minister Norman Fowler announced that he would 'explore the possibilities of long-term arrangements' for the private takeover of NHS facilities.

The state wants to cut the NHS and it wants to make sure that its workforce works harder for less pay. Every NHS worker has his or her story of understaffing at all levels. The Government is confident that it can tighten the screw because it reckons that NHS workers have no industrial clout. They are also counting on the inevitable media hysteria that follows every attempt by health workers to strike for a decent living standard. Just in case anything goes wrong, the Government has sought to divide the nursing staff from the ancillary and ambulance staff. In March the Treasury found £63m to boost its offer to nurses from 4 to 6.4 per cent.

The union leaders have proclaimed their determination to fight the pay offer.

Unfortunately the action proposed – two hour stoppages by COHSE, 3 day stoppages by NUPE and variations in between – are ineffectual and a recipe for defeat. Selective action has only symbolic value. It does nothing to hit where it hurts. It drags out the dispute, demoralises workers and allows the employers to retain the initiative. Selective action at best can only achieve the intervention of a 'mediator', which is what the union leaders really want.

There is real danger that the thousands of health workers who want to fight will be paralysed by the wheeling and dealing of their leaders. Unless rank and file workers strike out on their own now the momentum of struggle will be lost. A campaign of indefinite industrial action should be launched against the Government's offer. This campaign should be organised through committees of workers from all health unions. The rigid structures on which bureaucrats thrive divide one group of workers from another. The strike committees should not only put a stop to the rivalry between NUPE and COHSE but take over responsibility for negotiating with the bosses.

During the strike there should be emergency cover. But every effort should be made to paralyse the NHS bureaucracy. The strike is against the state and not the patients. And only the most resolute and militant tactics will force such a resolute employer to cough up the money we need.

Pat Roberts

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the next step

# WHERE WILL BRITAIN STRIKE NEXT?

LAST OCTOBER *the next step* carried a front page photograph of a British soldier in action, with the caption: 'Tony Benn says Britain is a colony — where will it strike next?'. We rejected the commonplace of the Labour left that poor little Britain had become 'a colony' of the USA, and insisted that it was still a rapacious imperialist power. We have consistently pointed to the growing trend for imperialist countries to interfere militarily in the backward capitalist world to preserve their interests. Many thought our cautions against labour movement support for British militarism ill-timed and overstated. Yet as we go to press barely six months later, the Royal Navy has been put on full alert in the South Atlantic and hostilities against Argentina seem inevitable. And those in the labour movement who in the past defended Britain against American domination have turned into staunch defenders of Britain against Argentina, whether in the form of Michael Foot's flag waving jingoism or Tony Benn's more discreet backing for imperialist diplomacy.

Many commentators initially regarded the despatch of the fleet for the Falkland Islands as a joke, like something out of Gilbert and Sullivan or an Ealing comedy. But, as time passes, Britain's offensive against Argentina looks less like the last act of the imperial drama and more like a dress rehearsal for more serious conflicts to come. The Falklands crisis, like the skirmishes that preceded both World Wars, has turned into an important test of the balance of power among the leading imperialist powers. It is an important test, too, of the labour movement's preparedness to follow the British ruling class into the mass slaughter of a third world war.

## Gunboats into the 'eighties

There is nothing 'old-fashioned', 'Victorian' or obsolete about Britain using military force to safeguard its interests abroad. Since the Second World War, British troops have invaded Malaya, Borneo, Indonesia, Cyprus, East Africa, several countries in the Middle East, and, of course, Ireland. The world recession brings more poverty and hunger and more intense repression to maintain the imperialist order throughout the Third World. It gives rise to deep-seated anti-imperialist sentiments among the masses of Africa, Asia and Latin America, which threaten the stability of pro-Western regimes and the whole system of world capitalist domination. Whatever the intentions of the junta, the Argentinian takeover of the Malvinas (Falklands) is a frontal challenge to imperialism — and not only in South America:

'If such barefaced attacks were allowed to achieve their ends, then the consequences would be grave not just for one or two remaining British outposts, but for peace in many areas.' (*Financial Times*, 6 April)

It is this fear, that if the Argentinians are not taught a lesson, then, as defence secretary John Nott put it, 'someone else will have a go somewhere else in the world', in Africa perhaps, or the Middle East, that has sent the British task force on an 8000 mile trip to the South Atlantic.

Britain is not alone in its concern over the Argentinian seizure of the Malvinas. All the imperialist countries have a common interest in deterring regimes like Argentina from challenging Western power

and repossessing what has been stolen from them. As the *Financial Times* commented, the Falklands crisis soon became more than 'a bilateral dispute' between Britain and Argentina: it was turned into 'a test of the international order'. Thus the Security Council of the United Nations voted with only one dissenter to condemn Argentina's action. And the 10 countries of the EEC, incapable of a united policy on Afghanistan or Poland, unanimously agreed to impose sanctions against Argentina. Government leaders in all Western countries have railed against Argentina's defiance of international laws, conventions and agreements. The imperialist powers are keen supporters of these rules and regulations, and institutions like the United Nations that supervise them, because this framework stabilises and legitimises the system of world imperialist control.

At the same time the Falklands crisis has brought to the fore conflicts among the imperialist countries, particularly between the USA and Britain. The problem for the US administration is not so much in balancing between its traditional allegiance to Britain and its developing alliance with the Argentinian junta, but more in reconciling the position of the USA since the Second World War as the supreme guarantor of the world order and its particular interests in Latin America. As the dominant power in NATO and the force behind the United Nations, the USA has to take a hard line on any backward capitalist country that challenges imperialist law and order. However, Reagan's regime has special problems in Central and South America. The President's plans for drawing Argentina, Guatemala and other countries into an alliance against the anti-imperialist movements that are a growing threat to American control in the region are likely to be set back by any military conflict between Britain and Argentina. Hence Secretary of State Alexander Haig's shuttle diplomacy.

## Labour's disgrace

However the Falklands crisis is resolved, it has revealed the forces driving towards another world war. It has shown the determination of imperialist powers like Britain to go to any lengths to safeguard their capacity to exploit and oppress backward capitalist countries. And it has revealed that, while the Western nations are united against any threat to imperialism from the Third World, they are deeply divided amongst themselves, each guided by its own particular interest in any new carve-up of the world. And whatever the final outcome, the initial response of the British labour movement has been a source of great comfort to the ruling class. There have been, broadly, three positions put forward on the Falklands.

The dominant view within the labour bureaucracy is straightforward support for imperialist war. This position has been advanced with varying degrees of jingoist fervour by the leaders of the Labour Party, Michael Foot and Denis Healey and by leading trade unionists Moss Evans and David Basnett. It enjoys the support of all but a handful of Labour MPs, not to mention the SDP, *Tribune* and the *New Statesman*. It is a disgraceful capitulation to chauvinism. It was

predictable. The Falklands crisis has drawn out the logical consequence of the labour bureaucrats' opposition to nuclear weaponry — their support for the development and deployment of stronger conventional forces. The alternative military policy now being pressed on the Tories by the Labour Party proposes scrapping Trident and building up the fleet: the likely result is we will have both.

The second position substitutes support for imperialist diplomacy instead of open war. This is the view of Tony Benn, Dame (Commander of the British Empire) Judith Hart, a few pacifist Labour MPs, CND and the Communist Party. They want the dispute to be resolved by negotiation, preferably through the United Nations, as an alternative to a shooting war. This is a tactical difference masquerading as a stand of principle. The British ruling class negotiates with countries like Argentina using its economic power and military might as bargaining counters. And as the Government knows, there's nothing so effective in speeding up talks as despatching the fleet: this is what is called negotiating 'from a position of strength'. The threat of war is simply another step on the road that leads from diplomatic pressure, through economic sanctions to full-scale war. 'War', as von Clausewitz wrote and every bourgeois politician understands full well, 'is a mere continuation of policy by other means'. But the pathetic Labour left pretends there is some fundamental difference between imperialist war and imperialist diplomacy, and, reluctant to accept the consequences of the former, it takes refuge in the latter.

## Chauvinists at sea

While the left talks about making a negotiated peace, in practice it ends up supporting the war. This is evident in its confusions over the Navy. Tony Benn thinks it ought not to have been sent; Joan Maynard wants it withdrawn; Frank Allaun, however, insists that it should stay somewhere in the mid-Atlantic while negotiations continue; Labour's elder statesman Lord Noel Baker proposes 'the peaceful cooperative action of United Nations navies', a proposal that corresponds with Benn's notion of a UN 'peace-keeping force'. The left's faith in UN intervention simply reveal its illusions in what it calls the 'international community', ie the imperialist powers. It is ironic that for all its customary anti-Americanism, the British left should look to an institution backed by US imperialism to get Britain out of a sticky situation in the South Atlantic.

What if negotiations fail to produce a solution and war begins? The left's position can be predicted with certainty: it will inevitably fall in line behind the Labour leadership, no doubt regretfully and critically, but nonetheless fully behind imperialist intervention — British or United Nations — against Argentina.

Finally, there is the position that Lenin characterised before the First World War as 'imperialist economism'. This view ignores the critical distinction between imperialist powers such as Britain and countries like Argentina that are dominated by imperialism. By condemning Argentina and Britain equally stridently, it adapts to chauvinism in the imperialist camp, disguising this reaction-

ary stand by talking in radical terms of the common interests of the working class in the two countries. The Militant Tendency provides the clearest expression of this outlook over the Falklands crisis, though it is in fact common to the British radical left.

If Argentina is ruled by a repressive dictatorship, the responsibility is largely Britain's (see page 4). Whatever the crimes of the junta in Buenos Aires, as a force for barbarism in the world it is way behind Britain. The key point, however, is that any criticism of the Argentinian regime, at a time when every bourgeois politician is ranting about 'tin-pot fascist generals' and Argentinian footballers are booed every time they touch the ball, can only indulge and reinforce the wave of anti-Argentinian hysteria sweeping Britain. The British left affects a concern with the problems facing the working class in Argentina, issuing advice on the class struggle there as though it were writing for the Argentinian labour movement. The left's advice has no consequences in Argentina; but its adaptations to British chauvinism undermine the efforts that must be made to rally the working class in Britain to support any attack on British imperialism in the Third World.

Some radical left groups — the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Revolutionary Party — have coupled concessions to British nationalism with repudiations of the jingoism of the Labour leadership and of the Benn/UN position. However, these groups' formal restatements of the Leninist position on imperialist war are rendered inconsequential by the narrow anti-Tory emphasis of their response to the Falklands crisis. The problem is constantly redefined as one of the Tory Government, not the British imperialist state. Thus, both *Socialist Worker* and *The News Line* attribute British militarism to the subjective needs of Margaret Thatcher to 'save face' or, more vacuously, to her 'lunacy'. But the British ruling class would not go to war to save Thatcher's face; it is crucial to identify the vital interests of the British state in hitting back at Argentina. If Thatcher's face (or her psyche) is the problem, then what is the solution? Obviously, a different face and a different government, a Labour government. This is the only conclusion that can be drawn from the left's hysterical anti-Thatcherism and its bemoaning of the lack of dynamism of the Labour left in giving a lead on the issue.

Our conclusion is different. We appreciate the vital necessity for the British state to go to war against Argentina to defend its interests overseas. We deny Britain's right to the Falkland Islands and we oppose all attempts — by diplomatic negotiations, economic sanctions or military adventures — to regain them. We reject all concessions to British imperialism by the labour movement. We welcome any setback to British imperialist interests in the South Atlantic as a blow against the state that dominates the working class in Britain. Our enemy is not just the Tory Government but the British state: our task is to mobilise workers, not for the return of a Labour Party with a more chauvinist outlook than most Tories to government, but for the overthrow of British imperialism and its state.

BRITISH CAPITALISM relies on countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America for raw materials, markets for its products and outlets for its investments. Britain's overseas investments — at around £49 billion — are the second largest in the world. Of the £24 billion it invested directly in factories abroad in 1980, 20 per cent went to backward capitalist countries. Britain's profits from capital exports are essential for its survival as a viable capitalist world power. In 1980 the repatriated profits of industrial and commercial companies amounted to £4.8 billion, 20 per cent of the total gross trading profits made in Britain (calculated from CSO, *Economic Trends Annual Supplement*, 1982).

### The sun hasn't set yet

Britain was the world's leading imperialist power at the end of the nineteenth century. Then it controlled a vast empire through which it raped and plundered, tortured and murdered, exploited and oppressed people in every corner of the earth. The rise of other capitalist nations — Germany and the rest of Europe, the USA and more recently Japan — has gradually squeezed Britain out of many areas where it once held sway. Two world wars have divided and re-divided the backward capitalist world up among the leading imperialist countries, and Britain has found its empire steadily shrinking.

Since the Second World War Britain, in common with other Western powers, has modified its relationship with countries under its influence. It has pulled back from direct colonial rule and installed sympathetic regimes in countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. These countries have never become genuinely independent: the frequency of British military intervention in them is testimony to the provisional character of imperialist withdrawal. Britain maintains armed forces on a grand scale to protect its overseas holdings from popular uprisings in its old colonies and from imperialist competitors. Britain's gunboats have not however been able to prevent uncompetitive British firms being displaced by more dynamic American, EEC and Japanese entrepreneurs in many parts of the world.

Argentina is a particular product of Britain's imperial traditions. It was never in fact a British colony. It became an independent country in July 1816, taking over territories, including the Malvinas, formerly ruled by Spain. Britain attempted, unsuccessfully, to seize Argentina, but it managed in January 1833 to grab the Malvinas, which it has clung onto ever since. In 1851 the British Government granted the Falkland Islands Company a virtual monopoly over the economy which has also been sustained to this day. Although Argentina kept British troops off its mainland, it could not withstand its economic power in the region. From the middle of the nineteenth century Britain exerted a dominating influence on the development of Argentina.

### A corner of some foreign field

Agriculture and industry in Argentina developed under British control. British companies built the railway system — and owned it until the 1950s — to facilitate the export of agricultural products through Buenos Aires at prices regulated from London. Many of Argentina's wealthiest families have English names; they shop at Harrod's branch in Buenos Aires and send their children to English-speaking schools geared to Oxbridge entrance examinations.

Britain exerted its customary civilising influence in Argentina. In 1860 it pushed Argentina into a war with Paraguay to destroy its developing textile industry: virtually the entire adult male population was also wiped out. Argentina's rulers faced little domestic opposition to their

# Argentina and the West



However enfeebled it has become, Britain remains a major imperialist power. Argentina, for all its industrial development, prosperous bourgeoisie and well organised working class, remains a backward capitalist country, dominated by imperialism. This is why, whatever the character of the regime in Buenos Aires, we support Argentina in any war with Britain.

ambivalent position on the Second World War: it was not that the people had much sympathy for German fascism — simply that they hated British imperialism.

Since the inter-war period Britain has been displaced as the dominant power in Central and South America by the USA. Other imperialist powers have also extended their influence in the area. Direct foreign investments in Argentina now amount to nearly \$5.5 billion, of which some \$2 billion comes from the USA, \$1 billion from Japan, \$500m from West Germany and \$350m from Britain. Thus Britain still has an important stake — and 17 000 expatriates — in Argentina. The supply of armaments of all sorts by successive Labour and Tory governments to the Argentine regime was not some quirk of policy, but the natural continuation of a long-standing relationship.

### Britain welcomes the generals

The political regime in Argentina is a product of imperialist domination. Argentina is one of a number of backward capitalist countries in which the weakness of the bourgeoisie has led to the elevation of a charismatic leader or a military clique to exercise power seemingly above the class struggle (see *Revolutionary Communist Papers*, No 6, for a discussion of 'Bonapartism in the post-war world'). In post-war Argentina, Juan Peron mobilised the working class with national and anti-imperialist rhetoric to stabilise his regime and support its strategy of independent capitalist development. Peron did not go far enough for the masses, but he went too far for many Argentinian capitalists and their foreign backers. He was ultimately obliged to crack down on the working class and was finally ousted by a military coup.

Social stability has been maintained in Argentina through a series of military dictatorships. Authoritarian regimes have curbed trade unions and political organisations to create ideal conditions for foreign investment. As the world market expanded the Argentinian economy experienced record growth rates to become the most industrialised country in South America.

The most recent coup in Argentina, in March 1976, marked the demise of the last revival of populist Peronism and its

replacement by the present military junta. It led to the violent repression of all opposition groups, the massacre of trade union militants and the virtual liquidation of the Monteneros guerrillas. British government officials have lately discovered a distaste for the generals, but this is how a former British diplomat in Buenos Aires welcomed the new regime, and the economic minister who led the offensive against the working class:

'Dr Martinez de Hoz and his highly capable team have wrought marvels... now I leave Argentina firmly convinced that this rich and varied country has an especially bright future ahead of it... and shall do all I can to spread this message in London on my return.' (cited in *Unity is strength*, Latin America Bureau, 1980, p35)

The message spread in London and beyond. Capital exports to Argentina accelerated: between 1977 and 1981 more than \$1 billion flowed into the country. In the same period Argentinian debts to Western banks rose from \$10 billion to \$32 billion — a large proportion transacted through the City of London and by British banks, such as Lloyds.

The Argentine junta has been sustained by the imperialist powers that dominate the country. Its repressive rule has been financed and encouraged by the USA and Britain. The world recession has revealed Argentina's subordination to the imperialist world order. Last year Argentina's debts amounted to 30 per cent of GDP and merely servicing these debts took up 85 per cent of export revenues. The regime's economic crisis has led to the further impoverishment and oppression of the masses. Over the past two years real incomes have been cut by 17 per cent and unemployment is soaring. Earlier this year President Galtieri ordered a wage freeze for public sector employees — at a time when inflation is put at 150 per cent a year!

No doubt Galtieri has ordered the recapture of the Malvinas to take the pressure off his government at home. But past experience has shown that manipulating the anti-imperialist sentiments of Argentinian workers is a dangerous game for the junta. The heckling of Galtieri at the recent mass rally in Buenos Aires when he announced acceptance of American mediation shows that the workers will not easily be satisfied by any com-

promises the regime may seek to make with the imperialist powers. Argentine workers will soon extend their hostility to Britain to include opposition to a junta whose fear of the masses greatly exceeds its reluctance to make deals with its old friends in London and Washington.

Workers in Britain do not need to be told about the record of the Argentinian generals — it is well known and little different from that of scores of military dictatorships sponsored by British and American imperialism around the world. The crucial point is that the record of the generals is much shorter and infinitely less bloody than that of the British ruling class: their potential for militarist savagery also bears no comparison to that of Britain.

### Beyond the South Atlantic

The Falklands crisis confirms a point that we have made in several recent issues of *the next step*: that the tensions leading to a third world war are to be found, not in the relations between the USA and the Soviet Union, but within the imperialist camp itself. The seizure of a heap of rocks by poor Argentina from mighty Britain has led to the launching of the biggest war fleet since 1945.

So desperate are the Western powers to maintain the fiction of impending East/West conflict that attempts had to be made to invent Soviet involvement where none existed. But even tales about Russian spy ships could not obscure the fact that the Royal Navy was en route for the South Atlantic and the USA was in a serious quandary what to do about it. The Falkland Islands dispute has shown that the conflicts that really matter in the world today are between backward and advanced capitalist countries and among the imperialist nations themselves.

The USA condemns Argentina's occupation of the Malvinas but it is fearful of the consequences for the Pax Americana in Latin America if Britain goes to war to regain them. A full-scale shooting war would rally Peru, Venezuela, Bolivia and Guatemala to Argentina's side. Even Brazil, although hostile to its neighbour, would come under pressure to support it against Britain. Reagan would then be obliged to scupper his Latin America policy and back Britain in the cause of maintaining the line that countries like Argentina cannot be allowed to break the rules of the imperialist order and get away with it. The USA has also to consider the danger of losing a valuable ally in Europe. Already in conflict with its NATO allies over issues of trade, foreign policy and defence, the USA is keen to preserve its friendship with Britain.

In Europe itself the united stand of the continental powers with Britain seems unquestionable. But the most enthusiastic, France, is the one with least to lose in terms of trade and the one that feels most threatened by this outbreak of 'lawlessness' given its many colonial possessions and dependencies throughout Africa and the rest of the world.

For Japan, there is nothing to gain politically by supporting Britain's call for trade sanctions. Premier Zenko Suzuki warned Argentina to negotiate at the United Nations, but refused to jeopardise important trade deals or the status of its large investment projects in the country. Why should it endanger economic links with Latin America when Europe is threatening sanctions against Japanese exports?

As for Britain, it has everything to lose no matter what it does. Invade, and become embroiled in a debilitating war 8000 miles away. Or compromise, and suffer humiliation, feeling still less secure about its future in a volatile world. Socialists in Britain can only welcome the slap in the face suffered by British imperialism. Our job is to halt the war drive and work for Britain's final defeat.

Tony Allen

TROTSKY ACCURATELY perceived the servile patriotism behind the Labour leaders' pacifism, a patriotism that can turn them from disarmers into war-mongers virtually overnight. He reckoned, however, without Michael Foot's jingoistic fervour – the merest slight to his Crown and country, never mind the roar of cannon, sufficed to make him denounce Thatcher for her 'lack of preparedness' over the Falklands.

Foot's transition from inveterate peace-monger to staunch militarist in response to the Falklands crisis is an important reminder of the way in which the anti-war sentiments of the labour bureaucracy have twice this century undergone a similar transformation as conflict drew near. It is a useful warning of the clangers inherent in today's nuclear disarmament movement.

Virtually every major national and international conference of the labour movement in the decade before the First World War passed resounding resolutions against militarism, rearmament and consumption. In July 1908, for example, a joint Independent Labour Party/TUC rally in Trafalgar Square heard ILP leader Ramsay MacDonald condemn the naval arms race that was then on, shortly before the London Socialist Sunday School Union Choir of Girls, dressed all in white, sang 'Angel of Peace'. After 1911, when Germany invaded Morocco, sections of the press began to campaign for conscription. The response of ILP MP Philip Snowden: to oppose it as 'entirely contrary to the national interest'. Thus was moral disgust for violence mixed with chauvinism right up to the declaration of war in 1914. And then...workers volunteered to die in their millions in the trenches.

After the war a superficial calm in international relations led to the decline of pacifist feeling in the institutions of the working class. Leading socialist pacifists such as George Lansbury failed to oppose the 1929-31 Labour Government's defence expenditures and put their faith in the newly-formed imperialist talking-shop, the League of Nations. Events, however, soon revived anti-war sentiment. Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, Hitler's accession to power in 1933, Italy's invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, the Spanish civil war from 1936 onwards – all these stimulated the formation of a mass pacifist campaign.

The Reverend Dick Shepherd's Peace Pledge Union, whose 140 000 signatories pledged never to use force aggressively, was formed in May 1936. But even before then the 1934 Labour Party conference came out against rearmament and reaffirmed its faith in the 'collective security' of the imperialist countries organised through the League of Nations. Germany's occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1937, however, made war seem inevitable, and the Labour Party conference that year went over to full support for rearmament. From then on it was downhill all the way: British pacifism stagnated and by the time Britain went to war in April 1940 the labour movement was an enthusiastic supporter of British militarism.

How can mass anxiety about war so easily collapse in the face of direct battle? The answer becomes clear once we take a look at a number of themes common to the disarmament movements of the past – and those of the present.

## Some day, over the rainbow

The labour movement anti-war campaigns before 1914 and 1939 showed a concern to prevent war breaking out in the future. They emphasised the dangers and horrors of a war that was always some time away, often, as it turned out, many years ahead. In the present, pacifist Labour politicians got on with the day to day business of negotiation with and accom-

# The peaceful road to war

‘The pacifism of social democracy at the first roar of the cannon will be transformed into the most servile patriotism.’  
(Leon Trotsky, July 1982)

‘Today “inveterate peacemonger” Michael Foot prepares the way to deliver the working class to fight for British imperialism in the Third World War.’ (the next step, No 19, November 1981)

modation to the British state. Their increasing identification of the interests of the labour movement with those of the British state was indicated by their acquiescence to the government's broader political objectives. Thus a labour bureaucracy opposed to militarism in the future came to endorse Britain's oppression of large areas of the world and large sections of its own population (women, immigrants, the unemployed) in the present. Similarly, the official labour movement proclaimed its pacifist convictions at the same time as it sanctioned the brutal suppression of revolts against British rule in India, Egypt, Ireland and other colonies.

When war became imminent the Labour leaders' loyalties to the British state and their commitment to preserving it outweighed their fears about military engagement. They could not but drop their pacifist rhetoric: to be pragmatic, they had to accept the inevitable. *The Times* put the stark choice before them very well:

‘The instinct of self preservation, which is the strongest factor in national life, therefore compels us – if the efforts of our government should fail – to be ready to strike with all our force for our own safety.’ (30 July 1914)

ILP leader Keir Hardie explained that he had opposed Britain's war against the Boers in 1899 – because then ‘no national danger of any kind’ was at issue. Now, however, the situation was different: once Germany had violated Belgium's neutrality, the boom of the enemy's guns was ‘within earshot’ and decisive action was called for. On 1 August 1914 Hardie had appealed for workers to stand together for peace. Three days later he told the House of Commons: ‘The lads who have gone forth to fight their country's battles must not be disheartened by any discordant notes at home’. The change from pacifist opposition to support for war was less dramatic before the Second World War, but no less complete.

## The war to end all wars

A second feature of labour movement anti-militarism is its narrow focus on military technology which it isolates from other aspects of imperialist strategy, and in particular from diplomacy. In 1905 Britain launched the first of its *Dreadnought* series of battleships. Many on the left saw this fearsome vessel as the cause of Anglo-German antagonisms and felt that it made a qualitative difference to the nature of warfare. The use of poisonous gases in the First World War produced a similar response; so did Germany's development of massed tank and blanket-bombing techniques before

the Second World War. The labour movement has always concentrated its condemnation on particular weapons – whilst approving threats over the conference table as a legitimate means of waging war.

In July 1914 the ILP organised hundreds of rallies calling on the Government to avoid war by talking things out with its opponents abroad. Once war began, radical ILP MP Fenner Brockway's pamphlet, *How to end the war*, called for peace ‘by negotiation’. Later in the war, the ILP leaders turned for help to US President Woodrow Wilson, who urged ‘peace without victory’ on Europe's combatants. Their enthusiasm for American mediation cooled when, after the sinking of the US *Lusitania* by a German U-boat, the USA itself entered the war. However, it was Wilson's proposal for a League of Nations that provided the left with its favourite forum for the resolution of inter-imperialist conflicts in the 'thirties.

The failure of the League to prevent Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia or Franco's air blitzkrieg on Spain confirmed that negotiation is just one level on which conflicts can be resolved. Once deadlock is reached, it is obvious that recourse to the battlefield is necessary. The bourgeoisie never has any difficulty making this jump; and nor, when it comes down to it, do the labour bureaucrats. Thus when negotiations break down, they follow the logic of their support for the bourgeoisie in negotiations through to support for it in war proper.

## Mobilising for power

Despite all the capitulations, there has always been a certain ambivalence about the labour bureaucracy's backing for the British bourgeoisie in war. This reflects the difficulty it inevitably has in reconciling workers to their own slaughter in a cause – the preservation of British imperialism – in which they have no interest whatsoever. Naked jingoism can always be used to rally the most backward sections of the working class, but its value for the bourgeoisie is strictly limited. It has never appealed to the more conscious workers, yet it is these

whose influence over the class as a whole is of decisive importance in mobilising the labour movement for war. But it is precisely to do what jingoism cannot that anti-war movements are about. They get workers to fight for the ruling class by putting the issue of national survival in working class language.

In the First World War the right-wing Labour leaders stood out for a British victory over Germany. But more left-wing MPs called for victory as a means of ending carnage in Europe for all time. Here's how Ramsay MacDonald presented his case in a pamphlet published in 1914:

‘First it is imperative that the war, once begun should be prosecuted to a victory for our country. Secondly it is imperative, while we carry on the war, to prepare for peace.’

This approach, combined with constant criticisms of the Government's unpopular conscription and factory legislation, allowed the labour bureaucrats to reconcile the more militant workers to the objectives of imperialism.

In the Second World War the same function was served by anti-fascist ideology. This appealed to workers, not to fight for British imperialism against Germany, but to defend democracy against fascism. The influence of anti-fascism was so powerful that it led the labour movement to assume the role of the most consistent fighters against Germany – unlike the upper class appeasers. And it also allowed the labour bureaucrats to lead millions of workers to their deaths and to claim the consequent reorganisation of imperialist relations as a historic victory for the working class.

## A cautionary tale

Today's nuclear disarmament movement seems destined to repeat the mistakes of the past. It campaigns against the prospect of a nuclear holocaust in the future; but it is silent about British oppression in Ireland and elsewhere today. It focuses on Trident and cruise missiles, while inviting imperialist diplomats to solve the Falklands dispute. The anti-nuclear war movement is the most dynamic and rapidly growing campaign among young people throughout Europe. Yet its potential to turn into a mobiliser for war is already apparent.

In every European country the disarmament campaign has acquired a distinctive nationalistic outlook; this is at present obscured by a common, and increasingly strident anti-Americanism. This hostility towards the USA corresponds with the rivalries that are already growing in importance between the leading EEC countries and the USA. The Falklands crisis has revealed some of the tensions within the NATO. The strains of a deepening world recession tend to drive its members into conflict with one another. In the event of deteriorating relations between the USA and Europe, the European anti-nuclear movement could play an important role in rallying workers to the side of their own national bourgeoisie against an American enemy. This is the danger of the peace movement in Europe today, of which Michael Foot, one of its founding members, provides a clear warning.

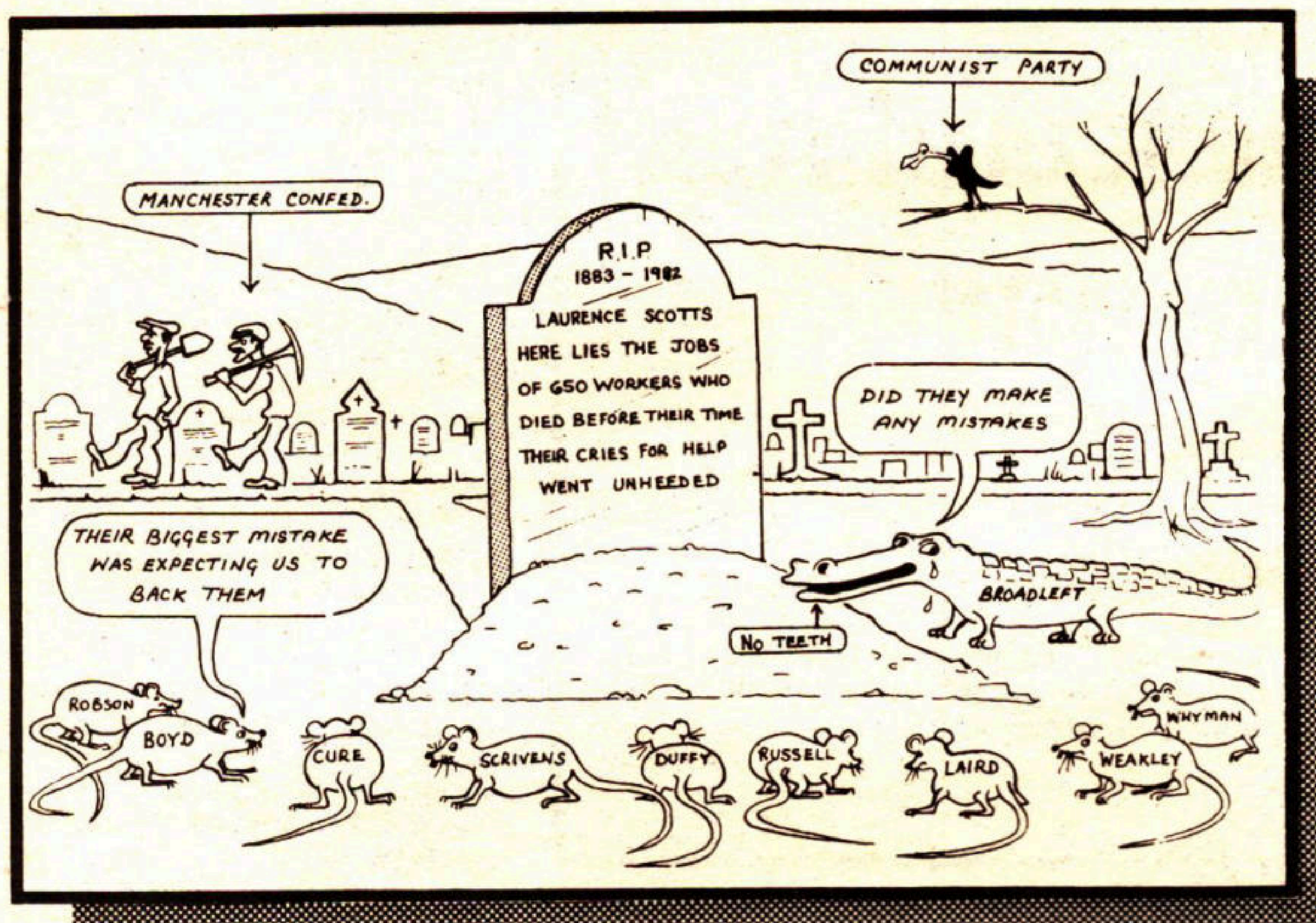
Mike Freeman

## ★ Preparing for Power

For the past two years, the next step has held major conferences in September. The first, attended by more than 200 people, examined various aspects of imperialism around the world. Last year's, twice as big, concentrated on the problems facing the working class in Europe.

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Write now for full details to preparing for power, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.



One view of the AUEW — from the Laurence Scott strike bulletin.

## The Broad Left in the AUEW TEN WASTED YEARS

Ten years ago this month engineering workers in the Manchester area occupied their factories in a militant fight for higher wages and shorter hours. Manchester engineer and Laurence Scott worker Dave Halls-worth looks back at the sit-ins, after a year in which every fightback by engineering workers has been outmanoeuvred and broken by the combination of the employers, the leadership and the Broad Left of the AUEW.

AT THE BEGINNING of March 1972 the Manchester District Committee of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions presented identical claims to 1000 employers of 200 000 engineering workers in the Manchester area. The unions demanded a £4 across the board wage rise, the introduction of a 35-hour week and four weeks paid holiday. This claim was the final act in a long drawn out dispute over the engineers' 1971 pay demand — which itself followed a three-year deal on wages and productivity which had resulted in the deterioration of the position of workers in the industry.

### His master's voice

We were ready for a fight — and so were the employers. 'If the unions are out to test the fibre of our unity we should leave them in no doubts as to its durability', declared Bamford of the Engineering Employers Federation. The next three months were a testing time indeed for the fibre of the AUEW under its Broad Left leadership.

The Broad Left, an electoral alliance of Labour left and Communist Party officials, had won control of the AUEW in 1968. After many years of campaigning, the Broad Left won a series of key posts: Hugh Scanlon became General Secretary, Ken Brett joined Ernie Roberts as an Assistant General Secretary and Bob Wright won a seat on the Executive. Brett was the Broad Left's national organiser, Roberts the editor of its paper *Engineering Voice*. The prestige of the Broad Left took an immediate knock as a result of its endorsement of the 1968 three-year productivity package. It did not recover

much as Scanlon equivocated in his opposition to Tory anti-trade union laws and as *Engineering Voice* turned from being a critic of the bureaucracy into its mouthpiece. The prosecution of the 1971 wage claim was decisive for the Broad Left — and Manchester was its Waterloo.

When the EEF took a hard-line stand against the unions, the AUEW bureaucrats simply abdicated the leadership of the struggle. Fearful of a head-on confrontation with the employers, they abandoned negotiations at the national level and urged their local officials to pursue the claim by plant by plant bargaining. They also feared losing control of rank and file militancy in an industry-wide conflict, so they restricted action to the district level. Scanlon himself insisted on imposing a secret ballot on the Sheffield district when a meeting of 45 000 militants at Sheffield Wednesday's football ground pressed for action. This device ensured that Sheffield workers remained isolated from those in Manchester and the whole struggle was fragmented.

### Manchester sit-ins

In Manchester, however, even the Broad Left could not stop us taking action. Three days before 27 March, the official date for industrial action, 1650 workers were already occupying their factories and 7000 more had undertaken some form of sanction against their employers. Workers at James Mills (part of GKN) kicked off on 15 March; Laurence Scotts and Davies and Metcalf joined in a week later. After 27 March, the vast majority of Manchester's engineering workers took

strike action of some kind. By the end of the month a dozen factories were occupied. The Manchester sit-ins, the most concerted series of occupations in the history of the British labour movement, reached a peak in mid-April, when 27 factories were in the hands of the workers. By the time the last of the sit-ins came to an end in June they reckoned that around 25 000 to 30 000 workers had participated in this remarkable challenge to the authority of the bosses and their property rights. There had been occupations before — notably at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and at nearby Fisher Bendix in 1971 — but these had been in defence of jobs: in the Manchester sit-ins we were on the attack for better wages and conditions.

Yet the Manchester sit-ins were ultimately a failure. The unity of the EEF proved more durable than the fibre of our Broad Left. Realising what was at stake, the employers chipped in and raised £2 million to bolster up their stand. The Broad Left led from behind and undermined from below. The officials' most damaging tactic was agreeing to secret deals in each plant. Their strategy was to press large firms to settle and thus weaken the resolve of the (majority of) smaller companies in the EEF. But this seriously underestimated the unity of the EEF against rank and file militancy: the only result of the secret deals was to deepen divisions among the workers. Laurence Scotts, for example, settled for £3.50 and no shortening of the working week; Ward and Goldstone got £4.00 and a promise of 35 hours; as the weeks dragged on others got less and less.

There was only one meeting of all engineering shop stewards in Manchester during the whole dispute. And this was called by Scanlon for the purpose of dropping the 35-hour week demand to allow negotiations to reopen. Far from considering a national strike, he even refused a national levy of AUEW members in solidarity with the sit-ins.

Local Broad Left official John Tocher concentrated his energies on curbing the more militant shop stewards, while allowing the influence of notorious right-wing officials like James Brennan OBE to grow. For Tocher, like Scanlon, the only purpose of the sit-ins was a lever to encourage the resumption of talks, their speciality.

### Left lets in the right

By the middle of the summer, when all the Manchester factories had returned to work, we were in a position to assess the situation. Engineering workers had won the lowest wage rise of any major group of workers in 1972. An EEF spokesman commented that the employers had given the unions a mauling. The Broad Left tried to absolve itself of all responsibility: *Engineering Voice* pointed the finger at the local leadership. But we knew who to blame. Many workers, realising that the Broad Left had led them into battles that cost them hard and won them little, turned towards the right wing. In the 1973 elections, Broad Left candidate Bernard Panter was defeated by right-winger Brian Mather for the post of district secretary. Tocher scraped in as division organiser. But it was three years — and many more betrayals — later that the Broad Left reaped the bitter fruits of its years of collaboration. Bob Wright, widely tipped to follow Scanlon, was defeated by the rising star of the right, Terry Duffy, for his place on the Executive Committee. Duffy consolidated his supremacy over the Broad Left in the AUEW when he decisively defeated Wright in the 1980 presidential election.

### No vote for Brett!

Where are they now, those Broad Left leaders of ten years ago? Scanlon is in the Lords, Roberts in the Commons, but Wright and Brett got left behind. They are still slugging it out in the factional strife of the AUEW, now working against a solidly entrenched right wing. The retirement of general secretary Sir John Boyd has opened up a struggle for his succession. The contenders are his heir apparent, the right-wing odds-on Gavin Laird, and Ken Brett.

In Manchester we recall the sit-ins — and at Laurence Scotts we remember the way the Broad Left helped Boyd and Duffy to isolate and sell out our fight for jobs last year. Workers here have seen the hypocrisy and ineffectiveness of the Broad Left's radical class collaboration, and they can't see it as much of an alternative to the up front collaboration of the right wing with the bosses. When one of the radical left activists tried recently to persuade Laurence Scott workers that electing Broad Left candidates would represent a victory for engineering workers, they laughed with scepticism. Changing a few faces won't solve our problems.

The biggest danger to us is not the right wing, but the left. It is the left that leads workers into fighting battles with tactics that disillusion and dishearten the class. The right is open in its collaboration: it rarely leads workers into anything. Workers' own experience in struggle exposes the right wing: the treachery of the left wing leaves workers thinking that they have lost owing to the inadequacy of the working class.

The Manchester sit-ins — and the Laurence Scott occupation — show the potential in the working class for seizing control. We have to reject the fear of confrontation of the Broad Left and sweep the compromisers aside. A revolutionary party grounded in the factories will show how factory after factory, and one group of workers after another, can be drawn into class-wide actions directed towards the overthrow of the rule of capital.

# The Rulecan dispute

# WOMEN AGAINST UNIONS

# AGAINST WOMEN

On 9 February Rulecan Ltd, a clothing manufacturer in Runcorn, Liverpool, sacked its 60 women workers who went on strike for trade union rights and a guaranteed minimum wage. For three months the women, members of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGW), have been on the picket line fighting for support. Carol Taggart of Manchester Women for Communism looks at why the outcome of the dispute is so important.

AS SOON AS Rulecan took over the Runcorn factory from Courtaulds, the previous owners, in December last year, the workers knew they were in for trouble. Management's first move was to announce the withdrawal of the £50 fall-back pay – a minimum guaranteed wage in times when work was slack. Then Pat Roberts, the new boss, demanded that the workforce step up production and work through breaks. The union calculated that wages could drop to £30 a week, even for workers working flat out for the longest possible hours. It didn't stop there. When a new product line was introduced, an Indian cotton dress, the machinery had to be stripped down to handle the different materials. As this operation was carried out, the women had to sit idle at their benches – which meant they lost money because they're paid on a piece-rate system. Afterwards, the stripped-down machines worked much more slowly than before, so wages were cut further.

The women called in their union. The NUTGW called in the Wages Council to demand a return to the old level of fall-back pay. The boss said 'Up yours!', and declared Rulecan a non-union firm. When the workers struck in protest, they got the sack.

Rulecan's next priority was to break the picket line and get the factory making profits again. It advertised job vacancies in the three local newspapers, and in job centres, offering a new guaranteed wage of £55 as an incentive. From the existing workforce, only the women supervisors and the men (van drivers, labourers) returned to work. But the company could rely on scabs – mostly young women, desperate for a job – to get the machinery moving.

That's the situation so far. The 60 women strikers face an intransigent employer who is prepared to go all out to smash union organisation. Before we see what can be done, let's look at the reasons for the management's hard line.

## Rags and riches

Like most British capitalists, the textile and clothing manufacturers have been having a hard time over the past few years. As recession engulfed the economy their profits and production levels fell. What made things even worse was an inability to compete with their rivals overseas. So they took it out on the workforce, determined to make workers pay for the crisis. For example, Courtaulds, Britain's biggest textiles company, in two years has cut jobs by 25 000 to just 61 000. Workers in the clothing trades have also been heavily hit by closures and redundancies.

Attacks on the workforce, however, are nothing new. The rag trade has always depended upon sweated labour – in particular the exploitation of women workers – and the ability to push its employees around according to the seasonal demands of production. That's why there is even more than the usual bosses' intolerance for trade union organisation and activity. Particularly in the



Women for Communism supporters picketing C&A, Oxford Street – Rulecan's main customers.

fashion clothing sector, to which Rulecan belongs, trade unions are anathema.

Courtaulds ditched its Runcorn factory as part of an overall rationalisation plan to concentrate on more profitable areas of the market. Rulecan, a midget by comparison, only took over the plant because it thought it could make it a lucrative investment project: smashing the union is its first objective on the road to a healthy profit margin. For the Runcorn outpost of the company's tiny empire to survive the recession, and the competition from South East Asia, Eastern Europe and elsewhere, the workers must take a hammering.

## Getting stitched up

To fight back against the bosses at Rulecan, the workers didn't just go on

the picket line but also sought solidarity action from other trade unionists. The local NUTGW official got two other unions, USDAW and the TGWU, at Kay's and Grattan's Catalogues, two firms supplied by Rulecan, to refuse to handle Rulecan's goods. This hit the company where it hurt – in the pocket. But management quickly retaliated and issued an ultimatum: call off the blacking, or get dragged through the courts under the conditions of the 1980 Employment Act which makes 'secondary' action illegal.

The threat of legal action had the desired effect. When news of the impending court action reached the NUTGW headquarters in London, the leaders panicked and lifted the blacking. Thus they abandoned the only effective action that the Rulecan strikers could take. Now

the bureaucrats are waiting for the verdict of an Industrial Tribunal, hoping that it will rule in the union's favour.

## How to win

The women's case will not be won in the courts. Even if the Tribunal backs their claim, a boss like Roberts will take no notice. He has the backing of the police for breaking up the picket on the factory gate and prosecuting the strikers for trying to stop the scabs from getting through.

Women for Communism isn't hanging around for the Tribunal in mid-May. We demand the women's right to work for a decent wage now. And we're organising action today. Already we have got support for the picket from Laurence Scott workers, the unemployed and from sympathetic women's groups. We have put out leaflets calling for the boycott of Kay's, Grattan's, Mothercare, C&A and other companies taking Rulecan's products. In Manchester, Sheffield, Coventry and London pickets of C&A's stores are underway to win support for the women at Runcorn. Leafleting of local factories employing women has been organised and collections held at all labour movement events. At the recent National Union of Students women's conference, Women for Communism supporters moved a resolution backing the strikers, which was passed unanimously.

We see the case of the Rulecan women as vital. In the recession employers are attacking the rights and living standards of all workers. But women workers are particularly vulnerable. In the clothing industry they face appallingly low wages and harsh conditions of employment, which beleaguered capitalists are determined to make worse. The NUTGW – 88 per cent of whose members are women – must stand up and fight, not abandon the women's cause. If we lose this one, we'll be in retreat everywhere. But if we build up support the women at Rulecan can win!

★ Contact Women for Communism, Box 33, 164-166 Corn Exchange Buildings, Hanging Ditch, Manchester, for details of activities.

★ Join the regular pickets of C&A, Arndale Centre, Manchester every Friday and Saturday.

★ Join the mass pickets at Rulecan. Transport from Manchester to Runcorn.

★ Send donations to the strike fund to Joyce Clare, 6 Portland Street, Runcorn, Cheshire. (Cheques made payable to NUTGW local fund).

## Coming soon Revolutionary Communist Papers No.9 WOMEN IN THE CRISIS

Last year more school dinner ladies were made redundant than steel workers. The capitalist crisis has led to vicious attacks on women workers. This forthcoming theoretical journal analyses these recent assaults, looks at the failure of the labour movement to defend women and examines the strategy needed to reverse this. Order your copy now. Send £1 to Junius Publications JP LTD London WC1N 3XX.

Another  
conference policy  
bites the dust

## Labour backs the PTA

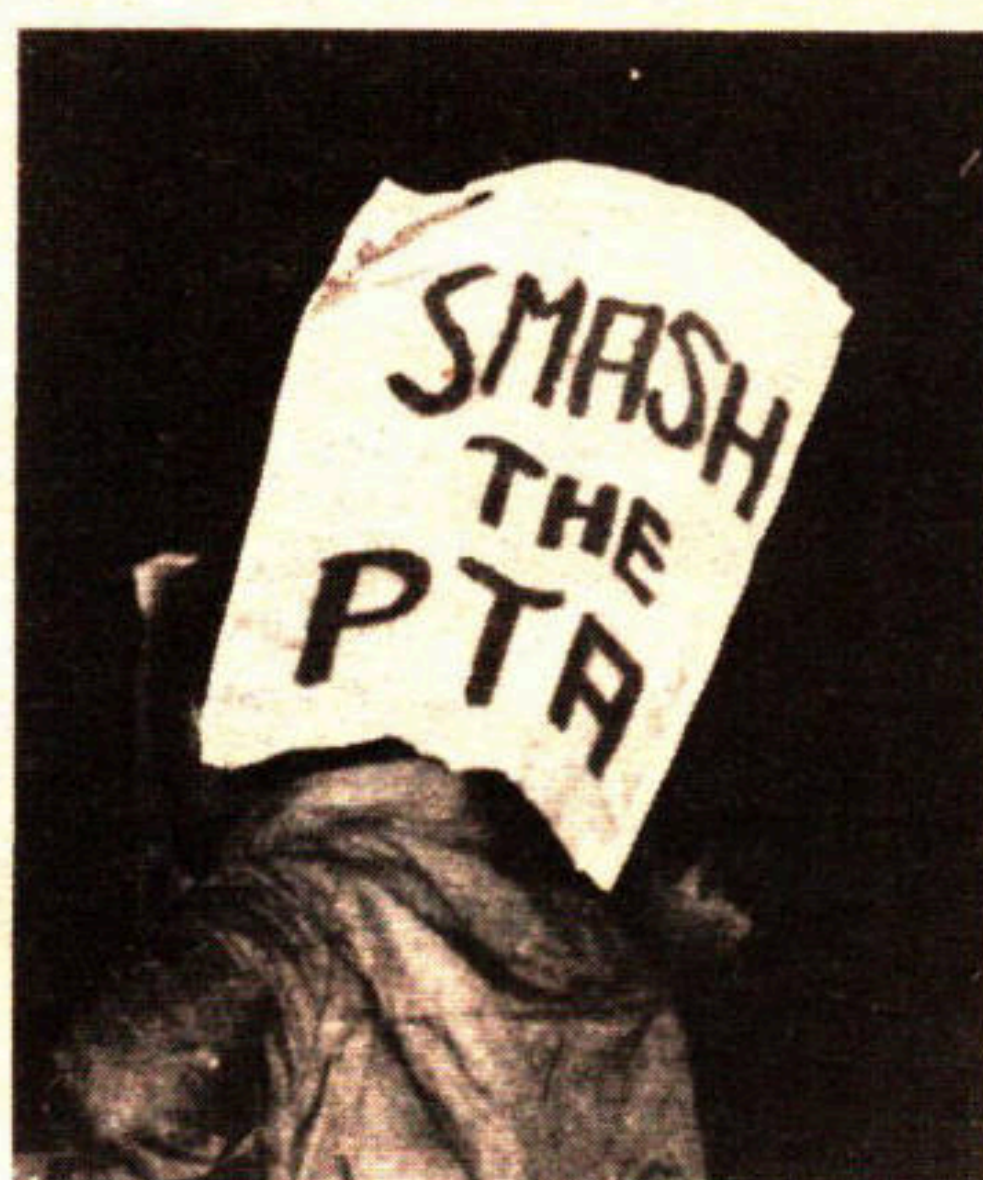
Last year the left acclaimed the Labour Party conference's endorsement of the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the end of Labour solidarity with the Tories' Irish policy. This year's debate on the renewal of the PTA reveals that bipartisanship is as strong as ever.

THE NUMBER of Labour MPs voting against the PTA has increased steadily since the Act was passed without a single vote against after the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974. Last year 46 MPs, many responding to the pressures of Irish voters in their constituencies, opposed the renewal of the PTA. After October's conference decision that the next Labour government would repeal the Act, there were predictions that up to 100 backbenchers would vote against the PTA when it came up for renewal in March. In the event only 53 MPs — including Gerry Fitt (Belfast Independent pro-Brit), Michael O'Halloran (Islington SDP mafioso) and Daffyd Thomas (Plaid Cymru) — entered the lobby with 'the Noes'. What happened to Labour's stand against the PTA?

### Call for a cover-up!

Home Secretary William Whitelaw neatly undercut Labour's opposition to the PTA by the simple expedient of appointing a judicial review of the operation of the Act. Extrovert and hedonist Lord Jellicoe was summoned from the quiet corner to which he had been despatched by former Tory premier Edward Heath for his minor part in the Lord Lampton prostitution scandal in 1973. As godson of George V and director of Tate & Lyle, he is ideally qualified to investigate terror and counter-terror. Labour's leading opponent of the PTA, Roy Hattersley, was in no position to object. As Whitelaw was quick to remind him, he had suggested just such an inquiry in last year's debate. Then, Whitelaw had refused. Now, anxious to maintain the widest possible parliamentary consensus behind the Government's machinery for repressing opposition to its Irish policy, Whitelaw agreed. And Hattersley was obliged to concede that it would be 'churlish' to repudiate his own suggestion, now served up by the Tories. The left, usually known for its hostility to 'Tory Law Lords', kept its silence.

An inquiry was all that Labour wanted. The noble Lord could investigate, hear witnesses, consult widely, consider the evidence, ponder his recommendations, and, after as long a time as possible, produce a report white-washing the Act and its operation. Meanwhile the PTA would continue to be enforced, day in day out, against Irish people in Britain. Lord Shackleton had, as Whitelaw pointed out, fulfilled just such a purpose for the Labour Government in 1978. On the one hand, Labour MPs could hold up the inquiry to their Irish constituents and socialist critics as evidence of their concern about state harassment of Irish people and their commitment to the wider Irish cause. And, on the other hand, Labour's loyal allegiance to British imperialism would be manifested in its continuing approval for repressive legislation.



The rest of this year's PTA debate covered familiar themes. Labour speakers complained about restrictions on *civil liberties*. They claimed that the Act was *unnecessary* as the War was now on the wane and that there were plenty of other laws under which enemies of the realm could be locked away. And, most serious charge of all, they maintained that the PTA was *counterproductive*, encouraging violent animosities against the state instead of suppressing them. The Tories swept these feeble points aside.

### The Tories wipe up

Whitelaw agreed that the Act 'makes a considerable inroad into the civil liberties of which we are justly proud', but declared that this was regrettably necessary to counter 'terrorism'. As every Labour MP agreed that the suppression of republican resistance to British rule was the Government's top priority, Whitelaw's straightforward assertion torpedoed all the civil libertarians. As for the Act being no longer necessary, the Home Secretary had only to point to the IRA's pre-Christmas bombing campaign in Britain and its recent successes in Ireland, to win the agreement of the House that continued vigilance was essential.

The policemen's MP Eldon Griffiths took up the argument that the PTA was not a successful weapon against the Irish freedom struggle:

'The figures quoted by the Home Secretary of the dramatically falling number of people who have had to be detained or to be subject to the powers in the Act is an eloquent demonstration that the Act has achieved, and is continuing to achieve its purpose.'

Labour Party politicians think that the declining numbers of PTA arrests and the low rate of convictions show that the Act is redundant and obsolete. The Tories understand that the statistics reveal the opposite; that the PTA has proved highly successful in achieving its real object, not 'catching terrorists', but in isolating and intimidating opponents (especially Irish opponents) of Britain's war in Ireland.

The collapse of Labour's opposition to the PTA confirms that bipartisan agreement between Labour and the Tories on the conduct of the Irish War is as solid as ever. Whitelaw's concession of an inquiry shows how dear this consensus remains to the British ruling class. The ease with which this token was accepted by the Labour opposition indicates the superficiality of its criticisms of the Government's Irish policy and of last year's much vaunted departures from bipartisanship. This year's renewal makes it even more clear than before that the fight against the PTA has to be fought against the Tories and against the Labour Party and its apologists in Irish solidarity circles.

Jackie Jones

Gays under attack

## Scandal at Kincora

The British authorities have allowed the exposure of homosexual activities at the Kincora boys home in Belfast in an attempt to discredit Ian Paisley and his Democratic Unionist Party. The real victims, writes Don Milligan of the Revolutionary Gay Men's Caucus, will be Ireland's already heavily oppressed homosexuals.

IN JANUARY 1980 the Dublin based *Irish Independent* published allegations about the Kincora House boys home on Newtonards Road, Belfast. The reporter, Peter McKenna, claimed that in 1979 a senior social worker had suppressed a report on homosexual activities between boys and staff at Kincora House. The junior social worker who had prepared the report was ordered to destroy it and told to mind his own business.

It emerged that homosexual relationships between adults and children in care were not confined to Kincora House. Staff and boys were involved at Belfast's Williamson House children's home and at Bawnmore boys home, Newtonabbey. The allegations and the evidence also involve men who were not employed in any of the homes and go back at least to 1958.

### Can of worms

Investigations mounted by the Royal Ulster Constabulary rumbled on for more than 18 months resulted in the conviction, in December 1981, of six men for gross indecency and indecent assault. Those found guilty included a former warden, a former deputy warden and a former housefather of Kincora House, and an Anglican lay monk who had at one time been the Principal of Williamson House.

William McGrath, a housefather at Kincora who was among those jailed last year, was a co-founder of Ireland's Heritage Lodge. Members of the Lodge were also members of Tara, a paramilitary organisation founded by McGrath in 1969. The 'scandal' lies in the fact that all this had been known in military, police and Loyalist circles for years. The Loyalist establishment had not pursued the matter. Leading members of Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party had actively suppressed the story.

Whether sexual relationships between children and the adults responsible for them are defensible or not, such relationships are illegal. Under any type of law reform being promoted by the gay movement in Britain or the Six Counties they would remain so. The DUP politicians who have so eagerly backed Paisley's Save Ulster from Sodomy campaigns have been caught in a cover-up. This is not a cover-up of homosexual relationships involving boys of 16 or over, but one involving boys of under 15. In such circumstances not even the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association would defend homosexual men involved.

### The cover-up

In 1975 Official Unionist MPs Harold McCusker and John Carson broached the subject of Kincora with Ian Paisley. McCusker told Paisley that he had become aware of rumours that a prominent member of the DUP was involved in homosexual relationships with boys. McCusker told the *Irish Times*: 'Ian Paisley exploded, so much that it shattered me. He said: "This is all lies and I warn you if you ever repeat this, court proceedings will be started", or something like that'.

On top of the claims of McCusker, Carson and Wallace, Roy Garland, an

active Unionist a decade ago, says that he had informed Paisley and a number of other politicians about McGrath and Kincora. Early in February this year a government ordered inquiry collapsed and the Eastern Health Board, the body responsible for Kincora, was asked to resign *en bloc*. After the collapse of the inquiry a special police squad was set up. This squad reopened the file on the death of 11 year old Brian McDermott, murdered in 1973. His body was found in the River Lagan, partially dismembered and badly burned. The Government has responded by bringing in Sir George Terry, Chief Constable of Sussex. It has also said that the investigations now in hand will be followed by a judicial inquiry. However, on 1 March this year RUC spokesmen denied that there was any connection between Kincora and Brian's death.

The question that still remains to be answered is why is there a scandal? Why has so much come to light in the last two years? All the essential details of this grizzly affair were known in ruling circles long before 1980. Why was the protection afforded to McGrath, the Heritage Lodge, Tara and the Democratic Unionists withdrawn? Certainly it had nothing to do with protecting working class children from sexual manipulation or violence. The British occupation forces and the RUC are clearly not interested in the safety of children.

### Target Paisley

In January 1980 the British Government's constitutional conference opened at Stormont. For the first time ever the Unionist Party was being credibly challenged as the major voice of Unionism. The challenge came from Ian Paisley and the Democratic Unionists. The SDLP and the Alliance Party agreed to attend the conference. It was turned into a propaganda platform for Paisley. James Molyneux, Official Unionist leader, refused to participate.

Tory Northern Ireland Minister Humphrey Atkins attempted to get round the deadlock by instigating meetings outside the conference with the Official Unionists and the SDLP. But Paisley rejected 'outside' talks and the DUP went on to ensure that the conference petered out without agreement.

Whether the Kincora scandal is the result of a systematic 'plot' against the Democratic Unionists or not, it has been of great value in undermining Paisley's pretensions to supremacy in the Loyalist camp. Kincora has worked to the advantage of the Official Unionists and the SDLP. Both parties want to find a way of stabilising British rule in Ireland and Paisley's fundamentalism does not help. The struggle for political consensus is vital for Britain in the war against the nationalist communities and their fighters.

Kincora is already beginning to pay dividends. Without it the Democratic Unionists could reasonably have hoped to take the seat of Robert Bradford who was killed by the Provisional IRA in November last year. Shortly before his death Bradford had been considering defecting to Paisley's camp and the Democratic



Orangemen on the march — in London

Unionists regarded the Belfast South constituency as good as theirs. However, the Kincora trial opened soon after Bradford's assassination. On 16 December the convictions were in and reporting restrictions lifted. Paisley's opposition to the Anglo-Irish talks and his raising of the Third Force resulted in his American visa being revoked. Things were beginning to go badly wrong for the Democratic Unionists. On 28 February the special police squad investigating Kincora announced that they were also looking into the death of Brian McDermott. Six days later, McCrea of the DUP was defeated in Belfast South, coming third in an election won by the Official Unionists. Most of the 300 spoiled votes had 'Kincora' scrawled over them.

### The real victims

In this sordid struggle to save the political mask of Britain's military rule, the real victims will be homosexual workers throughout the Six Counties. Despite Prior's commitment, made on 24 February this year, to introduce a law legalising sexual relationships between men of 21 or over, Kincora has resulted in mounting repression. Police investigations will put the jobs of all homosexual workers in health, education and childcare in jeopardy. As the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association recently stated: 'The gay population in Belfast has viewed both the events in Kincora and the possibility of a witchhunt of homosexuals in social work with horror'. Attendance at NIGRA's Carpenter Club and at the organisation's meetings has trebled as gay workers prepare to resist this latest attack.

The real lesson of Kincora is that homosexual workers will always be intimidated and used by the state in its struggle to maintain political control. Gay people are once again being used as the hammer and the anvil. The rotten desire of closet-homosexuals in the ranks of the Presbyterian churches and the Orange Orders to manipulate children is being used to smear all homosexuals. It is also being used to intensify the suppression of children's sexuality. The response of communists and gay workers to Kincora must be to step up the fight against the oppression of homosexual people in Ireland and in Britain.

## The papal visit to Britain

# Rome rule and home rule

When it was first mooted, the Pope's visit to Britain seemed a harmless diversion like the Royal Wedding or the World Cup. But the angry response from militant Protestants and British Orangemen, even before the Pontiff's arrival, is causing growing concern to the British establishment. The prospect of sectarian riots in Glasgow and Liverpool is a grim reminder of how conflicts resulting from Britain's occupation of Ireland could easily spill over into Britain itself.

THE BRITISH RULING class has welcomed the papal visitation. His hard-line orthodox views on contraception, divorce and homosexuality are regarded as eccentric; but the Pope's broadly conservative message, his promotion of the family and respect for authority — these are themes close to the heart of the British bourgeoisie in these troubled times. The Pope's 1981 encyclical *Laborem Exercens* celebrated the dignity and spirituality of the subordination of wage labour to capital, while encouraging trade unions to collaborate with employers and repudiate politics and 'the class struggle'. And the Bishop of Rome has won the plaudits of the British press for his condemnation of IRA violence at Drogheda in 1980, his hostility to 'Soviet totalitarianism' in his native Poland and his discouragement of clerical involvement in guerrilla war in Latin America. The Pope's recent take-over of the Jesuits to curb their radicalism rounds off a papal curriculum vitae which makes John Paul II a guest deserving of a royal welcome in Britain.

### A cautious welcome

Yet the road before the British Pope-mobile (a BL prototype) is not without its potholes. For a start there is the legacy of Henry VIII and all that; the English Church broke away from Rome in the sixteenth century and the Queen is still its head. However, the steady decline of the Church of England has encouraged moves towards reunification with the thriving Catholic Church. A weighty report by the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, published in March, attempted to obscure all the old controversies about predestination and transubstantiation in a welter of theological discourse. But no amount of waffle and Greek can reconcile Catholic claims of papal infallibility and the independent traditions of Anglicanism, vested in the sovereign, and jealously guarded by Enoch Powell. *The Times* pondered these matters and other important questions about priority in seating arrangements and whether breakfast-time was a suitable hour for His Holiness to encounter the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland: its conclusion was a sanctimonious warning that the Pope should tread carefully lest he tread on Anglican corns.

However the problems caused for the papal visit by the established church are small compared with the troublesome potential of the nonconformists, especially those with Ulster blood in their veins and the fire of Protestant fundamentalism in their bellies.

### The Irish dimension

There are around five million Catholics in Britain today; they make up almost ten per cent of the population of England and Wales and more than 15 per cent of the Scots. Both the numbers and the distribution of Catholics in Britain reflect

the pattern of Irish immigration. In 1780 there were only 60 000 Catholics in England; by 1840 there were 500 000. The famine years in Ireland increased the number by half in the decade up to 1850. Catholicism in Britain since the nineteenth century has been strongest where Irish immigrants were most concentrated, in the north-west and in western Scotland; its urban strongholds have been Liverpool and Glasgow.

It is the Irish dimension of British Catholicism that gives the papal visit its most disturbing political undertones. It was in Ireland — at battles at the Boyne and Aughrim in 1690 and 1691 — that the claims of Catholicism to the English crown were finally repudiated. Backed by a Protestant parliament, William of Orange defeated the Catholic James II and seized the throne. Ever since the Reformation, Catholicism in England has been associated with treacherous alliances with foreign enemies — Spain, France — and with domestic plots to overthrow the monarchy and restore the authority of Rome. However, as a result of the Irish immigration in the nineteenth century, the disloyal traditions of English Catholicism have become firmly identified with the recurrent revolt against British rule in Ireland. In recent weeks Cardinal Basil Hume has been working hard to allay deep-seated suspicions of Catholic disloyalty:

'I think for my part and for most Catholics they have two loves: one is their Church and the other is their country and the visit of the Holy Father to the Queen is important and significant.'

The British ruling class, however, knows that the country to which many Catholics owe their first allegiance is Ireland, not Britain.

Irish immigration to Britain was by no means exclusively Catholic. Ulster Protestants have also crossed the Irish Sea, especially over the last hundred years of industrial decline. Many set up home within easy reach of Belfast, in Glasgow and Liverpool. The Irish Protestants preserved their animosity against Catholics and their memories of battles past better than their English co-religionists. This is not out of any particular Ulster perversity, but simply a response to a long-established pattern of British rule in Ireland that guaranteed jobs and status to Loyalists and kept Catholics down. The divisions created by the British in Ireland made a lasting impression on working class life in some of Britain's major cities.

### Sectarianism in Britain

In both Glasgow and Liverpool there are still 'orange' and 'green' areas. On the football terraces Rangers and Liverpool draw Protestant support; Celtic and Everton traditionally rely on Catholics. Religious differences affect working class preferences in trade union and political elections. In Liverpool, Irish Catholics voted for the Irish Nationalist Party,

which became the second largest party in the city council in the early 'twenties, before going into a fifty-year rotten bloc with the Labour Party which is only now coming to an end. Protestants in working class areas voted for Tory and Orange councillors right up to the 'fifties and 'sixties (see Merseyside Socialist Research Group, *Merseyside in crisis*). In the recent Hillhead by-election in Glasgow the fact that the Tory candidate was a Catholic with an Irish name (Malone) was generally held to have lost him crucial Protestant votes.

In the nineteenth century anti-Irish/anti-Catholic riots were commonplace in British cities: Manchester, Leeds, Bradford and London all witnessed ugly incidents. As late as 1909 sectarian rioting raged for several months in Liverpool's north end. However, in recent years, sectarian passions have cooled in Britain. Blacks have displaced the Irish at the bottom of the pile and the Irish have been largely assimilated. The Orange Lodges have become little more than drinking clubs (even on the Sabbath) with dwindling numbers attending their annual 12 July commemorations. The Pope's visit, coming in the thirteenth year of the Irish War, seems likely to stir up divisions and conflicts submerged in British society for many years.

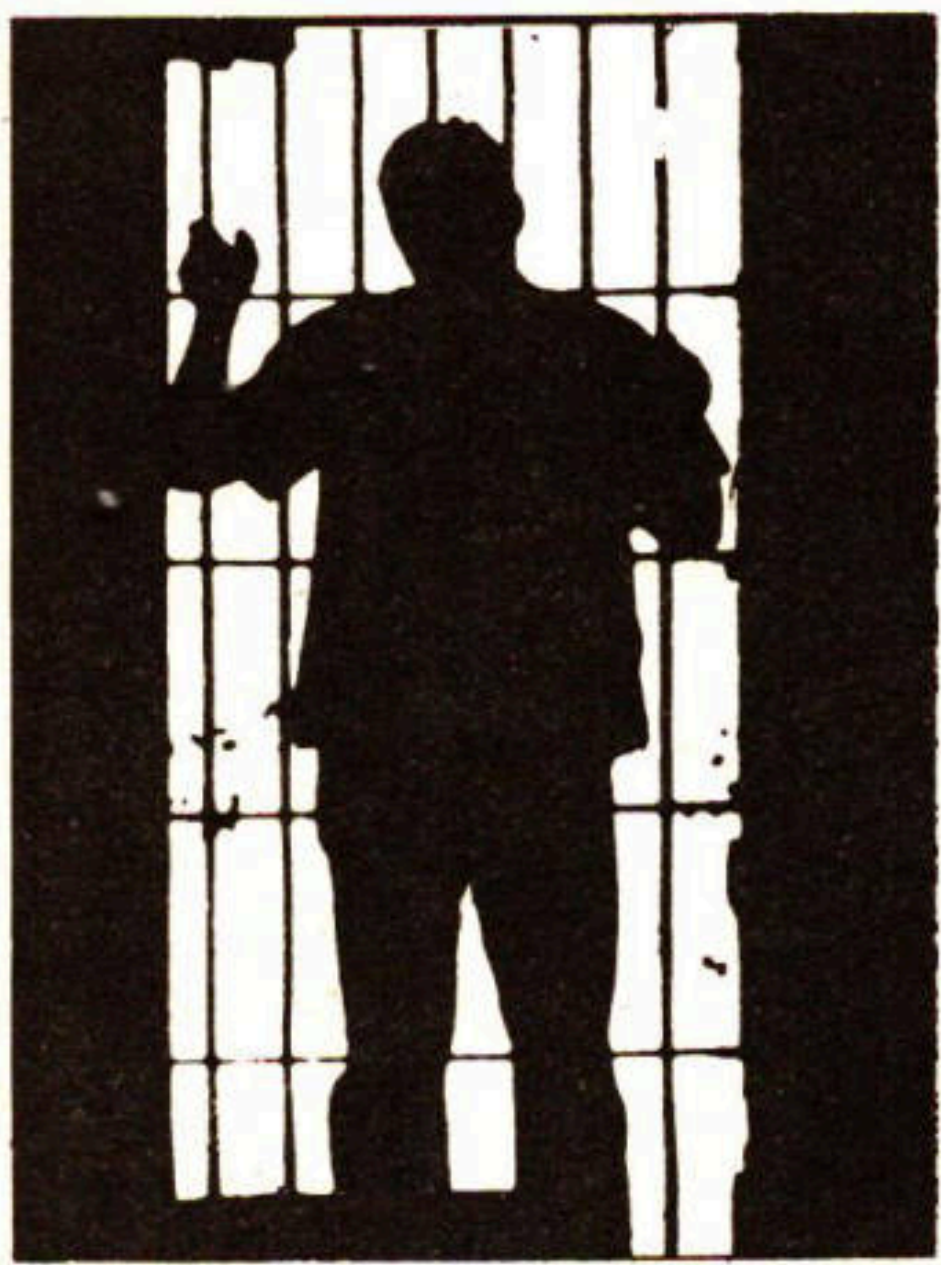
There have long been signs that the Irish War could lead to civil disturbances in Britain's substantial Irish community. Loyalist paramilitaries in the Six Counties have strong links with Glasgow. The British state has had to move in on several occasions to curb gun-running activities. Only last year 19 Scottish Loyalists were detained following the discovery of quantities of firearms, ammunition and detonators destined for the use of the UVF. Recent pro-republican demonstrations in Glasgow have provoked violent Protestant reaction, culminating in several near-riots: all marches were banned in the area during the hunger strikes. A Liverpool hunger strike solidarity march was routed by 1000 Orangemen in collusion with the police. And now the Loyalists are mobilising against the Pope.

### The British fear

The antics of the British fundamentalists in disrupting ecumenical church services and planning demonstrations against the Pope have attracted widespread bourgeois condemnation. But they have also struck a sympathetic chord in British society. A poll commissioned by the Catholic weekly, *The Universe*, revealed that only half the people interviewed approved of the papal visit and one person in eight — 12 per cent — disapproved. The most common reason for disapproval was that 'it would cause more trouble or aggravate the Irish problem'. The Protestant campaigners against popery have made no secret of their Irish Loyalist connections. They are closely associated with the Orange Order; Pastor Jack Glass is a long-standing ally of the Rev Ian Paisley and the Rev Cassells is related to the Big Man by marriage. The blend of anti-Catholicism with hostility to the cause of Irish national freedom is one with a powerful and widespread appeal in Britain.

The papal visit and the controversy it has aroused are important indicators of the destabilising forces the Irish War could unleash within the United Kingdom. The continuation of the British occupation is vital to the ruling class to contain the conflict within the Six Counties. As long as British forces remain in control in Ireland they can keep the explosive mixture of Irish politics out of Britain. The reaction to the Pope's visit is a chilling reminder to the British government that if it lost its grip in Ireland, it would face violent disruption in several cities in England and Scotland.

Mike Wall



## Defend Father Fell

NEWSPAPERS IN COVENTRY have launched a vicious anti-Irish campaign. 'IRA priest plans to return' screamed the big *Coventry Evening Telegraph* headline (9 April). Father Patrick Fell, a Coventry priest convicted of 'conspiracy to commit arson and cause criminal damage' in November 1973, is due to be released in July. The issue that the *Telegraph* pretended to be concerned about is the possibility of Fell continuing his career as a priest. But the real purpose of the article, which was packed with words like 'evil', 'terrorist' and 'criminal', was to give a boost to the *Telegraph's* long-running campaign to stir up hatred against supporters of the Irish liberation struggle.

Coventry's 'independent' newspaper, the *Weekly News*, followed in the *Telegraph's* footsteps. 'Forget it', was its front page message from 'the people of Coventry' to Father Fell's plans to return to work in the Midlands. It quoted anonymous 'leading Coventry businessmen' as organising a petition 'to protest against Fell's hopes of returning' (5 April 1982).

Fell was convicted with five other men: it was alleged that he took part in the control and management of a local IRA unit, a charge he has consistently denied. His arrest gave the police the pretext for beginning intensive harassment of Coventry's large Irish community. In addition, local newspaper editors seized the opportunity to spew out their anti-Irish prejudices.

In prison, the Coventry prisoners continued to suffer abuse. Frank Stagg, one of the six, died in Wakefield prison at the end of a 61 day hunger strike in February 1976. Fell himself lost remission for taking part in a protest against the ill-treatment and bad conditions inflicted on prisoners in English gaols.

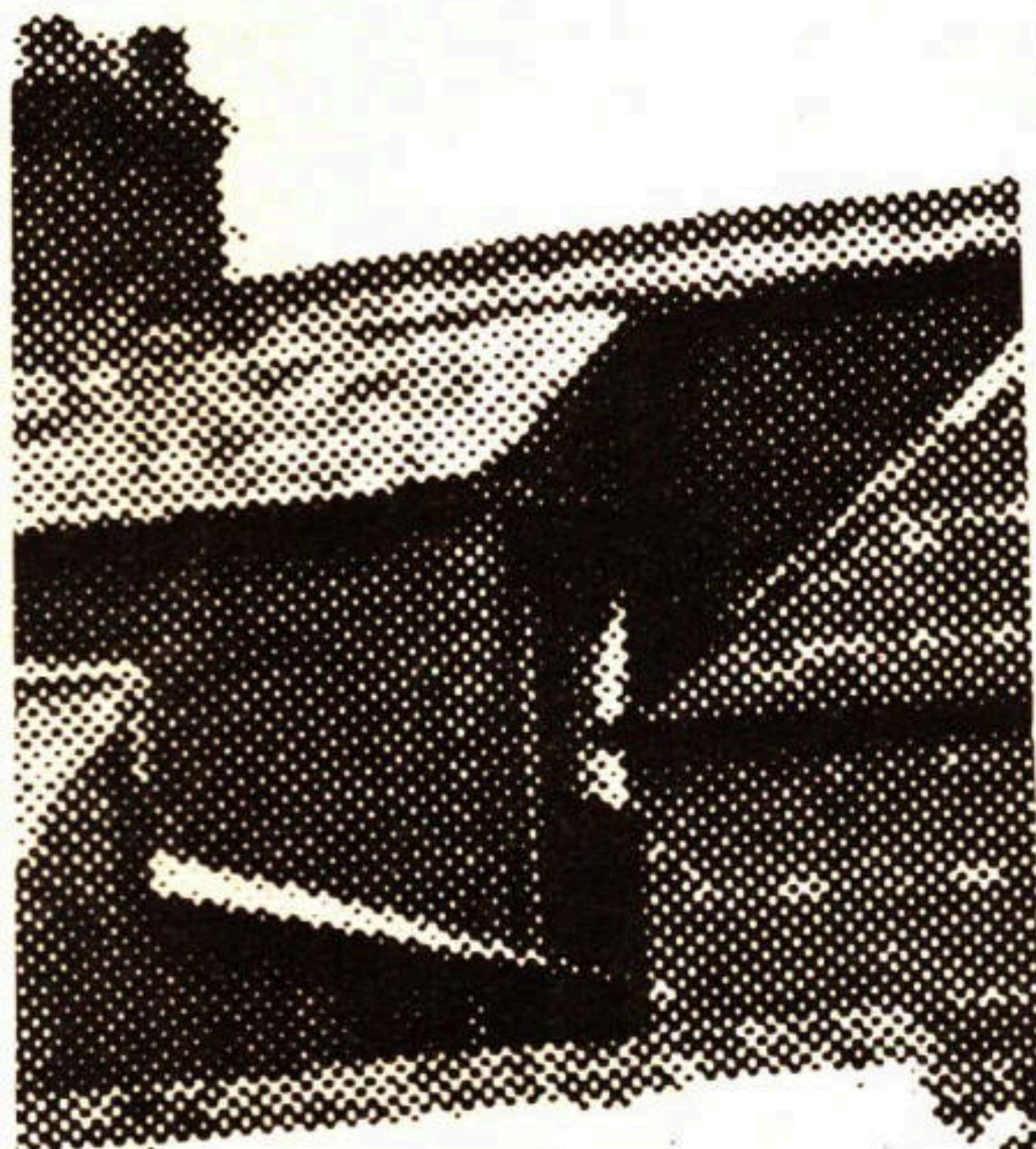
Coventry Irish Freedom Movement has responded to the current press offensive by organising a counter-petition to the businessmen's. We say that anybody who has been incarcerated by the British state because of his opposition to imperialist rule in Ireland should be supported, not witchhunted. We are campaigning in the local labour movement against the anti-Irish hysteria now being stirred up against Fell. We'll be joining with Sinn Féin and others in action to support the Irish prisoners still inside English gaols.

Mike Wall



# Youth for Irish freedom

Over the Easter weekend 100 young people from all over Britain crossed the Irish Sea to attend marches commemorating the 1916 rebellion in Belfast and Derry, and to see for themselves the reality of British rule in the Six Counties. Both Tory and Labour MPs had appealed for the British authorities to ban the delegation. The Communist Party and other factions tried to sabotage support in the labour and trade union movement. Yet the delegation went ahead with the backing of many trade union branches and other labour movement bodies. These included several local Labour Parties and a few branches of the Socialist Workers Party. And the delegation returned with most of its members more committed than before to the cause of Irish freedom, and more determined to build the Irish solidarity movement in Britain.



Don Concannon, chief Labour spokesman on Ireland

'This trip has absolutely nothing to do with the Labour Party which is against violence in Northern Ireland. I am sad that some gullible youngsters have been talked into taking credence (sic) to the murderous policies of the IRA. It is a warning to us that the devil will find work for idle hands.' (*Birmingham Post*, 7 April)

Jeff Rooker, left-wing Labour MP

'If the argument is going to be used, that we're taking mainly unemployed people over there to see the sight of the war and to convince them that the war is the only solution, then, quite frankly, I find that completely repugnant, especially at Easter time when we're always told the Irish people are so religious.' (interview on *BBC Midlands Today*, 7 April)

Gerry Fitt, Independent pro-Brit MP for West Belfast

'The people on this visit couldn't even begin to understand the 500-year-old problem.' (*The Sunday Times*, 11 April)

Anthony Beaumont-Dark, Tory MP for Selly Oak

'I wouldn't put it past the IRA to take these children on one of their murderous trips.' (*Birmingham Post*, 7 April)

Tony McNally, Communist Party West Midlands organiser

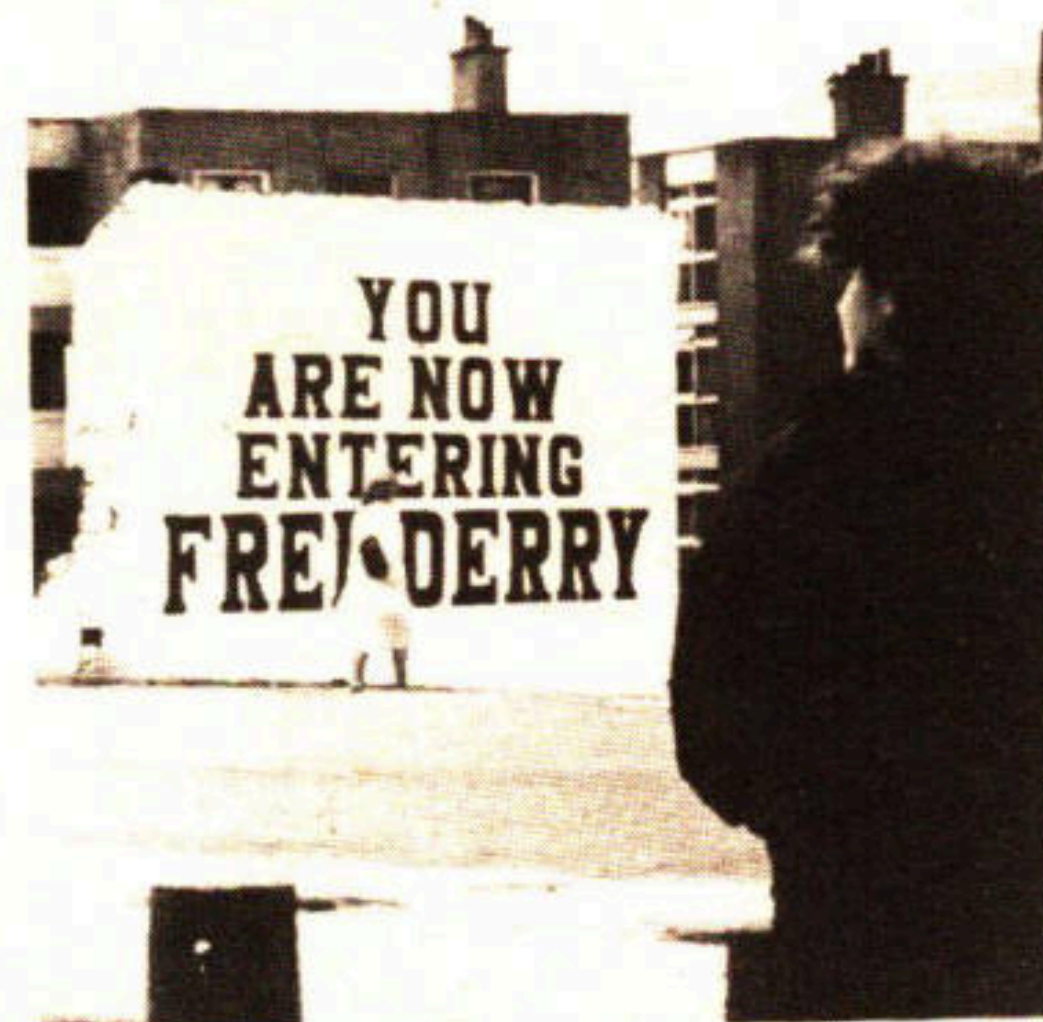
'They are a small, insignificant, but provocative group whose record has been to incite hostility on several issues. No responsible section of the labour and trade union movement should have anything to do with it.' (interview on *BBC Midlands Today*, 7 April)





## A rebel crossing

Travellers on the routine Sealink ferry had their crossing livened up by the Bobby Sands Memorial Flute Band from Glasgow and the IFM chorus: nobody objected and many joined in the singing. We knew we had arrived in Britain's police state when the RUC and the Special Branch held up our coaches for a couple of hours to search everybody and scrutinise our luggage. They confiscated leaflets, posters and papers.



## Painting Derry's walls

The delegation split into two parties — one made for Belfast, the other for Derry. Both were welcomed by Sinn Féin representatives (including former blanketmen Kieran Nugent and Fra McCann in Belfast) and accommodated in community centres. Delegates spent their first evening in Ireland having a look at the features of life under British occupation — the forts, the foot patrols, the cruising armoured cars, and the devastation — and meeting the people of Andersonstown, Beechmont, Turf Lodge, the Bogside and Creggan. In Derry IFM supporters joined local youth activists in refurbishing the anti-British murals for the Easter march.



## The war in Britain

Many young people in the Six Counties are curious about British attitudes to their struggle. They are particularly interested to know how we respond to IRA bombing campaigns in Britain. They are resentful at the way the British labour movement always lines up with the Tories to condemn the IRA. For us this is the key problem revealed by the youth delegation. Our aim is for the delegates to take the message back to workplaces, union branches, unemployed centres, that the Irish struggle for freedom is one that deserves the unconditional support of every British worker.



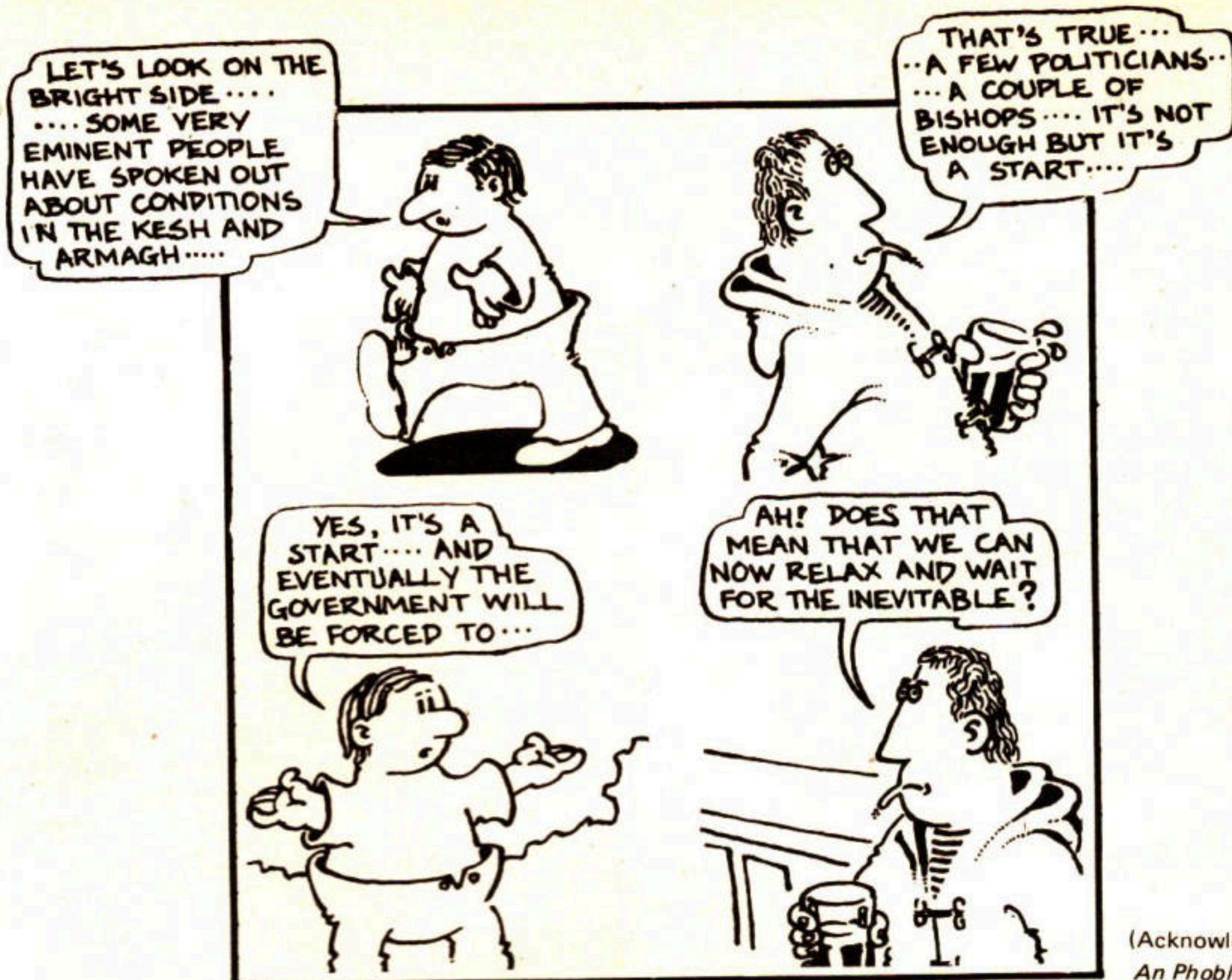
## A terrible beauty

The IFM contingents joined the Easter marches in Belfast and Derry. Thousands thronged the streets behind IRA colour parties flanked by drum and flute bands. People of all ages marched in the traditional three-line formation in silence. They had an air of seriousness and determination that was an impressive statement of the commitment of the nationalist community to freedom from British rule, after 13 years of war, and 66 years on from the Easter Rising.

## War politics

The high point of the Easter commemoration is the message from the IRA, the reading of the roll of honour and the firing of the salute to those who have died in the fight to free Ireland. For us the best part of the weekend was the opportunities it opened up for political discussion. We were amazed at the intense interest of people, young and old, not only in the politics of getting the Brits out, but in wider issues of women, trade unions, Poland and Argentina. Formal discussions arranged by Sinn Féin were complemented by many more informal conversations.





(Acknowledgements to Cormac and An Phoblacht/Republican News)

## The Troops Out Movement A disgrace to the cause

'WHERE IS TOM?' is a question often asked by supporters of the Irish liberation struggle in Britain. TOM's activities are a well kept secret. By all accounts, they consist largely of internal meetings and closed conferences. To keep up with TOM action you have to be in the right pubs or go to the right parties – or privileged with access to its regular and voluminous internal bulletins. TOM is rarely seen in the streets or at public events.

Even at the conference on Ireland organised earlier this year by the Labour Committee on Ireland in London, a conference attended by virtually everyone involved in Irish solidarity work, TOM's presence could be detected only by people gifted with a good memory for old faces.

TOM's quiescence at present is all the more surprising because some months ago it decided to call a national demonstration on 8 May to commemorate the death of hunger striker Bobby Sands. Having taken responsibility for an event of such political importance, TOM might be expected to throw its weight into making this a big and memorable demonstration.

The truth is, that while Bobby Sands' anniversary draws closer and closer, evidence of TOM's efforts to build the march remains very scant. Worse still – since TOM announced the commemoration, its public presence has, if anything, declined even further.

On Easter Sunday, when anti-imperialists assembled in London to join the traditional Republican marches commemorating the 1916 Easter Rising, TOM was noted for its absence. After some intensive searching around pubs and tube exits, a grand total of eight TOM supporters was spotted on one of the two processions. While never reputed for its dynamism, TOM in the past could always mobilise a hard core of supporters for such an important day of solidarity. This Easter, with its own national demonstration only weeks away, TOM virtually boycotted the Sinn Féin march. What is going on?

### Shame again?

Last year the British Government, backed by the Labour Party and the TUC, brutally murdered Bobby Sands and nine other Irish freedom fighters. The

On May 5 last year, Irish prisoner Bobby Sands died on hunger strike for political recognition of the national liberation struggle. However, the Troops Out Movement has learnt nothing from this setback. Instead of persuading workers to join the opposition to British rule, its own stagnation and inactivity has led TOM to launch a sectarian slander campaign against the Irish Freedom Movement.

hunger strikers died in the fight for recognition as political prisoners of war. The main reason why the British ruling class could prevail over the hunger strikers and refuse to concede their demands was the lack of any action in support of the hunger strikers from the British labour movement. Worst of all, even those on the left – including TOM – who claim to support the cause of Irish liberation, made no real attempt to win workers' support for the hunger strikers. Instead we had a feeble, and ultimately fruitless, campaign imploring Labour Party MPs and other public figures to call for concessions to be made to the hunger strikers to get the Tory Government off the hook. Many people may not share our view that this was a fatal error. But hardly anyone can fail to appreciate that the British left proved unable to organise even a coherent voice of opposition – never mind action – against the barbarism of the British government.

This is all the more reason to build a commemoration for Bobby Sands that shows we are *never* going to let this happen again. To honour Bobby Sands and the other hunger strikers means organising a protest that is more than a routine anniversary. To have any political consequence it must be a forceful and united display of our hatred for his murderers – and our determination to crush them. A commemoration that falls short of this would be a disservice to the Irish cause and a demoralising experience for anti-imperialists in this country.

TOM unfortunately appears unaware of the political significance of this anniversary and shows little concern for the spirit in which it should be commemorated. From the moment TOM announced its intention to hold the march it has behaved in a manner that permits but one conclusion. Its first concern is not to build a mighty protest but rather to use this anniversary to revive its moribund organisation and restore its tarnished reputation.

### Backroom politics

From the start TOM excluded the Irish Freedom Movement and other organisations from the national committee organising the march. At local level, TOM branches were instructed to refuse to cooperate with the IFM. These bureaucratic manoeuvres were followed by a national TOM conference, held in secret in London on 3 April, which decided to adopt a formal policy of non-cooperation with the IFM. Only now, with the march barely weeks away and as a result of considerable pressure from the IFM and others, some TOM branches have begun to modify their position.

Yet the TOM national leadership holds firmly to its sectarian and divisive course. Rather than put its energies into mobilising for 8 May, TOM has launched a campaign of slander and denunciation against the IFM – not only in Britain but also in Ireland.

A week before our youth delegation arrived in Derry, a party of TOM members arrived in town and circulated slanders and allegations that IFM supporters were all 'sectarians'. This caused some confusion among Derry youth – they expected us all to be virulently 'anti-prod'.

In Britain, TOM members got up in union branches up and down the country to oppose motions of support for the IFM youth delegation on the grounds that... 'it's the IFM'. The logic of TOM's political position on this initiative was summed up by a TOM member in Leeds TGWU who, when called upon to contribute to the debate, stated: 'Why support the IFM? There's TOM!'.

When IFM members approached Leeds TOM, some time before Easter, to discuss the mobilisation for 8 May, Leeds TOM spent more than an hour hurling abuse at our supporters.

TOM has adopted the habit of 'warning' trade unionists and Labour Party representatives not to have anything to do with the IFM. Hackney TOM circulated a letter to local Labour councillors, telling them not to support an

IFM petition calling on the council to hold a commemoration for Bobby Sands on 8 May. Leading TOM members spread the story that signatures the IFM obtained for a previous petition to Hackney Council were obtained 'under false pretences' (see 'Labour's hypocrisy', *the next step*, No 20, January 1982).

### A clique

TOM's conduct is a disgrace. It can only give comfort to those who fear nothing more than the growth of support for Irish liberation among British workers. Backroom manipulation and scandal-mongering are the methods of a clique consumed by petty self-interest. These methods are profoundly detrimental to the cause of Irish solidarity in Britain.

To justify its conduct TOM suggests that the IFM is 'sectarian' and a 'front' for the RCP. The RCP has made no secret of the fact that it launched the IFM, as it previously sponsored the Smash the PTA Campaign. The IFM is supported by many non-RCP members – it is open to all who accept its objectives and want to work towards them. And the IFM is prepared to participate in joint activity in the cause of Irish freedom with any organisation. At the same time, we make no secret of our concern to build the RCP. We see this as a vital contribution to the Irish liberation struggle and we are eager to convince others, through activity and propaganda, that this is the case. We urge TOM members who really wish to combat sectarianism and petty-mindedness in the solidarity movement to consider seriously whether they can say the same about TOM.

For us, TOM's recent conduct is not just a bizarre aberration. It reflects a defeatist and inward-looking mentality common on the British left. That TOM expresses this outlook in an extreme form is a consequence of its political orientation. It has adopted the culture of the Labour MPs and trade union bureaucrats whom it has spent years unsuccessfully trying to coax into 'doing something' for the Irish struggle.

The IFM was formed because an anti-imperialist movement cannot be built in this degenerate tradition. We urge TOM members who want to see British imperialism defeated in Ireland and at home to join us.

## With union leaders like ours...



Terry Duffy and Moss Evans — they sell BL jobs faster than Michael Edwardes sells the cars.

THE RESPONSES OF two of the most important unions — the TGWU and the AUEW — to fundamental attacks on the welfare of their members are symptomatic of the paralysis afflicting the trade union bureaucracy. In early April the strike of 1700 British Airways ramp workers at Heathrow was completely smashed. The *Financial Times* called it 'one of the most embarrassing six months in the 60-year history of the TGWU'. Why? Because traditionally the ramp workers have been one of the most militant sections of the working class. Through their strong organisation they managed to wrest excellent working conditions from their employers and they won a considerable degree of control over the way they worked. But times have changed. Management moved in to eliminate shop floor power at Heathrow and it succeeded. It succeeded because union leaders did next to nothing to win the dispute. The half-hearted gestures of TGWU officials meant that the ramp workers were easily isolated. In the end, the employers mobilised clerical staff and other airport workers to scab and carry out the jobs of the striking ramp workers. It was not, however, management that defeated the ramp workers, but their leaders' reluctance to risk a fight under present conditions.

The AUEW is no more prepared to take any risks in defence of its members' interests than is the TGWU. Recently the executive of the AUEW approved a draft agreement which further weakens the position of workers at BL. The new BL deal eliminates the last vestige of shop floor power and gives management full scope to pursue its objectives. Under the new procedure management acquires the right to impose 'productivity changes' after 10 days of 'consultation'. The agreement includes disciplinary measures designed to assist in the victimisation of militants. The new agreement limits the mobility of shop stewards by restricting the time available for them to perform their union duties. AUEW executive member Ken Cure had the gall to go to BL shop stewards to sell the draft agreement as the best possible deal. BL management got the message and on 15 April announced that another 1000 workers will be made redundant.

### Shadow boxing

The paralysis of the union bureaucracy is particularly striking in its response to the new anti-trade union legislation currently being steered through Parliament by Employment Minister Norman Tebbit. The TUC leaders have correctly identified Tebbit's Bill as the greatest legal threat to

# Who needs the Tebbit Bill?

In recent months trade union leaders have watched one group of workers after another go down to defeat. Their reaction to Tory anti-trade union legislation is to cooperate with employers in tightening up discipline on the shop floor. The official trade union leadership, argues Frank Richards, is now the biggest obstacle to a working class fightback.

the position of the unions this century. But what have they done? A number of tough-talking union leaders like Arthur Scargill have made the now customary threat that they are prepared to break the law and go to prison. The TUC is good at talking tough but very poor at acting tough. In February the TUC could not even bring itself to boycott the National Economic Development Council and other tripartite bodies. The TUC's employment policy and organisation committee voted eight to five *not* to boycott the NEDC in protest against Tebbit.

True, the TUC did organise a special conference on Tebbit's Bill on 5 April. True, the special conference overwhelmingly approved an 8-point plan to fight the Bill. But this 8-point plan is nothing less than a charade. The TUC's bold strategy amounts to an education campaign to warn union members of the grave consequences of the new employment legislation. According to its official report, the General Council of the TUC is not even prepared to organise mass action against the Bill — all that it promises is that it 'will keep under review the scope for taking demonstrative action against the Bill'.

Forget about the TUC's rhetoric. Its real strategy is to do everything it can to prevent the new legislation from being tested. It desperately wants to avoid conflict, for it feels that any mass showdown will undermine the position of the bureaucracy. That's why union leaders are prepared to sign agreements like the one at BL. By accepting local agreements along the lines of the new employment legislation they hope to avoid a head-on confrontation with the Government, the courts and the police. So the TUC's

watchword is this: 'We'll outflank Tebbit by signing local agreements which make his legislation redundant'.

And indeed Len Murray and his colleagues have gone a long way towards making Tebbit redundant. In one dispute after another union officials have used the employment legislation as an excuse for limiting the scope of action. And this has happened even before the Bill has been enacted by Parliament.

The TUC has decided to vacate the industrial battlefield. For the TUC, the official institutions and organisations of the labour movement are too precious to risk in the hurly-burly of the class struggle. Instead the TUC has embarked on one educational campaign after another to teach workers that the unions still count for something. The union leaders see this strategy as a temporary holding operation. Once a Labour government is elected in the future, the TUC hopes to regain its rightful place in the corridors of power and its affiliated bodies can begin to function as trade unions once more.

### We can't wait!

Labour bureaucrats can afford to sit back and wait for a future Labour government. But millions of workers have not got much time left. Moreover there is no guarantee that the TUC will change its ways and act as the combat organisation of the working class in the future. On the contrary, the longer that the TUC operates as an education institution, the more rigid and bureaucratic it becomes. The longer it sits on the sidelines and concerns itself with the interests of a narrow layer of bureaucrats, the more

remote it becomes from the shop floor.

Workers have to decide what is more important — their class interest or the preservation of an institution and a body of officials that seeks merely its own long term survival. For us there is too much at stake. The present strategy of the TUC leads the trade unions to become more and more the agency of the employers and the state. As the experience of BL shows, the union leaders are prepared to sell their members' jobs in tens of thousands, their wages and conditions, and even their shop floor organisation — all to save their own skins.

And BL is not an isolated example. Similar procedures have been accepted in the civil service, the steel industry, on the railways, and by unions in many other sectors. Reports reaching the next step indicate the reluctance of union officials to give their backing to their members in any struggle. Recently, union bureaucrats have used the employment legislation as an excuse for not making disputes official — lest they be taken to the courts.

Workers have to fight to reclaim their unions. There is no point in paying dues to a paper union. We have to destroy all the bureaucratic devices and red tape that turn unions into institutions remote from the working class. That means that right from the beginning the conduct of every dispute has to be taken out of the hands of union officials. Rank and file representatives must be in charge of all negotiations. Industry-wide solidarity action has to be organised through rank and file delegates, regardless of the attitude of the union leaders. If the union officials are prepared to help, well and good. But the defence of our jobs and livelihoods cannot be made conditional on the attitude of union bureaucrats. Too many disputes have been lost because of bureaucratic inertia and indifference.

The employers have ruthlessly pursued their class interests. They have torn up one agreement after another. They have imposed crippling procedures at the point of a gun. The only consideration that means anything to them is how to increase their profits. Workers have to adopt the same spirit of determination. At present, the institutions of industrial relations are designed to slow us down, drag out negotiation and defuse militancy. The new procedural agreements aim to tighten the chains that enslave us to capital. These procedures and institutions imposed from above are no use to workers in struggle. If we baulk before a scrap of paper then we lose the right to have any say in determining the future of our class.

THE FIRST STEP in the Tory Government's drive against the civil servants was last year's suspension of pay research, the traditional forum for pay negotiation. This was a prelude to fixing tight limits on the amount of cash available for the pay of non-industrial civil servants. The unions wanted a rise of 15 per cent to keep abreast of inflation; the Government offered seven per cent and then dug in for a protracted dispute.

## Round one

All the main unions in the civil service were pledged to some form of industrial action. The union leaders were outraged at the suspension of pay research — they saw the scrapping of this institution as a direct threat to their own position. The forms of industrial action adopted by the civil service unions reflected the 'moderate' stance of the bureaucracy. The high point of the action was a token one day strike on 9 March. The union leaders were reluctant to launch an all out strike lest they lose control over the rank and file. Instead they opted for a series of small scale stoppages of key workers such as computer operators. This inconclusive strategy dragged out the dispute over several months. The employers were surprised at the high level of militancy and the strength of support for groups of workers threatened with disciplinary measures. But they were confident that a lengthy dispute would allow the moderation of the union leadership to sap the confidence of the rank and file. And that's exactly what happened.

As the dispute dragged on demoralisation set in and the leadership called the whole thing off under the cover of reaching a compromise. For the Government however this was just the first battle; with the CPSA leadership on the run, the Government was now ready to press on with the war.

## Raising the stakes

The 1981 strike concluded with an undertaking that an inquiry chaired by Sir John Megaw would come up with an acceptable structure for pay negotiation. Last November the Government's evidence to this inquiry clarified the shape of things to come. The Government's proposals centre on the theme of bringing 'market forces' into the civil service. What this means was revealed by the Government's latest pay offer: an average increase of four per cent on last year's wage round. Not only did this amount to a cut in real wages across the board, it was also blatantly divisive. The lowest paid and those under 20 years of age were to get nothing. For the rest, a rise of between 2.5 per cent (for the lowest grades) and 18 per cent (for those at the top) — with room for merit and regional awards. 'Market forces' means that the lowest grades and the youngest workers are to be disciplined by the threat of unemployment. Although the final arbitration award went against this strategy — with rises of between 4.75 and 6.25 per cent — it is likely to be confirmed by the Megaw report later this year. High rises will be given to buy off those with key skills.

The Government is also putting the boot in against union organisation. In March the Cabinet put forward proposals for ending the arrangement for deducting union dues from salaries during industrial action. The Government has also moved against the agreement that allows union representatives paid time off for union work. Under the new proposal, paid time off will be limited to 25 days. In addition union activists will be closely scrutinised and kept under tight management supervision.

The employers have also set about rationalising the civil service. They have put forward a package for improving efficiency and standards of service through



## CPSA in conference

# For a new course

Civil servants will bear the brunt of the Government's offensive against the labour movement in 1982. Members of the biggest civil service union, the CPSA, face a savage attack from the Government — and they also have to contend with a leadership which has a long record of compromises and betrayals. The delegates to this year's CPSA conference in Brighton have seen over the past 12 months that the CPSA bureaucracy is a luxury that civil servants can no longer afford.

the use of new technology. The unions will be consulted but cannot block the introduction of new technology. The terms of the new deal accept that jobs will be lost, but the Government 'hopes' that transfers, redeployment and natural wastage will minimise redundancies. It is estimated that the introduction of new technology will lead to the loss of 50 000 CPSA members.

The Government has also forced civil servants to become agents of its racist social security policies. Checks on the racial identity of claimants have already been introduced in several dole offices in a pilot run for the implementation of routine checks later this year. The pilot checks are designed to test the water. The state wants to ensure that the apartheid-style measures of the Nationality Act are implemented without trade union resistance. Thousands of civil servants will be turned into immigration controllers. Civil servants will be obliged to play a more direct part in the enforcement of capitalist law and order.

## Bureaucratic indifference

On every crucial issue the union leaders have already given up the fight. Their response to the recent pay offer was typical. The paltry and divisive offer was rejected on 25 February. But instead of turning to their members for support, they immediately turned to the established procedure by putting the union case in the hands of an arbitrator. The CPSA bosses know that the Government has openly declared that it will not be bound by the ruling of the arbitration board. They also know that arbitration helps defuse the immediate anger of union members, and leaves the bureaucracy in

a position to retreat on the grounds that the membership does not want to fight.

The union leaders have also accepted the Cabinet's proposals to scrap the old union facilities agreement. They have argued that the proposals for reducing paid time off for union work still leaves civil servants better placed than many other workers. They forgot to mention that their swift acceptance of the agreement was motivated by a desire to limit the scope for union activity by rank and file militants.

The CPSA leadership has done nothing to defend militants who have stood out against the racist checks in the dole offices. Instead they turned a blind eye to the pilot schemes and limited their response to token statements of opposition.

The CPSA bureaucrats' contempt for the membership was particularly striking over the new technology agreement. The CPSA leadership came out strongly in favour of the two-year deal, overturning past conference decisions against accepting redundancies. They never even contemplated consulting the membership over this vital issue.

## How do they get away with it?

The union leaders in the CPSA have become used to a quiet life. Over the past 50 years various institutions — the Whitley system, pay research, etc — have safeguarded the bureaucracy from rank and file pressure. The rigid institutionalisation of all matters relating to terms and conditions of employment and the role of centralised bargaining has left the leadership in a position to exercise continuous control over the rank and file. In the CPSA, struggles between left

and right, particularly in the 'forties and 'fifties, were conducted through bureaucratic channels and left the membership relatively untouched.

Even the more recent rank and file movements of the left have involved themselves in committee and election work and have done little to activate the membership. So-called left gains have been achieved by radical activists working as good trade unionists, not through any real attempt to win political support amongst the rank and file. As a result, the moderate policies of the bureaucracy have gone unchallenged. Thus the CPSA leadership can take their stand on the 'high professional standards' of the civil service instead of fighting for the interests of civil servants. Thus while the Government was busy selling its insulting pay offer, the union leaders were declaring their commitment to the fine traditions of the civil service:

'In spite of this treatment, the British civil service is the finest in the world and deals with more activities of the government than any other comparable civil service... Continue to treat it as it has been treated during the last three years and it will soon be unrecognisable from the organisation it is even today and the country will be a great deal poorer and far less civilised.' (*Red Tape*, February 1982)

Rank and file civil servants should tell the CPSA bosses to stuff their 'civilising mission' and fight for their jobs, wages and conditions. Opposition to the moderate CPSA leadership is a precondition for fighting the Government offensive. This battle to turn the tide must centre upon discrediting those institutions upon which the authority of the bureaucracy rests. All these institutions — from Whitley Council to pay research — turn the union into an appendage of the state rather than an instrument for defending the interests of workers.

## The way ahead

Free bargaining isn't an end in itself. It merely provides the grounds for workers to fight for whatever pay increase they need. The current CPSA/CCSU claim is designed to keep pace with current rises in the cost of living. It's the basic starting point. The claim does not require a spurious 'scientific' investigation by third parties; it's the only way in which civil service workers on all grades can avoid a further erosion of living standards. Even more significantly, to reject arbitration is vital as a first step towards undermining the authority of the bureaucracy over its own members. This is the prerequisite for any rank and file in trying to begin the long task of re-establishing the ground already given away by the technology agreement.

This year's CPSA conference is a crucial one for the rank and file. It could provide the starting point for a genuine fightback. A fight must first take place within the union against the positions adopted in recent months by its own leaders. The call from the platform will be for a closing of ranks, unity around policies of moderation and common sense. Such unity will provide massive job cuts and a decline in living standards for all CPSA members.

It will leave those who still have a job in the civil service as the passive agents of the state attacks against other sections of the working class — enforcing racist checks, cuts in social security benefits and sick pay. Unity that counts requires the coordinated efforts of workers from all unions in the public sector. Effective opposition to the Government's pay offer means an end to arbitration and a presentation of the case to the members that a defeat on pay will also mean a severe weakening of any opposition to job cuts, productivity schemes and new working methods.

Mick Kennedy

# WORKERS AGAINST RACISM

## What's in a name?



THE BRADFORD 12 are up on trial this month in Leeds on conspiracy charges which could result in life sentences. And if the 'Black Mob Ran Riot' Terry May trial is anything to go by, we're in for another orgy of racist press hysteria.

It's not only the black community that will be on trial at Leeds Crown Court. If the 12 are sent down it will be a damning indictment of the entire labour movement. Although a few trade union branches have given formal support, the black community has largely fought this case alone. Even the left has bowed out of the campaign. On the 3 April Bradford 12 demonstration WAR was the only British left group with a sizeable contingent; the rest confined themselves to sending a few paper sellers.

### With friends like these

Blacks who revolt against racism can expect no mercy from the British state. That message is already coming across loud and clear. Since last year's uprisings Tory Home Secretary William Whitelaw has created a paramilitary police force for the specific purpose of quelling black rioters. The media has unleashed an unprecedented campaign against 'black muggers', designed to criminalise and isolate entire black communities.

But if black people expect no sympathy from Whitelaw, they should expect and demand it from socialists. If the old slogan 'Unity is Strength' means anything, it must mean class solidarity against racism. In theory, the labour movement is opposed to racism. But what have we seen in practice?

### Who needs the Tories?

Whitelaw, after swiftly sending off his own backbench critics, has succeeded admirably in bringing his left-wing opponents to heel. One after another they've been driven onto the defensive, forced to swear their allegiance to the police and have generally been reduced to a quivering mass of jelly.

We've seen the Labour Party complaining that 'the government is cutting the police service by underhand backdoor methods' (Roy Hattersley, 12 April); the TUC General Council maintaining that 'the Scarman Report has given the country a chance to get things right for black citizens'; and the Communist Party insisting that 'the left should always be prepared to discuss its policies with the police' (Comment, 20 March). Recently a number of organisations 'concerned with social justice' (amongst them the Anti-Nazi League) brought themselves to criticise

WORKERS AGAINST RACISM is the fastest growing anti-racist campaign in Britain. In less than three years WAR has established a national reputation for militant opposition to fascist and state racism. We've also taken a lead in the trade union movement, in fighting racism on the shopfloor. JUDY HARRISON (WAR's National Organiser) discusses how we work — and why it works.

the publication of black crime figures — on the grounds that it 'undermines Lord Scarman' (*The Times*, 17 April).

When Lord Scarman — the man who conducted a brilliant whitewash of the SPG, and concluded more blacks should join the police — is the left's alternative to 'hard' policing, the Tories have nothing to fear.

### On the run

How has the Government managed to get its critics running for cover at the first whiff of CS gas? By playing the racist card like never before. The state is very reluctant to raise the temperature of racial conflict, because it is well aware of the potential danger to bourgeois law and order. But it has no choice.

Throughout the capitalist world racism and xenophobia are reaching new heights. German 'guest-workers', Turkish migrants in Belgium, French North Africans, American blacks — all are experiencing attacks from the state and the far right. In Britain the process has gone furthest of all. The depth of the crisis, the scale and extent of black unemployment (50 per cent of black youth are out of work) has created an explosive situation that can only be contained by repression. The ground work has already been done. The national consensus already achieved against Irish 'criminals and terrorists' is ready to be used against the new, black adversary. And the left simply can't take the pressure.

There are still those who, at the eleventh hour, refuse to see the writing on the wall. There are faint-hearted liberals who want to turn the clock back to a mythical golden age of 'community policing', and hope that the Manpower Services Commission will keep the youth off the streets. This, the soft bourgeois option, is the one the left favours. The TUC's plans for 'regenerating our inner-cities', the Communist Party's infatuation with community cop John Alderson (see the sycophantic interview in *Marxism Today*) are the stuff *Guardian* readers' dreams are made of. Meanwhile the SWP is more concerned with refuting Scotland Yard's crime figures (see Chris Harman's lengthy analysis in *Socialist Review*) than it is with fighting the criminalisation of black youth which the statistics are intended to achieve.

### Lesser evil

The British left has responded to the state's racist offensive by opting for the lesser evil of 'soft' policing. In practice, this comes down to supporting the return of a Labour government. More or less critically, with or without illusions, they'll be telling black people to vote Labour at the next General Election.

The notion that stop-and-search exercises, police raids, deportations and kangaroo court trials are less evil when administered by a Labour government is a curious one. But such phoney alternatives are the bread and butter of British left-wing politics. On every issue — Ireland, women's oppression, redundancies, militarism — the left critically supports the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie. Why make an exception when it comes to racism?

### A different way

There is a real alternative. It's not an easy one, and you won't find it in any bourgeois party's election manifesto. It's mobilising the *working class* to fight racism. Why the working class? Because, unlike the socially concerned supporters of Scarman, the working class

- has every interest in smashing racism
- has the power to do it
- has nothing to lose from an all-out fight against the state.

It has never been clearer that it's in every worker's self-interest to fight racism. This is not only because the repressive measures currently being used on blacks will eventually be used against the class as a whole. Nor is it just because unity is a prerequisite for success in every fight against the bosses. The central issue is that racism cripples the workers' movement politically. The racist worker thinks he has got more in common with his country than his class. This makes him vulnerable to every divide and rule trick in the book. It turns him into a bosses' man, a class-collaborator against his fellow workers.

The worker who is prepared to fight racism, on the other hand, is ready for anything. WAR has demonstrated that time and again. We've shown how direct action in the workplace — against passport checks, against racial discrimination, against fishing raids and deportations — is

worth a thousand letters to MPs. If it chooses to use it, the working class has the power to wreck the state's racist ambitions. It also has the power to isolate and defeat the fascists. By showing them the door when they try to worm their way into the labour movement, and mobilising on the streets and the housing estates every time they threaten the black community, WAR has shown the way to deal with these cowards.

It is not only that the working class has nothing to lose by standing up against racism. It has the world to gain. And the bosses know it. That's why they witch-hunt us in the press. That's why their state tries to put us out of business. Police Federation chief Jim Jardine recently revealed his innermost fears to the press. On hearing how 'a mob of coloured people' had secured the release of four black youths from Bedford police station he exclaimed:

'I have never heard anything so ludicrous. What is the law coming to? How much longer have we got to be humiliated? In future are we to have groups of Irishmen, for example, demanding the release of people detained in Kilburn?' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 12 April)

Yes, yes — and more than that. Through WORKERS AGAINST RACISM we can build a movement that makes it impossible to incarcerate those who defy the state without taking on the whole working class. That's what solidarity means.

### You've tried the rest

The Bradford 12 need your support. If they go down it will be a defeat we shall never be allowed to forget. When the Shrewsbury building workers were sent down on conspiracy charges, the labour movement left them to rot. There's even more at stake in Leeds this month. For the state it's a test of its success at criminalising the entire black community. For us, it's a test of how far we've come and how far we've still got to go.

As the going gets tougher, the civil libertarians and 'anti-Nazis' are suddenly nowhere to be seen. WAR has not only survived, it's gone from strength to strength. We've done it by hard graft, by our confidence in the working class — and by never hiding our politics. As one Asian family told us:

'When the police said you were communists who don't believe in God we said "Yes, we know — but they get here when there's trouble from the NF. You just pray for us".'

You've tried the rest. It's about time you tried the best. JOIN US!

## WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM

# Why we're marching to the TUC

### LONDON TO BRIGHTON 4-8 SEPTEMBER

## Join us!

I/we want to march on/sponsor/make a donation to the WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM, London - Brighton, 4-8 September.

Name

Address

Tel No

TU/Organisation

No of marchers

£ enclosed

(Make cheques/POs payable to 'WAR')

Send to WAR, c/o Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8.



Jayaben Desai

'I want to be the first to sponsor this march. I want my name at the top of the list!'

**JAYABEN DESAI**  
GRUNWICK STRIKE LEADER

Every year the Trades Union Congress discusses 'race relations'. They might as well not bother. The more the bosses use racism to divide the trade union movement, the less the TUC does about it. This year though it will be different. Five hundred marchers will be descending on Brighton to make sure the subject of racism isn't relegated to 'Any Other Business'. We'll be demanding:

- industrial action against passport checks, fishing raids and deportations



Anwar Ditta

- an end to racist hiring, firing and promotion practices - no more colour bars!
- direct action against fascists at work and on the streets - the sacking of all racist union officials
- a trade union campaign to stop the criminalisation of black youth.

When TERRY WOODS (COHSE executive committee member and Leeds 221 branch secretary) heard about the march, he put his money where his mouth is straight away - by pledging that his branch would sponsor two marchers at £30 each. Terry has been involved in fighting the introduction of race checks at St James' Hospital in Leeds. He said at

a recent WAR meeting there was no way his members would carry out such work.

ANWAR DITTA'S response to the march was - 'I think it's really great you're organising it. The unions have got to fight for black people, particularly to stop all these deportations. I won my case but thousands of others didn't'.

DENIS BARRY (Laurence Scott's convenor) said 'If this march puts James Anderton in his place it will have done a good job. He masterminded the police attack on our picket lines and now he's out to get the black youth'.

Support for the march is already building up. From NASIRA BEGUM, CYNTHIA GORDON and REGGIE YATES - who've all experienced Britain's racist immigration laws first-hand; and from black trade unionists like BERNIE GRANT (NUPE official and Haringey Labour councillor) and NESTA MOODIE (EET-PU member recently victimised by Lambeth Council). Latest sponsors include Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone and Paul Boateng. They're all saying the unions have got to stand up and fight for blacks.

DON'T BE LEFT OUT. Add your name to the list of sponsors. Get your organisation/trade union to support it. SEND US MONEY (it will cost £30 to get each marcher on the road). And most important of all, JOIN THE MARCH!

# WRECK THE CHECKS!

## Fight Health Service Racism



WHEN THE QUEEN visited the London Hospital, Whitechapel, recently to open a new wing she got a nasty shock. Expecting to greet her hand-picked loyal subjects she instead got a noisy reception from over a hundred local demonstrators. They were there to make the point that from 1 October over 40 per cent of the London Hospital's patients will be lucky to step inside the flash new wing without paying £130 a day. The demonstration called by ELWAR, and actively supported by local Bangladeshi organisations, clearly upset the local constabulary. They couldn't restrain themselves from arresting three demonstrators as Her Majesty's limousine approached.

### NHS race checks

LOUISE WHITE is a black nurse at Newton Green Hospital in Leeds. She's an active COHSE shop steward who's fighting for the 12 per cent NHS pay claim.

Here's what she thinks of the DHSS race checks:

'I think all nurses should take a stand against this racist scheme. A lot of my workmates are really angry about it. Some say they're not going to have anything to do with such a thing. What does Fowler think he's doing anyway - he's not going to get us doing his dirty work.'

### One for Jimmy Saville?

FRANKLIN HANSON is a young black man who's lived in Britain most of his life. So when he was seriously injured recently - resulting in paralysis from the waist down - he was surprised to learn that getting on the waiting list for a bed in Stoke Mandeville Hospital would cost him £25 000. The hospital administrators tried to tell him he 'hadn't been paying into the system' so he wasn't entitled to free treatment. Is this a new Jimmy Saville fundraising gimmick?

## CPSA Conference



BRIGHTON - 10-14 May

WORKERS AGAINST RACISM FRINGE MEETING

Boycott ethnic monitoring!

Speakers from CPSA, WAR, claimants groups and black organisations.



Tuesday 11 May 7pm

Conference Room, Apollo Hotel, 135 Kings Road, Brighton (5 minutes from Conference Centre, on sea-front).

## NUPE Conference



SCARBOROUGH - 23-28 May

WORKERS AGAINST RACISM FRINGE MEETING

Racism and the NHS

Support United Manchester Hospitals' motion calling for industrial action against the checks.



Sunday 23 May 7pm

Golden Ball Pub, Sandside, Scarborough (near the 'Spa' conference centre).

ALTHOUGH THEY WERE living in a society at the height of its power and affluence, blacks in the United States had little to show for it. In the South they lived under conditions which in the early 'sixties still bore the brand of generations of slavery and reaction. Poll taxes, literacy tests and a range of other legal measures passed by white state legislatures effectively disenfranchised most black people. Removed from all political power, blacks suffered segregation and inferior treatment in education, housing, health care and even transport.

In the North blacks had the vote — but not much else. Systematic discrimination excluded black people from the best paid jobs and from active involvement in either Republican or Democratic politics. Even in 1964 some 30 per cent of young blacks in the inner city ghettos of the North had no work — at a time when few whites had difficulty getting jobs.

## By peaceful means

Back in 1954 the Supreme Court had ruled that segregated education was unlawful. The decision was ignored in wide areas of the South. However black resistance grew rapidly. It reached major proportions in Montgomery, Alabama, after an incident in which a woman was thrown off a bus and arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man. The black boycott of municipal buses that followed created a new generation of activists. Among them was a local Baptist minister, Martin Luther King, who assumed the leadership of the struggle.

The success of the year long Montgomery boycott encouraged King to convene the Southern Christian Leadership Conference — a grouping of black ministers from Southern churches. King led numerous peaceful protests against discrimination and segregation across Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida and the other Southern bastions of white power. His aim was to galvanise the liberal conscience of white America and rally enough support to push a Civil Rights Bill through Congress.

Unfortunately for King, white America had little or no liberal conscience. Only one significant trade union, the United Auto Workers, supported the biggest initiative — the 1963 'Freedom March' on Washington. And, as peaceful protests met with indifference or clubs, baseball bats and guns, a growing hostility emerged within the ranks of Civil Rights activists to King's moderate strategy. Many questioned the effectiveness of a Civil Rights Bill (which was eventually passed in Washington in 1964) since there were already laws outlawing racial discrimination and even a specific amendment to the Constitution which gave blacks the right to vote. But these meant nothing in practice.

After King's assassination it became clear that the focus of the fight for black rights was about to shift from the peaceful protest of the Southern middle class to the violent revolt of the black urban working class.

## By any means

There is a long history of race riots in the United States. Before and after the First World War and on the largest scale in Detroit in 1943, whites have violently opposed the housing, promotion or granting of any rights to black people. But when violence again spilled onto the streets of the USA in the 'sixties — first in Harlem in 1964, and then in nine cities in 1965, 38 in 1966 and 128 in 1967 — it was black people on the offensive. Most of the attacks were directed against the property of capitalists and merchants who exploited blacks, and then at the police and whites who fought back. Growing street confidence was matched inside the factories as militant black workers' organisations, mostly

# BLACK AMERICA What they gave and what they got



**'I haven't a racist bone in my body' said President Reagan, as he set about dismantling America's positive discrimination laws last January. Presumably Shadow Home Secretary Roy Hattersley still hasn't heard the news. He's committed the next Labour government to an 'affirmative action' programme for blacks — based on the US experience. Stan Meads reviews that experience. It began one long hot summer in the mid 'sixties.**

under the umbrella of the Revolutionary Union Movement, sprang up in most major plants. Black militancy reached its highest form in the Black Panthers, founded in October 1966 by Huey P Newton and Bobby Seale. The Panthers organised militant defence of the ghettos and were forced to engage in armed conflict with the police and the FBI.

## Kerner's means

At a time when its involvement in the war in Vietnam was beginning to take a heavy toll, the American ruling class had to act swiftly to halt the black rebellion in its inner cities. The man called in to reorganise things was Otto Kerner, governor of Illinois, who was put at the head of a 'Special Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders'. The strategy of the US bourgeoisie had two distinct strands.

While Kerner deliberated on the social causes of the riots, the police crushed blacks who had taken up a militant, violent stance. The Black Panthers were first portrayed as criminals in an attempt to isolate them from support in the black community. Then they were ruthlessly suppressed. Many were assassinated by the FBI in carefully staged shoot-outs. When Kerner reported, he recommended a major increase in spending on what was termed 'criminal justice' (the figure quadrupled by the early 'seventies) and a major shake-up in the organisation of the US police force to increase its operational efficiency.

When the smoke cleared, Kerner realised that liquidating the militants was not going to be enough. He himself admitted that 'the events of the summer of 1967 are in large part the culmination of 300 years of racial prejudice'. Kerner proposed a series of concessions to the blacks:

- recruitment of black cops — whose 'insight' could aid 'early anticipation of the tensions and grievances that can lead to disorders'
- a major community relations service programme — which set up co-ops, job creation and training schemes in major towns and cities to keep black youth off the streets
- aid for black businesses — a theme taken up by Richard Nixon in his 1968 programme for 'minority business enterprise'.

Following in Kerner's wake came legislation designed to enforce the Civil Rights Act. The best known measure was the introduction of 'positive action' — quotas for the number of places open to blacks in jobs and education.

## Who got what?

Many British liberals think that the civil rights movement and street rioting forced major concessions for American blacks. But the position of blacks improved little.

In the South, blacks did participate in elections. The number of registered voters in Mississippi doubled from 175 000

to 350 000 in 1980. In Louisiana it increased from 243 000 to 465 000 in the same period. And in some areas 'positive discrimination' seemed to work: at Harvard Law School the number of black students increased from less than one per cent to almost 10 per cent. The reforms of the 'sixties increased the numbers of black professionals and businessmen and drew them into mainstream US politics. Since the mid 'sixties it has become customary for both Democrats and Republicans to nominate black candidates in black areas. And just about every President has appointed a black to his Cabinet and a black on the Supreme Court.

Black workers however gained very little. Since the late 'sixties the number of blacks below the 'poverty line' has increased by 20 per cent while the number of whites below it has fallen by five per cent. Kerner's measures did nothing to reduce black unemployment. Today it stands at more than 50 per cent for young blacks. Even the much vaunted 'positive action' had little effect. In 1977 as few as two per cent of the jobs in many skilled trades were held by blacks.

## Reagan's turn

In the 'sixties the American ruling class succeeded in defusing a black rebellion with minor concessions because of the strength of the American economy. Today, the US economy is cracking under the strains of recession. Reagan's Government has been forced to take back many of the rights which could be granted in the boom years.

Black people have borne the brunt of Reagan's budget cutting proposals in welfare and education. When redundancies are pushed through on seniority it is invariably blacks — the newest workers, in the lowest grades — who go first. Reagan has started stripping away many of the political concessions made in the 'sixties. The Justice Department announced at the end of 1981 that it would no longer push ahead the programme of desegregation in the schools.

Reagan recently announced that the Government would no longer introduce ethnic quotas or positive action programmes, and would no longer insist that companies supplying government contracts comply with them. The most drastic threat of all is to black voting rights. Earlier this year Reagan threatened that the administration would oppose a renewal of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. This means control of local voting regulations passing back from Washington to local state legislatures. It opens the way for mass disenfranchisement of black workers.

## Second time round

Time is running out for black America. Race is once again a number one political issue. But unlike in the 'sixties the talk is no longer about 'helping the underprivileged'. Today's discussion is about 'law and order' and clamping down on illegal immigration. The Moral Majority and the New Right are making all the running — not the faded liberals of the past. Just like their British counterparts, American ruling circles are using racism and patriotism to keep American workers loyal to America. This is the background against which the Ku Klux Klan has gained a new lease of life.

'Positive action' played a useful role in the 'sixties and 'seventies. It kept the pot from boiling over. Now, for the American bourgeoisie, it has played out its role. How typical of the British Labour Party to resurrect this dead-end strategy as a solution to the rampant racism of the 'eighties. The only affirmative action we're likely to see from Mr Hattersley is the sort he tried under the last Labour government — sanctions against firms who paid workers too much.

# Reviews



## Not our houses

Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to our house*, Cape, 1982, pp143, hbk, £6.95.

SATIRE IS BY NATURE conservative. It makes fun of trendiness, but can never transcend it. This is the problem with Tom Wolfe's satirical attack on modern architecture.

Wolfe sets himself the task of understanding why Manhattan consists of 'row after row of glass boxes'. He asks why American capitalists commission buildings made of bare, white, inhospitable slabs of concrete, steel and curtainless window, topped by roofs that are flatter than flat. Wolfe traces the problem back to Germany after the First World War, and to the movement known as the Bauhaus.

### They painted the town drab

The Bauhaus was a school of garlic-chewing architects that grew up in post-Versailles Weimar. Its slogan: 'starting from zero'. Its ideology: 'the brotherhood of man'. Its hoped-for client: 'the entire people'. Its spokesman: Walter Gropius, a meticulously groomed ex-cavalry lieutenant. Its broad outlook: socialist.

Like Picasso and the Cubists or the composer Arnold Schoenberg, Gropius had caught onto the idea of the 'art compound' — a clique of stuck-up artists who mainly did art about art. He made a fad of knocking 'bourgeois' devices (pitched roofs, curves, high ceilings, wide hallways, cornices, pillars, decoration of any sort) out of architecture and representing the 'non-bourgeois' result as good. Its more important achievement, however, was to ensure that the architect's pet theory now became as much a selling point to clients as his own excellence in the practice of architecture. Most Bauhaus architects, however, never got their designs off the drawing-board.

But when, as refugees from fascism, the Bauhausmen set up shop in the USA, the commissions poured in, often from wealthy corporations. In the process, the Europeans did to old, indigenous talents like Frank Lloyd Wright what Schoenberg (another refugee) did to George Gershwin: they relegated them to the fourth division. As a result, all office blocks, plush New York apartments and architecture colleges came to look like factories. As for Bauhaus-inspired housing estates like that built in Pruitt-Igoe, St Louis:

'Respectable folk pulled out...scores of commission meetings and task-force projects were expended...In 1971, the final task force called a general meeting of everyone still living in the project. They asked the residents for their suggestions. It was a historic moment for two reasons. One, for the first time in the fifty-year history of worker housing, someone had finally asked the client for his two cents' worth. Two, the chant. The chant began immediately: "Blow it...up! Blow it...up! Blow it...up!". The next day the task force thought it over. The poor buggers were right. It was the only solution. In July of 1972, the city blew up the three central blocks of Pruitt-Igoe with dynamite.'

By the mid 'sixties Pop Art, deliberately blurred photography, computerised synthesiser music, asexual ballet, Kafkaesque fiction and bullshit French philosophy were baffling but enrapturing the American bourgeoisie. So was architecture, and the consequences here were

more evident than they were for other disciplines: eave-less, rainwater-stained buildings of unspeakable drabness bedecking the entire US landscape. Since then all attempts to break out of Bauhausish architecture have been greeted with derision. Even the 'post-Modernist' architects are only fashionable because they make friendly jokes at the expense of Modernism. They put sloping roofs on these days, but only as 'ironic references' (to those in the know).

For Wolfe this is all lamentable. Why can't America, the world's dominant capitalism, look like America? Why is America saddled with an architecture 'whose tenets prohibit every manifestation of exuberance, power, empire, grandeur, or even high spirits and playfulness as the height of bad taste'?

### Mister WASP

So ends Wolfe's thesis. And there's no doubt about it, the man has a point. The influence of the Bauhaus in America — and, indeed, in Britain too — has often been baleful. But Wolfe's witty exposure of its fraudulence is akin to American New Right economist Milton Friedman's more turgid exposure of the failings of Keynesian social democracy. It seeks solace in the past. It cannot point a way forward for the future.

The parallel between the New Right and social democracy goes further than this. Wolfe, a Southerner whose paeans to American individualism include books on drag-racers, hippies and astronauts, hates the liberal East Coast establishment and its infatuation with European ideas. He hates it so much that he overemphasises its influence in America — seeing Bauhaus housing where it is not, just as the New Right sees New York profligacy and 'welfarism' everywhere.

Wolfe, like the New Right, sees his target as 'socialists'. But, as he himself observes, 'Gropius interest in "the proletariat" or "socialism" turned out to be no more than aesthetic and fashionable'. The Bauhaus wasn't socialist in orientation but social democratic. Even in America after the Second World War, and certainly in Germany after the First, its 'socialism' led to a levelling down of standards, skimping on materials and costs, a failure to consult the workers about their environment and a 'theory' that was obscurantist, not revolutionary. The Bauhaus' biggest coup was to take rich American private capitalists for a ride in a way it had only really been able to do with poor German social democratic city councils before. That may anger Wolfe, but it won't convince us that socialist architecture has failed. It's never existed.

The Bauhaus believed that architecture could save the world. Vague egalitarian ideology, however, has proved no substitute for the Leninist party. Of course some Bauhaus-derived architecture is good; but it is the atrocities of post-war British town planners that stay in the mind more than the success stories.

Some day — well after the American revolution — there will be a socialist architecture in the USA. It will have what Tom Wolfe is looking for: exuberance, power, empire, grandeur, high spirits and playfulness. But at issue will not be the empire of the old, reactionary South that Wolfe yearns after, but the empire of the working class. We can only speculate how good that architecture will be.

James Wood

## NUR on the points

Philip S Bagwell, *The railwaymen, Volume 2: the Beeching era and after*, George Allen & Unwin, 1982, pp452, £15.

NUR bureaucrats see the Attlee Government's nationalisation of the railways in 1947 as a big step forward for the working class. For them it is right and fitting that rail transport, 'the lifeblood of the nation', should be in public hands. But the British state only ever took over the railways because they had rarely been profitable in the 'twenties and 'thirties and were overloaded to the point of break-

down during the war. The railways have never been 'our' railways, and, as Bagwell shows, public ownership has not prevented 'the lifeblood' running dry, both under Tory administrators and under Labour ones. Even after the Beeching closures of workshops and branch lines of 1961-64, Labour managed to preside over 150 000 redundancies on the railways between 1964 and 1970.

Bagwell reveals why the NUR leaders took no notice of rank and file resistance to the Beeching offensive. The attitude of Greene and his colleagues was that where capital had no use for railway lines (and railway workers) they could be allowed to disappear. When Beeching's March 1963 report, *The shaping of British railways* called for a new profitability drive, the NUR first declared a three-day strike in defence of public transport as a 'service to the community'. Then it discovered that rail economies themselves could be of 'service to the community'. Finally the NUR agreed to the closure of 2400 stations and 5000 miles of track. Despite strong rank and file support for the strike, Greene claimed there was none, so consigning tens of thousands of railwaymen to redundancy long after Beeching and his Tory masters left office.

The railways are not, as the NUR leadership even now maintains, an industry which all classes have an interest in preserving. So long as private cars (for passengers) and lorries (for freight) are more efficient, the state will prefer to invest in roads rather than track. Rail cuts will never be stopped by pleas about the needs of the travelling public. To be successful, struggles for jobs on the railways must be struggles for jobs, not struggles to 'defend public transport'.

### Put a buffer on London!

Nor can struggles for jobs be treated as struggles to put the Labour Party in power. Over the past two decades the NUR has increasingly looked to the Labour Party to solve its problems.



But what has the NUR got for its money and support for Labour?

As the record of redundancies under Labour shows, NUR members have received little. But NUR leaders have received something they value highly: recognition and negotiation from Labour governments, plus regular beer and sandwiches at Downing Street. Bagwell describes the 'emergency measures' Harold Wilson deployed when the NUR's executive threatened a strike against the derisory three per cent pay rise Labour's Prices and Incomes Board offered it early in 1966:

'When Mrs Mary Wilson, the secretaries and the housekeeper had made sandwiches, using all the remaining bread at Number 10, Jim Callaghan's larder was raided through the ever-open door linking the two houses, and the sleeping Chancellor relieved of his one remaining loaf. Meanwhile a journalist friend, spotted waiting outside, was sent to the main line termini all-night refreshment rooms to buy up their entire stock of sausage rolls. All the stocks of whisky and beer and the cigars "kept for visiting statesmen" were mobilised for help in "lubricating the machinery of industrial relations".'

The executive called off their strike some time after midnight. Just a few Travellers Fare pastries was all it took to keep the bureaucrats in line and cut NUR members' wages.

The future for NUR members lies not in reshaping and re-electing the Labour Party, but in turning their union's political levy into a strike fund. The sooner this is done after the next round of redundancies, the sooner we will win the round after that.

Paul Saunders

## The politics of health

Going private: the case against private medicine, The Politics of Health Group and Fightback, London, 1982, pp46, pbk 70p.

FOR THE Politics of Health Group the problem of the NHS result, not from its character as a capitalist health service, but from the existence of a booming private sector outside the state system. The growth of private insurance schemes and private hospitals, as well as the operation of drug companies and NHS suppliers and contractors — all operating on strict commercial principles — are held to be undermining the founding principles of the state service. But what were the founding principles of the NHS? The pamphlet claims that the NHS was set up to provide 'the right to health care given purely on the basis of need' and that this principle 'was accepted for more than 30 years'. This is nonsense. The NHS was not set up to cater for the needs of the working class, but in response to the need of the capitalist class for a healthy workforce, maintained at the lowest possible cost.

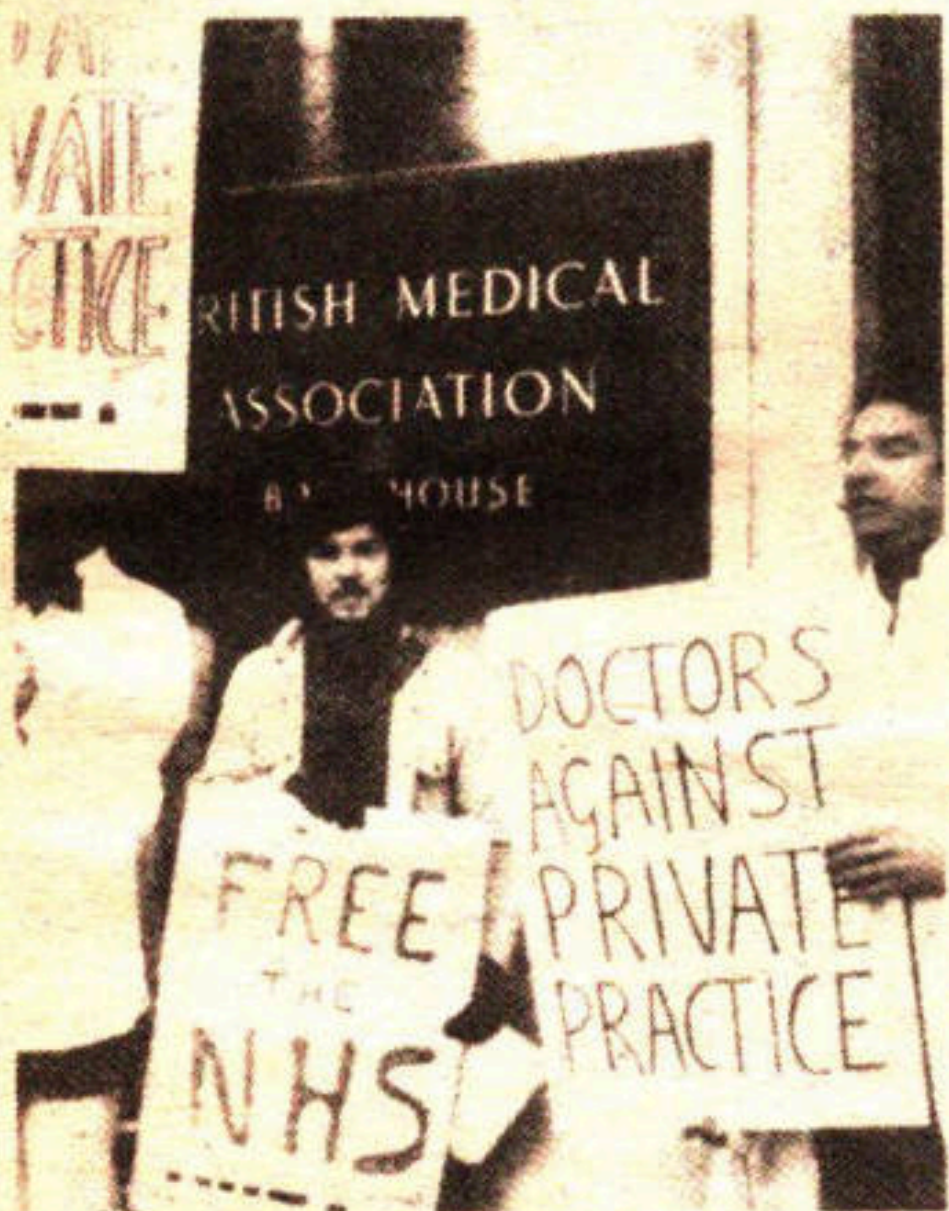
The principle of economy in the expenditure of government money — health care on the cheap — has guided the NHS from the start. The service was only a few months old when 'the cuts' began: the 1949 budget reduced spending on hospitals. In 1951, the Labour government imposed prescription charges on drugs, glasses and false teeth to discourage workers in need of treatment from receiving it. The forerunners of the Politics of Health Group on the Socialist Medical Association expressed concern that 'the price of dentures essential to industrial efficiency' might be more than 'the average worker' could afford. In 1953, the government appointed a major inquiry under Lord Guillebaud to discover the means 'of ensuring the most effective control and efficient use of such Exchequer funds that may be available'. And so it has continued, ensuring that thousands of GPs still operate like small shopkeepers in shabby premises with inadequate facilities and that hospitals are still housed in Victorian workhouses or in jerry-built modern monstrosities. The NHS staggers along on the labour of the chronically low paid, especially women and immigrants. And the British working class gets a squalid, third rate health service, celebrated by generations of middle class socialists as something for which workers should be eternally grateful to the Labour Party.

### Public squalor, private affluence

Today's recession means an even heavier clamp down on NHS spending than in the past. It means forcing an ever greater burden of health care back onto the working class itself, in higher prescription charges, a greater responsibility for the care of the elderly, the disabled and the sick at home ('in the community') and in generally deteriorating services. One of the symptoms of the decay of the NHS is the expansion of the private medicine sector. Private practice has always existed to spare the upper classes the indignities of the state system. It has grown in response to increasing bourgeois dissatisfaction with even the sort of privileged treatment they have been traditionally accorded within the NHS. It has also grown in the last couple of years because more and more workers have been forced to resort to the private sector to get the treatment they need. This is the clear aim of the government policy; the new restrictions on black people obtaining NHS treatment are an important indication of the trend towards the privatisation of health care.

The Politics of Health Group is well aware of the inadequacies of the NHS, although it perceives these from the viewpoint of health care professionals and middle class consumers rather than that of the mass of NHS workers and patients. The group is committed to the creation of a socialist health service; its pamphlet attempts to link a campaign against private medicine with the broader objectives of the group. Unfortunately, there is no

link between opposing private practice and transforming the NHS. The problem is not private practice but the capitalist NHS. The fundamental condition for a socialist NHS is the creation of a socialist state: to succeed any campaign for better health care, must therefore have an anti-capitalist character, it must be linked to broader working class struggles against the capitalist state. Linking up the campaign against privatisation with activity against the new race checks and all immigration controls is one example of how this strategy can be pursued in practice.



This is anathema to the Politics of Health Group. While in theory it aims to link the campaign against the private sector with the struggle for a 'truly socialist' health service, in practice it limits its horizons to trying to make life under the present health service more tolerable for its members. This emerges clearly from the character of the Politics of Health Group as part discussion circle, part encounter group. It has weekend meetings every few months and has produced three pamphlets in five years. While its members have supported various anti-cuts and anti-closure campaigns, as a group it organises no practical activity. It is more a therapeutic community than a political campaign:

*'We are committed to a style of politics that relates to our personal experience and tries to work towards an anti-sexist socialist practice in the ways we organise and relate to each other. Within the group itself we have attempted to deal with differences of perspective in a mutually supportive way.'*

This is a style of politics geared to the subjective needs of middle class individuals, not one appropriate to developing a strategy for defending the needs of the working class for decent health care.

Helen Swift

## Plastic arguments.

Liz Curtis, *They shoot children: the use of rubber and plastic bullets in the north of Ireland*, Information on Ireland, 1982, pp38, pbk 50p.

THIS IS AN excellently produced, but politically misguided pamphlet. It provides an account of the development of rubber and plastic bullets by the British government for use in Hong Kong, Cyprus and other colonies, and their widespread use in Britain's oldest colony over the past decade. It includes details of the 13 people – including six children – killed by these riot control weapons in Ireland and many examples of the terrible injuries suffered by hundreds more. Most of this information is derived from the more comprehensive survey by Fathers Denis Faul and Raymond Murray, *Rubber and plastic bullets maim and kill*, which unfortunately is not widely available in Britain.

Plastic bullets reveal the brutality and the

cynicism of British rule in Ireland. They are lethal and destructive weapons which can be used to coerce mass resistance to the state; at the same time they can be presented to the British public as a relatively benign means of crowd control, made from the same materials as children's toys. As Liz Curtis points out, the object is not to minimise the force used in Ireland, but to minimise political reaction in Britain. The delay between injury and death typical in plastic bullet incidents helps to lessen their impact on public opinion at home.

Plastic bullets are a feature of the brutality that is an inevitable part of British rule in Ireland. Exposure of the consequences of their use can play a useful part in mobilising domestic opposition to the British occupation and support for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. This is not, however, the purpose of this pamphlet. It focuses on plastic bullets as a particularly objectionable aspect of British rule, 'a mockery of justice' that should be abandoned in favour of less vicious forms of control. The pamphlet's most damning criticism of the use of rubber and plastic bullets is that it is an ineffective means of stabilising British rule; it increases 'the alienation of the nationalist community' and 'only serves to reinforce the belief that violence is a justifiable means of removing the regime that controls them'.

Like the Troops Out Movement of which she is a leading member, Liz Curtis is a great respecter of prominent personalities and high-sounding institutions. Her argument is supported at every stage by quotations from doctors, lawyers, academics and journalists, culminating in 'the words of Steve Wright of the Richardson Institute for Conflict and Peace Research at Lancaster University'. According to Professor Wright, the use of plastic bullets has 'exacerbated and helped to destabilise the Northern Irish conflict by reinforcing vicious conflict circuits'.

Liz Curtis' objective is to persuade the government that plastic bullets only make its problems in Ireland more difficult and intensify the violent struggle to force the British out. She calls for plastic bullets to be banned, presumably in favour of some less offensive type of riot control technology. Her aim is to modify Britain's oppression of Ireland, to make it more tolerable to the liberal conscience troubled by slaughtered and maimed infants.

Liz Curtis presents the evidence on the use of plastic bullets in an appeal to the British ruling class that such techniques are neither an essential nor an efficient means of maintaining order in Ireland. They could and should be dispensed with, pending 'political solutions that eliminate the fundamental problems'. We too expose the atrocities inflicted by the British armed forces on the Irish people, but as part of an appeal to the British working class that such incidents are an inevitable feature of British rule that cry out for workers to take a stand against the British occupation and against all British 'solutions'. Liz Curtis' pamphlet brings out the fundamental difference in outlook that separates the Troops Out Movement from the Irish Freedom Movement.

Jonathan Mason



## What's left of NALGO?

I was very interested to read your articles on the public sector in the last issue of *the next step* and in particular the comments on NALGO's policy on the cuts. You are correct in criticising NALGO's stance on redundancies. Full-time officials (particularly the left) pride themselves on not having negotiated a national redundancy agreement – they aren't going to sell jobs! Instead they are content to let natural wastage and delays in advertising posts erode job levels throughout the country.

Unfortunately the membership generally supports this line. A recent group meeting (conference of local government branches) on 5 March 1982 was held specifically to discuss the cuts. The absence of any political challenge to national policy was obvious. Before the meeting the NALGO Action Group (SWP) had circulated a leaflet urging branches to oppose the national policy and support their strategy of working to rule, etc. There were a few red faces when the national policy was seen to be to the left of NAG: all out strike action in the event of compulsory redundancies and a compulsory levy to provide a fighting fund. NAG's leaflet highlighted the utter pessimism of the left.

The Broad Left showed no more political acumen. There were 25 amendments to the national strategy: most opposing the levy and seeking secret ballots. Some of the traditionally left branches sought to strengthen the policy on compulsory redundancies. None sought any action on natural wastage. The Broad Left organised effectively to make sure none of the amendments were debated, but also ensured there was no debate. The meeting was not used to describe what had happened in Manchester or Lothian where there had been action on the cuts, nor to explain the limitations of national policy. The statements in the press claimed overwhelming support for the national strategy but I expect the majority of NALGO branches left the meeting without any encouragement to go back and fight for jobs.

A NALGO member Wood Green



## St Pauls strikes back!

The recent beating Bristol PC Ian Bennet got from black people may have been an unpleasant shock to the local city's Labour council and an embarrassment to their partners, the St Pauls 'community leaders'; but it raises no problems for class-conscious workers in the area. Bennet was a 'community' policeman and enjoyed considerable status as such among the local constabulary. The attack on him signifies a clear rejection of community policing by black youth.

When the first St Pauls riots broke out in 1980 the official labour movement was quick to react. Upset by the Government's refusal to hold an official inquiry, they obliged by having one of their own. *Tribune* MP Ian Mikardo was wheeled down from Bethnal Green to chair it. But any expectations that it might give its support to blacks in the fight against the state got no further than its opening statement of aims:

*'To enquire into the social and economic conditions prevailing in the St Pauls area and to make recommendations which might ensure a level of communal harmony and stability sufficient to minimise the risk of a repetition of anything like the events of 2 April 1980.'*

Though the police refused to work with the inquiry, the Government was so impressed by the local bureaucrats' concern for law and order that it eventually gave considerable financial support to Bristol council's Community Development Scheme, which largely implemented the inquiry's recommendations. The past year has seen a massive housing 'improvement' initiative in St Pauls, the replacement of the Starsky and Hutch (copyright I Mikardo) cops who provoked the original riot with smiling foot police intent on 'getting to know' us

(spying), and – most strikingly – the taking of numerous government and council-funded 'Community Enterprise' jobs by Labour Party figures and their radical hangers-on. In fact the best way to get a job in St Pauls these days is to develop an interest in cooperatives, etc. Readers of *the next step* will doubtless be thrilled to hear that St Pauls now has its own CND branch, where Labour Party members can mingle with radicals and vicars.

All was going wonderfully until some black kids, who for some reason had never got involved in our happy community life, dropped a block of concrete on PC Bennet's head. So we're now back to where we were two years ago. Being sensible, the police have virtually dropped community policing and have reverted to tried and trusted Panda cars and meat wagons. The difference is that, thanks to the housing scheme, they have a much fuller knowledge of the area and its inmates than they once did; and that they have, if not the overt backing, at least the tacit support of the local labour movement and the left.

The message from St Pauls is: 'It's coming'. The police know it, the black youth know it and the fascists know it. The Labour and radical left, on the other hand, is doing its best to look the other way. Class-conscious workers in St Pauls are establishing a Workers Against Racism group in Bristol to ensure that the youth of St Pauls don't fight their enemies on their own. We urgently need help from anybody living in Bristol who is in no doubt which side he or she will be on in the struggles to come. If you can help, contact us c/o Box 26, Full Marks Bookshop, Cheltenham Road, Bristol.

WAR supporters  
Bristol

# Saturday 8 May • London REMEMBER BOBBY SANDS!

National March in commemoration of the hunger strikers who died last year for political recognition of the Irish national liberation movement. Join the Irish Freedom Movement contingent for Troops Out now! Self-determination for the Irish people!

Supported by Sinn Fein, Irish Republican Socialist Party, Indian Workers Association, Plaid Cymru, Irish Freedom Movement, Troops Out Movement, Armagh Coordinating Committee, Labour Committee on Ireland and others.

Coaches will be leaving from Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham, Coventry, Bristol, Swansea, Chatham. For details and tickets phone 01-274 3951.

## VICTORY TO THE IRISH PEOPLE!



## SILENT TOO LONG

### ★ SPEAKING TOUR

Silent too long is the organisation of friends and relatives of over 700 Catholics in Northern Ireland who have been murdered by the British army and Loyalist paramilitaries. In the previous issue of *the next step* we reviewed their publication which documents these things and the collusion between the British army, the RUC and the paramilitaries in terrorising ordinary Catholic people.

The Irish Freedom Movement has invited two members of Silent too long from Derry and South Armagh to speak in Britain as part of our week of action around the anniversary of Bobby Sands' death on 5 May.

#### Leeds

Tuesday 4 May 7.30pm, Leeds Trades Council Club, Saville Mount, Leeds 7.

#### Manchester

Thursday 6 May 12.00am, Manchester University Students Union, Oxford Road.

#### Sheffield

Thursday 6 May 6.45pm, AUEW House, Furnival Gate, Sheffield.

#### London

Friday 7 May 7.00pm

### THE SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

Bobby Sands commemoration rally with speakers from Silent too long and the Irish Freedom Movement. Plus the 'Spirit of Freedom' exhibition. Holborn Library Hall, 32-38 Theobalds Road, near Holborn tube. Admission 50p.

### ★ EXHIBITION

Hunger strike exhibition produced by Derry H Block Committee. This exhibition is showing in Britain for the first time. It presents photographs, posters and documents on the hunger strikes of 1980-81.

Saturday 1 May  
Highgate School

3 May - 7 May  
Earth Exchange  
213 Archway Road N6

## East London Workers Against Racism

The Mohamed family live near East India Dock Road. They've been fire-bombed twice in the past year, and had their windows smashed 15 times. Female members of the family have been attacked on the streets. They — and countless other Asian families in East London — need your support.

Contact ELWAR if you are prepared to join our nightly defence patrols. Phone Keith Tompson on 01-274 3951 (24 hours).

## BRADFORD 12 ON TRIAL

★ Support the pickets at Leeds Crown Court — mass picket every Wednesday

★ Send cheques/postal orders to 'Bradford 12 Defence Fund', National Mobilising Committee, Box JK, LAP, 59 Cookridge St, Leeds 2 (T-shirts, badges, stickers, videos available on request)

★ Phone 01-250 1293 (Bradford 12 Campaign) or 01-274 3951 (WAR) for details about transport to pickets.

## CLEANSING OUR RANKS

★ Anti-racist work in the unions  
★ WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM  
★ WRECK THE CHECKS activities  
Come to the WAR TRADE UNION SUB-COMMITTEE  
Tuesday 18 May 7pm  
Conway Hall  
Red Lion Square  
London WC1  
(near Holborn tube)  
Phone 01-274 3951 for more details.

# RCP Activities



#### SOUTH LONDON



Tuesday 4 — Wednesday 5 May  
**Remember Bobby Sands!**  
24 hour hunger strike in commemoration of the death of Irish hunger striker Bobby Sands last May. All banners welcome.  
From Tuesday noon to Wednesday noon. Lambeth Town Hall steps, Brixton.

South London Irish Freedom Movement activists group meets fortnightly on Monday 10, 24 May. Details from 274 3951 or the next step sellers.



Sunday 9 May 11.00am-1.00pm  
**South London Workers Against Racism** activists meeting. John Marshall Hall, Blackfriars Road, SE1.

#### MANCHESTER



**Women for Communism**  
**Support the Rulecan Women!**  
**Fight for women's right to work!**  
Mass picket in Runcorn every Monday morning from 7.00am to 8.30am in support of the Rulecan women workers who came out on strike for trade union recognition and have now been dismissed. For details of transport phone 01-274 3951.

**Boycott scab produced goods!**  
Picket C&A, Rulecan's main customer, Arndale shopping centre every Friday 12.00-2.00pm.

**Women for Communism** activists group meets every other Tuesday evening.

**Irish Freedom Movement** activists group meets regularly every other Friday evening.



Saturday 29 May 10.00am  
**Regional conference on the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.** Speakers from South Africa and the British labour movement, plus films and South African band in the evening.

**MANWAR** activists group meets regularly every other Monday night.

For details of all these events phone 01-274 3951 or write to Box 33, 164-166 Corn Exchange Buildings, Hanging Ditch, Manchester.

#### SHEFFIELD



Thursday 20 May 7.30pm  
**Can socialism in one county work?**  
Public meeting. Speaker Mike Freeman (editor of *the next step*). See the next step sellers for details.



Saturday 19 June 10.00am  
**Preparing for Power** regional day-school.

At a time of concerted attacks by the ruling class, workers need to be united and resolute in defence of their interests. At this day-school revolutionaries and militant trade unionists will come together to discuss the strategy and activities that put working class interests into practice. Join the debate and get into action! For further details phone 01-274 3951 or write to *Preparing for Power*, BM RCP London WC1N 3XX.

**Sheffield Irish Freedom Movement** group meets every fortnight on Wednesday see the next step sellers for details.

*the next step* is sold from 9.00-11.00am on Mondays to Thursdays every week at West Street dole office.

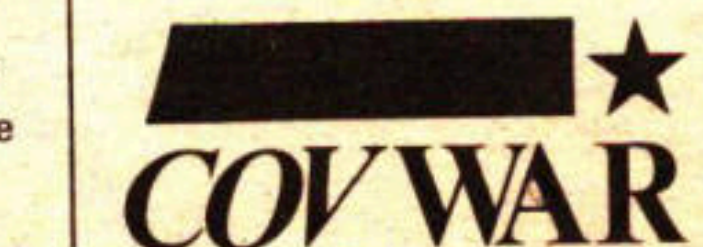
#### COVENTRY



Saturday 1 May 10.00am  
**Remember Bobby Sands!**  
**Support the Irish War!**  
Public rally and street theatre in commemoration of the death of Irish hunger striker Bobby Sands  
Coventry city centre.

Wednesday 5 May 2.00pm  
**Wreck the checks in the NHS!**  
Defend the overseas students! No to racist checks and fees! Free health care for all! Lobby outside Coventry and Warwickshire city hospital. Supported by COVWAR.

Wednesday 5 May 7.30pm  
**Racism in Coventry: how to fight it.**  
Public meeting as part of Warwick University's anti-fascist/anti-racist week of action. Supported by COVWAR. Details from the next step sellers or Warwick Students Union.



#### LEEDS



Thursday 20 May 1.00pm  
**El Salvador**  
RCP public meeting about the struggle in El Salvador today. Speaker Phil Murphy.  
Leeds University debating chambers.

Plus regular Irish Freedom Movement activists meetings.  
Monday 3, 17, 31 May at 7.30pm, Trades Council Club, Saville Mount, Leeds 7.

#### EAST LONDON



Monday 17 May 7.30pm  
**'Ireland's hunger strike'**  
Film and discussion about the hunger strikes last year in the Six Counties, and the work that we should be doing in Britain to build a real anti-imperialist movement. Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street.



Monday 31 May 7.30pm  
**'The Craggan'**  
Film and discussion about life in Derry under British occupation. Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street.

Regular ELWAR activists meeting on Monday 10 May at 7.00pm, Dalston Labour Club, Dalston Lane, E8.

**East London Irish Freedom Movement** activists meetings are held fortnightly on Thursday 13, 27 May at 7.00pm, Dalston Labour Club, Dalston Lane, E8.

#### NORTH LONDON



Tuesday 4 May 7.30pm  
**The SDP: what it is and how to fight it.**  
Public meeting about the Social Democratic Party and the forthcoming local elections. Islington North Library, Manor Gardens, off Holloway Road, N7.



Wednesday 5 May 4.30-6.30pm  
**Remember Bobby Sands!**  
Black flag protest called by the Irish Freedom Movement in commemoration of the death of hunger striker Bobby Sands. Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, N1.