

the next step

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The only way to end the Irish War

SUPPORT THE FIGHT FOR IRISH FREEDOM TROOPS OUT NOW

IT IS JUST over a month since the elections to James Prior's Northern Ireland assembly. Since then 19 people have died in what the British press calls the latest wave of 'sectarian' 'tit for tat' murders in Ireland. In fact, the killings are simply the latest phase in Britain's war of occupation in the Six Counties.

In all wars soldiers are killed. Of the 19 fatalities in the past few weeks, nine were officers of the British army or its paramilitary police, the Royal Ulster Constabulary. One of the dead was the girlfriend of an RUC officer, who was with him when his car was blown up. Another victim was Lenny Murphy, head of the notorious Shankill butchers, and a member of the Ulster Volunteer Force, a Loyalist militia with close links to the British security forces. All were killed by the soldiers of the republican armies — the IRA and the INLA. In turn, three IRA volunteers were shot dead on sight by the RUC at a country road block. This is war.

The other four victims of the recent period were soldiers in no army. Peter Corrigan was an election agent for Sinn Fein. Joe Donegan was an unemployed joiner. Patrick Murphy was a shopkeeper, Michael Fay was a mechanic. All were murdered by Loyalist paramilitaries. Seventeen-year old Michael Tighe was shot dead by the RUC and his friend seriously wounded in highly suspicious circumstances. What all these victims of the British state and its Loyalist allies had in common was that they were Catholics.

There is only one force for sectarianism in Ireland — the British state. Its rule in the Six Counties has enforced sectarian discrimination against Catholics in every sphere of life. Britain has guaranteed Protestant privileges and fostered Loyalist paramilitaries' virulent and violent hatred for Catholics. The Irish republican movement is fighting to destroy the sectarian state of Northern Ireland by driving out the British occupiers. There will be no peace in Ireland until it is successful.



**Inside:
Secret
TUC
documents
expose
NHS
sell-out**

the next step

The official labour movement RIP

ON 25 NOVEMBER Tory Employment secretary Norman Tebbit announced that his forthcoming Green Paper on trade union 'reforms' will contain even more draconian measures than the previous efforts to destroy the organisations of the working class. He made no attempt to tone down his statement, for he assumed that any opposition to the proposed new legislation could be swiftly swept aside. The British ruling class is no longer interested in negotiations — it knows that it can get away with dictating the terms. Thus it came as no surprise when *The Guardian* leaked a confidential Cabinet Office document which categorically stated that 'no trade unionist should be included' among those selected for royal commissions and similarly prestigious public bodies.

Individual employers have been following the Government's example. They know that there is little to stop them from imposing low wage settlements and victimising militants. Recently firms such as BL, Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, BOC, Hoover, Caterpillar Tractor and industries such as footwear, electrical contracting, and the docks have demanded and got away with two and sometimes three-year pay deals. The Ford motor company has decided to change its sick benefit scheme, while a productivity deal forced upon Esso's 1700 highly organised oil-tanker drivers means 200 job losses.

Every ruling class triumph is only a signal for the next assault. At the moment employers can scent victory and they are determined to go in for the kill. Their objective is not to get rid of trade unions altogether, but to alter the balance so overwhelmingly in favour of the employers that unions become a harmless symbol.

In full retreat

The labour bureaucracy has abandoned the field of industrial struggle. In this issue of *the next step* we examine in detail the TUC's scandalous conduct of the NHS dispute (see p12 and 13). The TUC's main priority is its self preservation. Every time the Government raises the stakes the union leaders simply retreat. A recent meeting of the TUC's General Council concluded that even its previous token actions are too much of a strain:

'The General Council therefore concluded that very careful thought needs to be given before any fresh commitments are entered into which would put further strains on resources in terms of not only money but also time of key trade union officials and activists in the regions.'

In other words, the TUC cannot afford to waste its resources by fighting for the interests of its members.

The labour bureaucrats' paralysis is not only due to their fear of losing assets and resources. They lack confidence in their own case; they believe that if they waged a determined campaign they could lose control over their rank and file and isolate themselves from respectable public opinion. The leadership of the Labour Party in particular is committed to following the middle road. The heavier

the blows falling on the labour movement, the more moderate becomes the response of its leadership.

In November the Labour Party went a step further. A top level TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee meeting on 22 November decided that demonstrations during the pre-election period were counter-productive. Everything had to be done to avoid creating an extremist image. The TUC's General Council immediately agreed and took steps to withdraw support from demonstrations already planned, such as the People's March for Jobs and the Glasgow to London march against unemployment. Len Murray immediately despatched a circular entitled 'TUC Campaigns' to all TUC affiliates, warning them of the new emphasis.

The circular is really a charter for TUC inertia. The TUC's campaigns on behalf of union members in 1983 will consist largely of distributing pamphlets and organising conferences for full time officials. The highpoint of the campaign is a series of conferences:

'Perhaps the most important objective of the campaign is to win support, in all sections of the labour movement, for the jointly agreed policies of the TUC and the Labour Party. As part of the consultation process on the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee statement 'Economic Planning and Industrial Democracy: A Framework for Full Employment' joint TUC-Labour Party conferences are being organised in each of the English regions, Wales and Scotland and possibly Northern Ireland'.

A rush for tickets seems unlikely. More and more tedious conferences are the TUC's substitute for fighting the bosses.

The only time that union leaders are prepared to fight these days is when they have the support of the bosses. Thus the leadership of the steel workers' union was ready to organise picketing against steel imports as part of the fight against foreign competitors. Fighting foreigners is quite respectable — Bill Sirs has the full backing of Tory MP Teddy Taylor for his union's pickets against steel imports (*The Times*, 26 November). However it is not so acceptable to struggle against British bosses. In the event the pickets collapsed almost as soon as they started. The union bureaucrats discovered that even this chauvinist gesture could prove too much of a strain on their assets and the energies of the full-time officials.

Them and us

The working class faces an onslaught from the bosses but its problems do not end there. It also faces a union leadership which is determined to clamp down on rank and file initiative. In a sense the conflict of interest between the leadership of the unions and the rank and file has never been greater. The experience of the past year shows the interests of the working class cannot be defended by any thing less than an all out struggle against capital. Important defeats in all sections of manufacturing industry and in the public services demonstrate the necessity for an all out resistance.

But resistance is the last thing that the

bureaucracy wants. For the Labour leaders fear the class struggle like the plague. As far as they are concerned, it puts their own position at risk and it also threatens the electoral prospects of the Labour Party. Even empty gestures like the People's March have to be called off to protect the moderate reputation that the labour leadership is trying to cultivate.

The conflict of interest between the labour bureaucracy and the rank and file can be expressed as a choice of two alternatives. You can keep your head down and help to preserve the TUC's resources until a Labour government is elected. Or you can stand up and fight back against the bosses every time they turn the screws on the working class. Active workers must use every opportunity to point out that workers must choose between these alternatives. Unless this is done — unless workers take matters into their own hands — the historic interests of the proletariat will be subordinated to the narrow interests of a small layer of bureaucrats.

What alternative?

The manifest corruption of the labour bureaucracy raises an important question. If the conflict of interest between the labour bureaucracy and the rank and file is so clear, then why do not workers in their tens of thousands revolt against their leaders? Why is it that the labour leadership is under such little pressure from rank and file workers? All credit for this state of affairs must go to the British left. The British left claims to have the interests of militant workers at heart. It claims a commitment to radical change and it often criticises the gradualism and parliamentarianism of the Labour Party. The trouble is that the left lacks any independence from the official labour movement. In a sense, it could not exist outside its constituency Labour Parties, its general management committees, its trades councils and trade union branch subcommittees. That is why, despite its criticisms, the left is a firm defender of the labour bureaucracy. The British left pleads for patience while it gets on with the job of reforming the unions and the Labour Party. Its most enduring message is that, whether you like or not, the official labour movement is the only realistic vehicle for change.

The reaction of the left to the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee's announcement of withdrawal of support from demonstrations was typical. Activities like the People's March have been the main outlet for the energy of the left. But when the top body of the official labour movement had spoken, there was nothing to be done but toe the line. The Communist Party, whose activities are always based around TUC initiatives, was furious. Well, at least, the *Morning Star*, 'deeply regretted' the decision. But the TUC's most faithful servant added a note of understanding:

'Of course the Labour Party and the TUC are correct in placing importance on press

briefings, television appearances, public meetings and statements in raising the issue of the alternative strategy and in attempting to combat Thatcher at her own media game.' (25 November)

'If that is what they want — that is what we'll do', said the Communist Party dutifully.

The other left groups barely bothered to react. They were busy fighting the right-wing purges inside the Labour Party. While the TUC was putting its foot down, and the employers were stepping up their vicious assaults on the working class, the number one priority of the British left was to make the Labour Party a more fraternal place to live in. This is its way of saying 'forget about the conflict between workers' interests and those of the labour bureaucracy — the most pressing task is to re-elect a Labour government'.

Let's get rid of them

Revolutionary communists have only one interest — that of the international proletariat. Unlike the British left, the RCP's loyalty is not to the institutions of the labour bureaucracy, but to the working class. We are not prepared to accept the right of the TUC and the Labour Party to subordinate the interests of a whole class to their petty preoccupations. The present course of action outlined by the labour bureaucracy and critically supported by the left dooms workers to an indefinite future of poverty and degradation.

The labour bureaucracy's monopoly over working class action is not unshakable. We do not need Len Murray's permission to organise demonstrations, strikes and pickets. Workers can assume responsibility over their future now — we do not have to wait for the utopia of a democratised Labour Party. It's about time that we abandoned this fixation on institutions that can't even organise token marches against unemployment and can't even tolerate a harmless bunch of do-gooders like the Militant Tendency within their ranks. How much easier it is to build a revolutionary workers' party then to try to democratise an 80-year old party that has been run by a bureaucracy from its birth!

The party of the future

We have no interest in obscuring the conflict of interests between workers and the labour bureaucrats. On the contrary, the clearer this conflict, the faster will the Revolutionary Communist Party be built. We believe that this conflict will not go away — indeed, it will only intensify. That is why we call the RCP the party of the future. Only those that are prepared to fight for class interests today, only those that are ready to confront the labour bureaucracy and force them out into the open, can claim the right to lead the movement of the future. Join us in the struggle to throw off the dead-weight of past tradition and to build the party of tomorrow!

ELECTIONS IN THE TWENTY-SIX COUNTIES

The still-born state

Charles Haughey's defeat in the Irish general election might have produced a change of government but it will not bring political stability to the Twenty-six Counties. The third election in 18 months has only served to highlight the fragility of the state artificially created through the British carve-up of Ireland 60 years ago. The world recession and the continuing domination of Ireland by Britain will remain the decisive factors in determining political developments as Garret FitzGerald takes office in Dublin. Pat Roberts reports.



INFLATION AT 20 per cent and real unemployment levels of 14 per cent reveal that the Irish Republic, like other European countries, is reeling under the impact of the worldwide capitalist recession. However, Ireland has problems which are not so much European but more characteristic of Third World countries. By the end of this year total state foreign debt will reach about five billion Irish punts (£), equivalent to 40 per cent of national output. This puts Ireland in the same league as Mexico, Brazil and the Philippines — it is one of the world's major debtor nations. The massive foreign debts incurred by Dublin were meant to bring Ireland up to the level of Europe. But, as other backward capitalist countries have discovered, borrowing from international banks only postpones the problems and stores up new difficulties for the future.

The Twenty-six Counties are entirely dominated by foreign capital. But Dublin is not only dominated economically. The partition of Ireland in 1921 into a twenty-six county 'independent' republic and a six county area integrated into the British state provided the foundations for a new form of imperialist domination. Through Partition, British imperialism has maintained its control over Ireland as a whole.

It is the economic and political domination of the Twenty-six Counties that explains the unstable and deformed character of the political system. The narrow basis for the accumulation of capital brings permanent economic instability. It also means that the capitalist class remains weak, ineffectual and lacking in confidence. The survival of this class depends heavily on movements of foreign capital. But the class structure is deformed in other ways. Partition divides the working class and the persistence of the division limits the development of proletarian politics.

The stunted development of class relations in Ireland has a number of important consequences. It limits class polarisation and stimulates the emergence of a classless middle ground. This middle ground is the natural home of the petit bourgeoisie. And it is petit-bourgeois politics that pervade the Free State. As Marx explained, the petit bourgeoisie continually vacillates between the two main classes — the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The petit bourgeoisie has no political independence — it continually responds to pressures from other classes. In the case of the Free State, it is also forced to respond to pressures from British imperialism.

It is the dominant influence of the petit bourgeoisie that explains the inconclusive character of political relations in Ireland today. Parliamentary politics represent a series of compromises — between past traditions and the present needs of capital, between aspirations for national independence and the reality of

imperialist domination. The end result of these compromises is an inherently unstable alliance between the capitalist class and imperialism.

All the characteristic features of the republic's electoral system — the dominance of rural constituencies, the special privileges in taxation enjoyed by farmers, the influence of the Church, the graft and corruption — are an outcome of the alliance between the weak Irish bourgeoisie and imperialism. Every election is an occasion to restate old values, and to declare a common commitment to the Irish way of life. However, in recent years this procedure has ceased to be convincing or effective. Growing unemployment and economic decline have forced people's attention towards more down to earth matters. Hence the increasing volatility of the electorate and the growing instability of the whole system.

Nothing to choose between

Despite their different origins, all the electoral parties express the outlook of the petit bourgeoisie. Even the more overtly pro-imperialist Fine Gael, the party that endorsed the Treaty that led to Partition, is forced to make its peace with the past. Thus Fine Gael leader FitzGerald cannot afford to ally himself publicly with Britain or make statements that offend the nationalist sensibilities of the rural community. Prime Minister Charles Haughey's Fianna Fail, 'the republican party' as it proclaims itself, has no distinct policies. As the *Financial Times* put it, the 'policy differences between Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are minute' (19 November). As a result, Haughey has been forced to invent differences — first over abortion and then over the future of the North.

The so-called left-wing parties — the Labour Party and the Workers Party — are in reality the radical wing of the petit bourgeoisie. They attempt to distinguish themselves as socialist by calling for more social justice and more state spending on social services. The most radical demand of the Workers Party is its call for a wealth tax on the rich — hardly a proposition that will mobilise the proletariat. These two parties have no independence from Haughey and FitzGerald — they simply translate the views of the petit bourgeoisie into a more radical language.

Thus the Irish electorate is presented with little real choice. All the parties have a profound attachment to the capitalist system. All the parties deplore the national liberation struggle waged in the North. And all the parties believe that abortion is a crime.

The national question

The British media likes to poke fun at the parochial and corrupt style of politics in the Free State. Reporters point with glee to the series of scandals that have

rocked the Haughey regime. Some newspapers have hypocritically commented on the backward response of the parties to the question of abortion. What they have not pointed out is that all these features of political life in the Free State are the inevitable consequence of British imperialism. It is imperialism that has stunted the development of Irish politics. It is imperialism that has corrupted political life. And it is national oppression that has consolidated the power of the church and of tradition.

Every major political party has an interest in suppressing the issue of national oppression. They all realise that to question imperialist domination would unleash forces that they could not control. To some extent the economic recession with its disastrous consequences for Irish people has helped to push the national question to the background. But not entirely. The war in the North inevitably raises the republic's connection with British imperialism. Even at the height of the recession attacking Britain can be a sure vote getter.

It was the certainty of losing further support that forced Haughey to take up the national question. But if he hadn't done it, somebody else would have raised the stakes. As electoral defeat loomed on the horizon, a Fianna Fail hack announced to an audience in Waterford that, 'We have here on the platform tonight the greatest living republican — Charlie Haughey' (*Irish Times*, 16 November). Since that night the 'greatest living republican' has gone out of his way to play the Green Card. While denouncing FitzGerald for collaboration with London — he warned: 'Britain, stay out of our elections!'

Of course Haughey was careful how he took up the national question. He emphasised the need to maintain Ireland's independence from foreign influence. But he was careful not to question Partition. He simply evaded the war and the presence of thousands of troops on Irish soil. There was a good reason for his circumspection. Haughey and his class hate the liberation struggle much more than they hate the indignity of playing second fiddle to London.

Long after the November elections and long after Haughey's demise the national question will continue to influence the imagination of the people of the Free State. For the national question simply is not restricted to the North. The economic and political instability of the Twenty-six Counties and the charade that passes for parliamentary politics shows the illusory character of its independence. For too long the petit bourgeoisie have been allowed to hold the stage. In the not too distant future the Irish proletariat will rid itself of the puppet parties and assume its rightful place at the head of the anti-imperialist struggle. On that day the middle ground will disappear and through the fight against imperialism the struggle for self-determination and for socialism will become synonymous.

Eleven years on

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SECTARIAN MURDERS AND PLASTIC BULLETS AND...

The myth of the mad gunman

THIS SUMMER the Fair Employment Agency — originally set up to eliminate discriminatory employment practices in the Six Counties of Ireland — decided that to publish its report would be embarrassing. The last thing it wanted was to draw international attention to what everybody in Belfast knows — that if you are Catholic your chances of getting a job are next to nil. If there was any remaining doubt, it was dispelled by a survey of the Northern Irish Civil Service published by the Belfast magazine *Fortnight*. According to this survey 87.3 per cent of people at the highest paid grade in the civil service are Protestants, as are 83.2 per cent and 82.7 per cent of the next two highest grades.

The sectarian state

The Six County state was created to maintain British domination over Ireland. The loyalty of the Protestant majority has been underwritten by special privileges granted by British imperialism. The Loyalist state is not merely an imperialist outpost in Ireland — it is designed to coerce the nationalist minority into submission. Catholics face discrimination in housing, services and jobs and are permanently excluded from positions of economic or political influence.

Sectarianism is a way of life in the Six Counties. It is the outcome of the special relationship between imperialism and Loyalism and it is aimed at keeping the nationalist population in check. For more than 60 years the sectarian state has deployed a wide range of legal and military measures to enforce imperialist oppression.

The Loyalist establishment has no independent existence. In every respect its survival depends on the maintenance of the British connection. Loyalism in the Six Counties is the creation of British imperialism. Without the sectarian state, the social position and privileges of the Loyalist community would be lost. That is why the Loyalist forces react in such a bitter and hysterical way against anybody who challenges the artificially created state.

By its very nature the sectarian and oppressive Northern Ireland state provokes resistance. Discrimination and oppression have forced the nationalist community to respond. Yet even the most moderate responses — such as the civil rights movement of the 'sixties — threaten to unleash the fury and hatred of the Loyalist establishment. The campaign of terror directed by the Loyalist paramilitaries against Catholics from the mid 'sixties gave no choice to the nationalist community but to defend itself. The emergence of the IRA and the armed struggle in the late 'sixties stemmed from the urgent need to defend the nationalist ghettos.

The frequent confrontations between the two communities and the emergence of paramilitary forces can appear, at first sight, to justify the view that a religious conflict is taking place. The British ruling class has encouraged this superficial explanation which allows it to use the label of a peace-keeping force for its army of occupation. The recent spate of assassinations has lent further credibility to this view.

It is convenient to blame the violence in the Six Counties on sectarian strife. In this way the responsibility of British imperialism for propping up and fuelling sectarianism is obscured. In reality sectarianism is the only way that the connection with Britain can be maintained. Sectarianism is essential for guaranteeing the continued loyalty of the Protestant community and for enforcing the oppression of the nationalist community.

In the British media the all-pervading sectarian discrimination against Catholics in all spheres of life in the Six Counties is overshadowed by a stream of propaganda about mad gunmen and communal strife. This propaganda has become so influential that much of the British left simply reiterates it in more socialist terms. The myth of the mad gunman allows the British establishment to divert attention from its crimes in Ireland. For the British left it provides an excuse for sitting on the sidelines while the British state carries on its war against the Irish people.



Who are the sectarians?

The Loyalist paramilitaries and the IRA cannot be equated. The Loyalist gunmen are fighting in support of British imperialism to defend their narrow privileges and to enforce the subordination of every Catholic. The IRA is fighting a war of national liberation — it aims to destroy the institutions which enforce sectarianism.

The targets of IRA assassinations are military personnel — members of the army, the RUC and the UDR. IRA operations are not aimed against Protestants as such — nobody has yet found any attacks on the Protestant religion in any republican publication. By contrast, the Loyalist assassination squads operate indiscriminately — their aim is to terrorise all Catholics and their victims are chosen at random.

The issue of religion is central to Loyalism — it provides the ideology which legitimises its privileges and its special relationship with Britain. Even today prominent Loyalist politicians have no inhibitions about attacking 'Popery' and using bestial metaphors to describe Catholics. Catholicism is portrayed as a threat to the Loyalist way of life and the assassination of individual Catholics is justified accordingly.

The stamp of Loyalist bigotry can be found on many of its Catholic victims. Thomas Madden, murdered on 12 August 1972, was found with over 150 wounds on his body. Gerry McWilliams from Andersonstown died in September 1974. The man who found his body thought he had come across a bundle of rags — every bone in his body was broken, his eyes had been gorged and his throat was ripped out. Joe Donegan, whose savagely battered body was found last month, is only the latest of the many Catholics

arbitrarily picked up, tortured and murdered.

Even the most sophisticated practitioners of British propaganda have not been able to ascribe to the IRA the deranged brutality that characterises Loyalist sectarian murders. There is a very good reason for this. Even the most religious member of the IRA is of necessity anti-sectarian. For the nationalist population, sectarianism and imperialist oppression are intimately linked. Resistance to their oppression is by its very nature anti-sectarian — its goal is the destruction of the sectarian state.

False friends of Ireland

The British left justifies its abstention from the Irish War on the grounds that both sides are more or less equally at fault. The left will denounce the murder of a child by a rubber bullet with the same vehemence as the assassination of an army officer. Some British socialists have the gall to accuse the struggle for national liberation of unleashing further repression. In recent months the left has become increasingly outspoken in its denunciation of the liberation struggle. Readers of left-wing newspapers could be excused for believing that the main problem in Ireland is the resistance of the nationalist population.

On 30 October, *Socialist Worker* joined the Fleet Street chorus in denouncing 'religious sectarianism' on both sides. Two weeks later, a correspondent went a step further and suggested that in fact assassinations committed by republicans were a cause of sectarianism. He commented: 'One can only wonder what response they'd receive from those workers, Catholic and Protestant, in the Royal Victoria hospital on the Falls Road whose joint fight is being undermined by the assassinations' (13 Novem-

ber). The implication was clear: an otherwise united working class was being wrenched apart by sectarian gunmen from both sides.

The plea for class unity has an air of plausibility about it. But the inescapable fact is that as long as the sectarian state exists, the working class will always be divided along religious lines. Loyalist workers see Catholics as competitors for their privileges — as enemies rather than class allies. The destruction of the sectarian state is a precondition for eliminating Loyalist privilege and opening up the road for class unity.

It is instructive that in the rare examples of class unity, it is almost always nationalist workers who take the initiative. Thus at the Royal Victoria Hospital it was the majority of Catholic ancillary workers who provided the impetus for united action during the NHS dispute.

The British left's pleas for class unity in fact represent an acquiescence to national oppression. In return for abandoning the struggle against imperialism, it offers the utopia of united action over pay. Under the guise of class unity even non-violent forms of anti-imperialist protest are criticised for being divisive. Thus *Socialist Organiser*, after musing about how the 'Catholic and Protestant communities can learn to live together' concludes:

'The demonstration of solid support for the republicans by 10 per cent of the electorate, and the probable counter polarisation on the Protestant side, probably does bring sectarian civil war nearer.'

The charge of fomenting sectarian strife is made against the only force that is fighting sectarianism in Ireland! As usual, *Socialist Organiser* is only following the path of *Militant*. *Militant* knows who to blame: 'Sinn Féin's result will only increase sectarian polarisation of politics' (29 October).

The obvious fact that the resistance of the oppressed provokes further repression is perverted into the argument that the struggle against oppression bears the responsibility for the state of affairs in Ireland. Take away the rhetoric about class unity and all that's left is the lies and distortions of the British ruling class.

Their solidarity and ours

Socialist Worker, *Socialist Organiser* and *Militant* all have strong views on plastic bullets. In common with other British liberals they find this weapon too offensive. That is why they will be supporting the conference against plastic bullets organised by the Labour Committee on Ireland next March.

The Irish Freedom Movement is against plastic bullets and every other weapon used by the British army to terrorise the people of Ireland. But being against plastic bullets has nothing to do with building a solidarity movement with the liberation struggle. Indeed, for many British socialists the issue of plastic bullets provides an opportunity to express anguish and concern at the consequences of the British occupation, while they remain firmly in the camp of the foes of the liberation struggle.

In Britain the plastic bullets issue is cynically manipulated to take attention away from the real problems raised by the Irish War. Are you for the immediate withdrawal of British troops? Do you support the right of the Irish to self-determination? Do you support the right of the Irish people to pursue their struggle for liberation by any means they see necessary? Only if your answer is yes to all three questions is your opposition to plastic bullets that of an anti-imperialist rather than the excuse of a British liberal.

Frank Richards

THE ABORTION AMENDMENT CONTROVERSY

Hypocrisy all around

'The state recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the state a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The state shall therefore endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties at home.' (*The constitution*, Article 41.2)

THE OPPRESSION of women is written into the constitution of the Free State. Women are first and foremost mothers, tied to the home. Their place in social production is secondary and many employers still expect women to give up their job when they marry.

The subordination of women is legitimised through the elevation of the family to a mystical plane. As the constitution puts it:

'The state recognises the family as the natural, primary and fundamental unit group of society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.' (Article 41.1)

The celebration of the family results from the requirements of social control. In more developed capitalist countries the family is primarily a unit for reproducing the working class. In Ireland, the family plays this role too. But in addition, the family plays an important role in maintaining social stability in an otherwise unstable political system.

Through the family, the Catholic hierarchy retains its influence and ensures that religion continues to regulate important aspects of social life. Although a referendum in 1972 removed references to the 'special position' of the Catholic church from the constitution, the influence of the hierarchy remains considerable. All parties have a common interest in maintaining social stability — hence the defence of the family and the church and the attacks on the rights of women. The all-pervasive character of the pro-family campaign can be seen in the way it has affected the provision of health care in Ireland since the 'fifties.

Mothers and children

In 1951 the coalition government headed by Fine Gael man John Costello introduced a 'mother and child' scheme for debate in the Dail (Parliament). Presented by radical health minister Dr Noel Browne, this scheme provided for 'safeguarding the health of women in respect of motherhood, and for the attendance to the health of children up to 16 years of age'.

Even this modest scheme provoked condemnation from the Catholic hierarchy. The clergy argued that the scheme was taking away the rights and duties of parents, and handing them to the state. According to the church, the state had 'no competence' in providing physical education for children, or advice to expectant mothers. The Catholic bishops' real fear was that, with the expansion of health services, doctors whose view on birth control did not coincide with those of the church, would be let loose on women and children. The Catholic leaders were backed up by private doctors.

Catholic social teaching proved to be Noel Browne's undoing. Unable to appease the bishops, he was forced to resign from the cabinet shortly before the government fell.

The new Fianna Fail government accommodated to the hierarchy's views. After a series of consultations and obliging amendments, Fianna Fail came up with a scheme that met with the approval of the Catholic hierarchy.

It recognised the 'responsibility of individuals' to provide for their own health, and the 'duty of fathers' to ensure

Imperialist oppression consolidates backward tradition and ideology. The special place of the Catholic church in Irish life is a direct result of this oppression. So long as Britain retains its hold over Ireland, the church will retain its influence for it is the very experience of oppression which drives people to seek solace in religion. Catholicism must therefore be seen as an expression of Irish identity in the face of oppression. Moreover, the social and economic backwardness that imperialism inflicts on Ireland ensures that the Catholic hierarchy remains firmly rooted in society. The present debate on abortion brings out, with full force, the continuing grip of reaction in Ireland.



their families' health. It ensured that 'materialist principles' and 'practices contrary to natural law' would not be part of medical treatment. The scheme advocated the development of social health provision only within these guidelines. In short, it proclaimed that the twenty-six county state would not even grant any of the limited rights that women might win in a capitalist country.

A church's right to choose

As in any other capitalist country, women in Ireland are forced to have abortions. According to estimates something like 5000 illegal abortions were performed in Ireland last year. More than 5000 more Irish women were forced to come to Britain to get an abortion last year. Why? Because under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, which was introduced by Britain, abortion is illegal in Ireland. Anyone who has an abortion or who assists a woman to have an abortion is liable to life imprisonment.

There are strong anti-abortion lobbies in the imperialist countries. But in a country oppressed by imperialism, matters go much further. Even to consider abortion is portrayed as evil. Free discussion on sex and the family is stifled and women are under pressure to keep their views on these matters to themselves. All shades of political opinion uphold this reactionary climate.

Over the last year, the issue of abortion has been at the centre of an intensified offensive against women's rights. With backing and encouragement from leading clergy and politicians, Catholic organisations have initiated a debate over abortion. Although it is already illegal, they want this situation guaranteed in the constitution. Both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael have given commitments to hold a referendum to enshrine 'the rights of unborn life' into the constitution by an amendment along the following lines:

'The state acknowledges the right to life of the unborn, and with due regard to the equal right of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.'

Why Haughey is against abortion

Backed by reactionary pressure groups like the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, Life, and the Responsible Society, the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign was launched in April 1981. Both Haughey and Fitzgerald gave its leading member Julia Vaughan, a former nun, assurances that they supported PLAC's demand. The Fine Gael leader gave his promise with an eye to the election pending at that time. But over the last few months, some misgivings have arisen in Fitzgerald's party over the wisdom of an abortion amendment.

For Fianna Fail, however, the abortion amendment has been an ideal issue. In the run-up to the 24 November election, Haughey made his support for PLAC a central campaigning demand. Given the economic programme put forward in *The way forward*, Fianna Fail's 'five-year plan', this is hardly surprising. Haughey has been attempting to capitalise on an issue that seems like a sure winner. Over a period when he has been attacking workers' living standards, and appealing to Ireland to tighten its belt, Haughey has been rallying the nation around the abortion issue.

Opposition to abortion has been a rallying cry for Haughey's party itself. Though wracked by internal splits on economic policy and choice of leadership, Fianna Fail can unite behind a moral crusade on abortion.

The Twenty-six Counties are in the grip of a moral crisis. Pre-marital sex, robbery and drugs — Catholic Ireland is being swept by a wave of sin. And the threat of increasing social unrest in the Twenty-six Counties is a headache for the Government. The hierarchy and politicians are building up opposition to abortion as a bulwark against the tide. The letters pages of newspapers are filled with metaphysical discussions about the moment of conception. In infant schools and from church pulpits, nuns, priests and moralists have been putting the case against abortion, backed up by gory pictures of aborted foetuses. Television programmes like 'Dallas' have been rescheduled when

they include references to abortion.

These examples illustrate the sustained ideological attack on women's rights in Ireland. An amendment to secure the absolute illegality and impossibility of abortion would be a major setback for Irish women.

Bad opposition

The referendum on the proposed amendment has not gone unopposed. Concerted opposition has come from the Anti-Amendment Campaign, which was formed in June this year, and encompasses everybody from right wingers like Methodist Ernest Gallagher and Conor Cruise O'Brien, to Bernadette McAliskey, the Irish Republican Socialist Party and numerous women's groups.

Unfortunately, the coalition is only campaigning against the amendment, not for the right to abortion. The whole thrust of the campaign is 'You don't have to be in favour of abortion to be against the abortion amendment'. Labour Party senator Mary Robinson's arguments against the amendment are typical. She argues that the amendment is superfluous because abortion is already illegal and therefore the 'rights of the unborn child' are secure under existing legislation.

The Anti-Amendment Campaign is doomed to failure simply because it evades the central issue — the right for all women to have an abortion. The arguments of the AAC are thus ineffectual and even dishonest. These are the objections that the AAC puts forward:

- The country could spend the money better than on a referendum.
- The amendment would deny abortion in special cases, such as after rape, or where a woman's health is endangered.
- It would stifle further discussion.
- It would do nothing to solve the problem of unwanted pregnancy.

None of these constitutes an argument against the ideological offensive waged by PLAC. Concern with the nation's economy does nothing to counter the arguments about the fictional 'rights of the unborn child'.

The barrier to real freedom

Many feminists in Britain and Ireland see in the Irish anti-abortion lobby another example of the Catholic and male-dominated institutions of Ireland. The underlying cause of the reactionary ideology — British imperialism — is entirely ignored. The clear link between national domination, the conservatism of tradition and religion and the oppression of women is obscured. Even radical women's groups such as the Women's Right to Choose Group in Dublin refuse to take a stand on the national question — fearing that it would introduce divisions into the women's movement (*Spare Rib*, May 1982).

In Britain many have even counterposed the apparent enlightenment of the Protestant church to the conservative obscurantism of the Catholic hierarchy. Some British feminists even want Westminster to safeguard women's rights in the Six Counties. This not only backs up the right of British imperialism to dominate Ireland; it also misses the point. The roots of religious reaction are to be found not in Dublin or Maynooth but in London. It is national oppression which enforces the degradation of Irish women. And it is imperialism that nourishes the soil on which reaction grows. That's why the fight for abortion on demand is so intimately linked to the struggle for Irish freedom. The best that people in Britain can do to fight for the emancipation of Irish women is to join the struggle against British imperialism.

Mike Wall

The crisis of Irish solidarity work

**FIGHT RACISM!
FIGHT IMPERIALISM!**
TROOPS OUT
Paper of the Troops Out Movement 15p

OVER THE LAST two years the Irish solidarity movement in Britain has gone from bad to worse. Tiny demonstrations and empty gestures have been the characteristic features of Irish solidarity events. As we frequently argued, these failures resulted from an opportunist perspective, which refused to fight for solidarity from a proletarian point of view. Instead of building an anti-imperialist movement in the working class, many Irish activists have sought refuge in liberal and student circles or in the Labour Party.

The liberal solidarity movement has recently degenerated further. It now blames the working class for its own failures, and it has entirely given up fighting for solidarity with the liberation struggle.

Solidarity with the Labour Party

The main component of the British solidarity movement used to be the Troops Out Movement (TOM). It is ironic that this movement should be named after the demand for 'troops out' because TOM has always been reluctant to organise public activities around this slogan. The dominant feature of this movement was its moralism — its perspective was to stir liberal consciences and expose some of the horrors of the Irish war. It never understood that liberal opinion has no time for the Irish — and that in a war British liberals will always back the British ruling class.

Whenever the Irish Freedom Movement has pointed out that only British workers have an interest in the victory of the Irish people we have been accused by TOM of being purist. Now TOM has gone a step further and accuses itself of being too purist. A recent document circulated

inside TOM argues that the demand for Troops Out Now 'constitutes a barrier to building a meaningful withdrawal movement'. According to its authors even TOM's past wishy-washy approach is too strong.

In a way, this document recognises what the IFM has been arguing for a long time: it is impossible to win support for the liberation struggle through appealing to liberal opinion. There is too much at stake in this war and the soft option of the middle ground does not exist. But instead of drawing the conclusion that opportunism does not pay — the document calls for an even more liberal solution. The authors argue that TOM should put forward objectives which are acceptable to the pro-imperialist Labour Party. In their words 'political activists here, such as the Labour Party left, are looking for positive solutions to work around, not just catch phrases'.

The term 'positive solutions' is the key. What does 'positive solutions' mean in the context of imperialist domination? It can only be the reform of this domination — a call for a more humane form of imperialist rule. This is precisely what the Labour left wants. In March next year its supporters are holding a conference to discuss plastic bullets. The IFM is against the use of plastic bullets because it is against Britain's domination of Ireland. The Labour Committee on Ireland, which is organising this conference, has nothing to say about British imperialism. Indeed the conference organisers can't even bring themselves to take a stand on plastic bullets. Thus a letter sent out by the conference organisers delicately asks: 'is the Plastic Bullet part of the political solution, or part of the problem?'. For the IFM the

answer is straightforward — it depends which side of the war you are on.

The LCI and TOM go on pretending that you can build solidarity without choosing sides. In Britain that simply means lining up with the Labour Party and giving solidarity to the Labour left.

The author David Reed

A recent publication *Building an Irish solidarity movement* is the text of a speech given by the author David Reed to a conference organised by the Revolutionary Communist Group. Inside the RCG David Reed is something of a cult figure — having managed to write a 17-part serial on Ireland in its review *Fight racism! Fight imperialism!* The speech attempts to criticise TOM and offer an alternative way of building a solidarity movement.

Unfortunately, the author David Reed starts from the same premise as TOM — the British working class is hopeless and therefore cannot be relied on to build an anti-imperialist movement. But, unlike TOM, Reed hasn't got much time for the Labour Party either. Reed therefore is forced into a sociological investigation of who can be won to the cause. In the course of his inquiry, he notes that most Irish demonstrations in the past have usually been composed of republicans, anti-imperialists and communists. Having conclusively demonstrated this, he observes that other 'forces' also exist to make up the numbers. The other forces turn out to be 'the unemployed youth — black and white'.

Unemployed youth, republicans and communists, no doubt, have an important place in the anti-imperialist movement. But this search for allies begs the

central questions. Can a movement be built without the mobilisation of tens of thousands of workers? Can an effective anti-imperialist movement exist without transforming the consciousness of the British working class? These questions are irrelevant for the RCG. According to the author, 'forces whose interests lie in the overthrow of British imperialism' already exist.

Reed simply evades the problem by stating that the solution is at hand. As Marx noted, the force that will overthrow capitalism is the working class. It has existed for a long time. The problem is how to transform the outlook of workers so that they can assume their historic responsibility. Those who ignore the problem and look elsewhere — to the Labour Party or to unemployed youth — postpone the building of an effective movement of solidarity for the future.

The IFM

The solution to the crisis of the Irish solidarity movement lies in the hands of the IFM. The IFM is the only movement in Britain which directs its activities towards the working class. It is the only movement that seeks to win support for the liberation struggle inside the workplace and trade union branches. The IFM believes that there are no magical answers, gimmicks or ready-made vanguards. The problem is not to discover who the anti-imperialist forces are, but to develop effective policies to win workers behind the cause of Irish freedom. Join us in this struggle and fight to turn the solidarity movement into a living force inside the working class!

THE PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ACT

Let's smash it in '83!



Solidarity with Irish prisoners in Leicester jail.

SINCE ITS introduction in November 1974 about 5550 people have been arrested under the PTA. Almost 90 people were arrested during the last three months — nearly one person every day. The aim of the PTA is to intimidate the Irish community in Britain — to prevent any serious demonstration of solidarity with the liberation struggle. This draconian law is currently under review by Tory peer Lord Jellicoe and it is up for its next renewal in Parliament in March 1983. The chances are that it will either remain on the statute books or an even more repressive law will be introduced.

For the past three years, the IFM's predecessor, the Smash the PTA Campaign, has been organising against this law in the labour movement. We have organised legal defence and solidarity pickets on behalf of the victims of this law. During the coming months, the IFM will be stepping up the campaign. Petitions and motions will be circulated in the trade unions calling on workers to resist the

PTA. In March, the IFM is calling for a week of direct action to build popular opposition to the PTA — plans are already underway to make sure that public attention is turned towards the renewal of this reactionary legislation.

Now it is your turn to stand up. Every trade unionist can initiate a discussion on the PTA in his or her union branch. Get your branch to pass a resolution opposing the PTA and sponsoring the IFM's week of action.

MODEL RESOLUTION

This branch/trades council/students' union calls for the immediate repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. It notes that this Act is designed to coerce opponents of British imperialism, particularly in the Irish community. This branch fully supports the week of direct action against the PTA called by the Irish Freedom Movement during the first week of March and calls on all its members to take part in it.



Next picket at Wakefield 18 December 2.00pm (leafletting town centre 1.00pm)

Events in Brixton in November reveal the success of the establishment's new strategy for holding down the black youth in the inner city areas. While young blacks fought back against the Immediate Response Unit riot squads, the police and the council won overwhelming public approval for their action in evicting and demolishing three houses in the 'no-go' area of Railton Road, Brixton's Front Line. Only Workers Against Racism supported the angry response of black youth — to be condemned and slandered from the Tory *Daily Mail* to the WRP's *News Line*. Farekh Afzal examines how the state got back on top in Brixton.

THE BRIXTON POLICE seriously underestimated the potential resistance to their 'swamp' stop and search tactics in 1981. The ferocity of the response of black youth provoked a recognition among the ruling class that a different strategy was needed to control the inner cities. The promoter of the new approach was Lord Scarman, who presided over an inquiry into the Brixton riots and published his findings in paperback earlier this year. Its executor was Sir Kenneth Newman who took over command of the Metropolitan Police in October. The November events in Brixton demonstrated the new approach in action.

Scarman meets Newman

Scarman's recommendations fell broadly into two areas. First, he proposed measures to improve relations between the police and the community. Second, he advocated that the police should be equipped and trained to deal effectively and firmly with disturbances. In a major article in *The Times* on 14 June, Newman explained 'why I back the Scarman line'. For him, 'the specific policy implication' of Scarman was 'that the police should, especially in multi-racial inner city areas, reduce abrasive street encounters to the minimum and focus their efforts on the selective and accurate targeting of the people actually committing street robberies. This implies a bigger investment in intelligence and skilled surveillance'. In other words, Newman wanted less 'swamping' of the kind that tended to provoke more trouble than could easily be handled, and more 'targeting' to hit the real troublemakers really hard.

At his first interview as commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Newman indicated that 'the full riot police arsenal of plastic bullets and water cannons would be employed if riots of the type that affected Brixton and elsewhere last year were repeated' (*The Guardian*, 4 October). However, as Newman explained, these measures would be used alongside schemes to create greater public trust and confidence in the police. Here Newman echoed Scarman, and, with some reservations, welcomed radical initiatives to increase 'police accountability':

'In Great Britain movements by police to improve relations with the community are running in parallel with movements by left-wing parties to gain more control over the police. The dangers of control by people motivated by an ideology rather than the public good are obvious and care will have to be taken that it is the general public's interest that is served, not that of a narrow sectional interest.

'Nevertheless, accountability is a requirement for effective policing and forms of consultation will have to be evolved which will "ensure that the police in their policies and operations keep in touch with and are responsible to the community they police" (Scarman). (*The Times*, 14 June)

It was this strategy of highly selective, aggressive policing backed by a campaign of consultation and community relations that the state brought to bear on Railton Road last month.

The scapegoat identified

The initiative that led to the evictions and the subsequent riot began almost a year ago, and it came from the highest level. On 18 January, Home Secretary William Whitelaw chaired a meeting of police and council representatives with the object of following through Scarman's recommendation to establish a Lambeth police



consultative group. This body, which held its first public meeting in March, played a crucial role in legitimising the actions of the police in Railton Road in November.

The Home Office pushed the scheme ahead in face of diverse objections. Within six months it increased its financial backing from £13 000 to £22 000 a year to pay for a full-time worker and a secretary. The police bent over backwards to accommodate criticisms of recruitment and training methods, access to Brixton police station and the inefficiency of its telephone switchboard. They were particularly concerned to build up good relations with the representatives of the black community on the committee. The council provided office facilities and a telephone and £6500 for running expenses: it agreed to help find a shop-front so that the consultative group could at least appear to be operating independently of the town hall. Some local radicals — notably in the law centre and the trades council — were critical of the committee, but largely because they felt that its composition was not sufficiently representative of the community for it to play its harmonising role effectively. They maintained a discreet distance.

The driving force behind the consultative group was the police, led by L-division commander Brian Fairbairn. The police defined the terms of the committee's discussions right from the start. At one of its first meetings, Fairbairn circulated a document entitled 'Policing problems in Lambeth', which provided the framework for the group's deliberations throughout the summer. Through the consultative group and a wider propaganda campaign the police provided a definition of the problems of the area as crime in general, crime carried out by young blacks in particular, and especially crime carried out by young blacks in Railton Road.

In August the consultative group provided the platform for a lecture on black child muggers from Detective Chief Superintendent Gerry Plowman. He identified 'a hard core of between 150 and 200 teenage thugs' who were 'responsible for Brixton's soaring street crime'. According to Plowman, '80 per cent of the attacks were committed by black youths' (see *The Standard*, 4 August). Newman's 'target' was moving into Fairbairn's sights. The role of the consultative group was to make a selective hit acceptable to a wider public. In this task the various constituents of the committee — the councillors, the black community leaders and the Labour MPs all played their part.

'The council that cares'

Lambeth Council is widely known for the radicalism of its Labour leader Ted Knight. Ousted by an unstable alliance of Tories and the SDP last May, he took control again in November when an SDP resignation shifted the balance of power. These changes have made little difference to council policy. The response of all Lambeth's councillors to the riots of 1981 was to use them as a lever to gain more central government spending for the borough. However, the inability of the council to use even its limited powers to tackle some of the real problems facing

Who really provoked

black people in Brixton has led it to line up behind the police offensive to keep them down.

Following the riots, Lambeth Council won an increase in the government's inner city partnership funding from £9.7m in 1981-82 to £12m in 1982-83. What use is this money to black people in the borough? The council's main capital project is its proposed town centre plan — a grandiose scheme to build a complex of shops and light industry which promises to provide 4000 plus jobs by 1986-87. This recalls the recreation centre currently under construction in Brixton centre at a cost of £18m: it was supposed to open in 1978. When it finally opens next year its entrance charges will be beyond the means of most of Brixton's young unemployed.

The only thing people in Brixton have seen in the way of new investment is the 'We're backing Brixton' campaign and the 'face-lift' of the central market area. This was promoted by local traders and shopkeepers desperate to draw back business after the riots and the shock-horror stories about muggings. A substantial government subsidy helped to advertise the local big stores on all the railway bridges and put a few concrete plant pots and park benches in Brixton's main thoroughfares.

Meanwhile unemployment among black teenagers rose by 79 per cent in 12 months — more than twice the rise among white youth. A Lambeth Council survey estimated that between 50 and 75 per cent of all black people under the age of 24 were out of work (*South London Press*, 6 April). For these young people, jobs in 1986-87, a recreation centre they won't be able to afford in 1983-84 and 'We're backing Brixton' badges in 1982, meant nothing. Brixton's young unemployed blacks congregated to pass the time of day on Railton Road.

The Front Line became the centre of black resistance to the police campaign of criminalisation and harassment. For the police it became a no-go area. They put all the problems of the area down to the 'activities' of black youth on the Front Line. The council increasingly came to echo the police, blaming all the borough's ills on unemployed young blacks. The council's response to its inability to provide jobs, housing or amenities for blacks was to bring forward its plans to demolish the Front Line.

The council came up with the offer of an Afro-Caribbean centre to placate the people on the Front Line. Ted Knight could only grumble that it would probably end up costing the council more than it bargained for (*Financial Times*, 5 April). But the council did not send 500 police and the bulldozers up Railton Road to make way for new amenities for Brixton blacks. It linked arms with the police to demolish the Front Line because it has nothing to offer black youth today except empty promises for the future.



Ted Knight

Representing the community?

The Lambeth police consultative group is particularly proud of its success in winning the active support of a number of community organisations and their leaders. One of the central themes of the Scarman

Report was the need to integrate a section of the black community in Britain in general and Brixton in particular. The consultative group is regularly attended by representatives of around 20 organisations of ethnic minorities in Brixton. But who are these representatives and whom do they represent?

The chairman, who receives a Home Office salary, is Father Charles Walker, formerly chaplain to the West Indian community in the diocese of Southwark. Courtenay Laws has been involved in community relations in the area for many years and is the director of the Brixton Neighbourhood Community Association, which employs around 30 staff in various youth work, youth training and lunch club activities. Lloyd Leon is the landlord of the Atlantic pub, at the heart of Brixton. He is also a Labour councillor and leading representative of the Brixton Domino Club of which Scarman is a life member. Rene Webb runs the Melting Pot Foundation on Atlantic Road, an advice centre for Brixton blacks with an open door to the police. George Greaves is landlord of the Coach and Horses, another Brixton centre pub, and chairman of the Council for Community Relations.

All these organisations are recipients of substantial state and charitable funding. The table below shows the grants made by Lambeth Council alone to some of the community groups on the consultative group (75 per cent of the cash comes from the government).

Community Organisation	Representative on consultative group
Asian Community Action Group	Jay Thakkar
Brixton Domino Club	Lloyd Leon
Brixton Neighbourhood Community Association	Courtenay Laws
Melting Pot Foundation	Rene Webb
Council for Community Relations	George Greaves
Consortium of Ethnic minorities	I Critchlow
South London Islamic Centre	A R Lone

The community representatives on the consultative group have proved receptive to viewing the problems of Brixton from the standpoint of the council.

Over the summer they earnestly joined in the debate on black criminality in the Railton Road area. Rene Webb called for a firmer line from the police, declaring that 'it was never the intention that where crimes are committed, the police should not act' (*The Times*, 2 August). Lloyd Leon echoed police denunciations of a hardcore of 'black hoodligans'.

By November the community leaders were solidly behind the police and the council in their determination to teach the Front Line youth a lesson. In reality the middle-aged black businessmen and professionals on the consultative group have little in common with Brixton's unemployed youth. Their status and their community projects depend on state patronage and funding more than on the support of local people. Their eager participation in the consensus against the Front Line confirms that their loyalty to the council and the police exceeds their loyalty to the black community.

How Labour helps the police

In Brixton the Labour councillors and MPs have been working hard through the consultative group to build a wide consensus of support for the police. Back in April Ted Knight explained what had to

the Brixton riot?



be done to prevent a repetition of the 1981 riots:

'If Commander Fairbairn is frank with us and explains what he has in mind and then takes account of the view of the community groups, then I think we will be successful. If he doesn't tell us what he is doing then there will be breakdown.' (*The Standard*, 2 April)

Fairbairn was only too enthusiastic to tell the consultative group what he was doing: he was preparing to take action against the black 'criminals' on the Front Line. The minutes of the June meeting record how the police identified the problem and how a consensus on the solution emerged:

'Commander Fairbairn explained that groups of people tend to congregate regularly on pavements, refuse requests to clear the footpaths, and have begun to treat the area as one in which the police are not to be allowed to undertake their proper functions. Accordingly, in the course of their duties, officers have been impeded, spat upon, hit by a bottle, and police cars have been stoned. Residents have been accosted and subjected to intolerable noise and have now threatened to withhold their rates. There had also been complaints from London Transport. The commander concluded that appropriate action would have to be taken and that the police could not 'favour' any section of the population merely to keep the peace.

'Mr Leon supported the account given by

of life in the area, increasing disregard for the law there and the open trade in drugs. He appealed for action through consent and understanding and argued that if buildings were destroyed, the problem would not be eradicated but merely transferred to another area. He called for joint action by the police, the council and the community.'

This is how local MP John Fraser summed up the 'problems' to a meeting between representatives of the local community and the leader of the council on 18 June:

'Drug dealing
Theft, violence in the course of dealing
Road obstruction and safety
Illegal drinking clubs
Commercial parties and noise
Obstruction of footpaths
Non-residential use of houses
Diminution of quality of life of residents
Risk of serious disorder
Problem of activity moving elsewhere.'

The issues of unemployment and housing no longer merited even a token mention in Labour's list of priorities. The Labour Party had always ignored the major problem facing Brixton's blacks - incessant police harassment. Labour was blind to everything except crime, crime, crime; the only thing that mattered in Brixton were 'the activities' going on in three houses in Railton Road. In increasingly strident terms throughout the summer, Fraser demanded firm action against the Front Line. Once Newman took up office, Fairbairn's newly riot-equipped Immediate Response Units were just waiting to go in.

The final authorisation came in a document entitled 'Organisational arrangements for urgent action' and subtitled a 'Paper submitted jointly by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Robin Pitt, and Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Ted Knight'. This is the opening paragraph:

'A feature of the council's approach to the Railton Road problems has been its bipartisan nature. The objective has been to achieve a consensus between the political parties and between the council and the community.'

The consensus was achieved by identifying the problems of Brixton as black crime and targeting a small section of Railton Road as the focus for public condemnation. After months of careful preparation, on 1 November, the police moved in for the kill.

The riot and after

The events of 1 November and the subsequent public response showed that the police's painstaking approach to reasserting firm control in the inner-city areas could bring results. At dawn between 500 and 1000 police moved into the Railton Road area behind council officials and evicted three houses; within hours they were being bulldozed. By midday, an angry crowd of local residents had gathered. Around 100 people, mainly black youth, spontaneously formed a

protest demonstration to the town hall. Later they marched around Brixton in search of the 'community leaders' who had authorised the evictions, but they were nowhere to be found. Until night-fall the police mounted a containing operation, deploying all their community techniques. Then they sent in the Immediate Response Units in full riot gear. Several hundred battle-dressed police charged the crowd of 200-300 black youths in Railton Road and beat them off the streets. Only a handful of arrests were made.

'Police storm Brixton mobs' rejoiced the *Daily Star* the next day. *The Sun* hailed the conquering hero:

'This morning *The Sun* salutes Sir Kenneth Newman, the victor of the Battle of Railton Road.' (3 November)

The media presented the police operation as a triumphant success. They had put the boot in hard into the Front Line. And, what was more, they had done it through decisive action backed by the solid support of the council and 'the community'.

But if the community supported the police over the evictions, why did they need 1000 officers with riot shields, dogs and all their other weaponry to evict three houses? If the community approved the police action why did it respond to the invasion with bricks and bottles and other demonstrations of resistance? This was a problem the press had to explain. It did not take long: within 48 hours the real cause of the riot had been discovered. It had all been organised by Fran Eden of Workers Against Racism.

Fran Eden and WAR became convenient scapegoats for all the guilty parties in the Railton Road raid. All the elements on the Lambeth police consultative group were united in blaming the fight-back against the police by black youth on the Front Line on outside white agitators. Chief Superintendent Bob Marsh had seen troublemakers 'wearing masks'. Tory council leader Robin Pitt blamed unknown anarchists, but his colleague Iain Picton named Fran Eden and WAR. Black community representative Lloyd Leon had seen 'four white men carrying a black banner' organising the march to the town hall.

It was indicative of the breadth of the consensus established to legitimise the attack on Brixton's black youth that it encompassed the left as well as the right. *Militant* accepted the terms of discussion dictated by the police: there was a 'small criminal element' in Railton Road and 'many workers, including black workers, were unhappy with the activities in these houses' (5 November). But the most scurrilous attack on WAR came, not from the right-wing press, but from *The News Line*, the paper of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

The News Line provided a mouthpiece for the views of the Labour group on Lambeth Council and its leader Ted Knight, of whom the WRP is an ardent supporter. *The News Line* echoed the police consultative group consensus that the whole affair would have passed off quietly were it not for the provocative intervention of WAR and the RCP. In its concern to defend Knight, *The News Line* went even further than the gutter press in its inventions about the role of WAR. It reduced the protest march of Front Line youth to the town hall to 'a group of its (RCP) followers', carrying placards saying 'Out with Red Ted Knight now'. In fact, the anti-Knight slogans were daubed with paint on headboards from broken-up beds taken out of the derelict houses by local youths. They clearly reflected the spontaneity of the protest rather than its organisation by the RCP or anybody else.

The main preoccupation of *The News Line* was to defend the Labour Party:

'All parties on the Tory-controlled Lambeth Council agreed that the derelict homes in Railton Road should be pulled down and the area redeveloped to provide social amenities for local people. The decision was also supported by local trade unions and community organisations who saw the festering slums as a flashpoint which the police were continuously exploiting.'

The police invasion of Railton Road had nothing to do with housing or slum clearance. Lambeth is full of festering slums that the council has done nothing about for years. Nor had it anything to do with providing amenities. Lambeth Council owns thousands of acres of empty space and hundreds of empty properties which it could use to provide facilities for the unemployed. Nor again, did the raid have dealing with crime as its central object. There are many areas of London where drugs can be bought on the street as freely as Railton Road, where there are illegal drinking clubs, noisy parties and prostitution. But Railton Road was singled out for attack because it is the Front Line, the street where blacks gather in defiance of the drive by the whole British establishment to put them down. The response to the 1 November invasion reveals that the establishment now includes the police, the council (Tory and Labour), the black community 'representatives', the bourgeois press... and *The News Line*.

The war continues

Two weeks after the riot, local Labour leader Knight and MP Stuart Holland were still quibbling about the precise timing of the raid and the numbers of police used. But the police were moving on to the next stage in their Railton Road occupation plan. They presented yet another document to the police consultative group for council and community approval. It was brief and to the point:

'It is considered that police should, after recent events, be more insistent on the observance of the law and reasonable, lawful behaviour in Railton Road and the surrounding area.

'To this end, it is the intention that a team of local officers, properly briefed to act sensitively and justly, who would seek to avoid confrontation on the streets but be progressively more insistent on acceptable standards of behaviour, should be formed.

'It must be realised in advance that some youths will show resistance and may well refuse to obey the law. As an attempted arrest in such circumstances will likely lead to a confrontation, sufficient police reserves must be on hand to give protection and ensure the enforcement of the law.

'Given that some confrontations will occur, neither the consultative group nor the police must lose their resolve in this task to continue, with sensitive policing by this team, towards the objective.'

The police know that although they have hit a body blow against black people in Brixton, they have a long way to go to establish firm control. This document reveals the police's certainty that there will be more 'confrontation' on the Front Line and demands a free hand to crush any resistance that emerges. All parties to the consultative group freely acquiesced: the new plan was greeted in the press as a progressive experiment in community policing.

The Brixton experience reveals the power of the emerging consensus on crime and policing in enforcing the oppression of black people in Britain's cities. Over the past year, the ruling class has defined the issues and set out the terms of the debate. Our response must begin from a different definition of the problems. For the working class the real problems are not the activities of young blacks, but police harassment, racist attacks, mass unemployment, bad housing and falling living standards.

WAR did not organise the riot in Railton Road on 1 November. But we fully supported the resistance of the local black people to the onslaught against them. And we will carry on supporting resistance to racial oppression whether it takes the form of police thuggery on the Front Line or the insidious ideological campaign of criminalisation of black people.

the commander and reported that he had witnessed unprovoked attacks on the police and other acts of indiscipline. As a local ward councillor he too received many complaints from both black and white people. He argued that the problems would nevertheless need to be handled sensitively; through action not only by the police but by central and local government; and by addressing the root cause of the problems.

'Mr John Fraser MP endorsed the comments by Commander Fairbairn and Mr Leon and confirmed that as the MP for the area he too was in receipt of much correspondence on the subject. He described the deteriorating condition



Tulsa Hill headmaster Bret George congratulates Brixton police at the consultative committee.

ALL OVER EUROPE

The doors are closing tighter

Türken raus ~ NO WAY!

IN HIS STATEMENT to the nation the new Christian Democrat Chancellor Helmut Kohl declared that the 'problems of foreigners' in Germany should be solved 'in a humane way'. As the campaign for the next general election (expected in March 1983) gathers momentum, both the physical and the ideological attacks on 'aliens' are increasing by the day.

Paying them to go

The Social Democratic (SPD) government that was ousted in October was very 'concerned' about the 'problem of foreigners'. In December 1981, it imposed some restrictions on the entry of foreigners (including a ban on children over 16) — to 'strengthen the willingness of foreigners to return' to their home countries. This went hand in hand with a policy of 'integration' of the second and third generation of foreigners who have lived in Germany for years. More than one million foreigners (a quarter of all) are under the age of 16 — a potential social time bomb in today's climate of hostility towards foreigners.

In March 1982, the premiers of Germany's federal states proposed to then Chancellor Helmut Schmidt several 'financial incentives' to people prepared to return to their home countries. Speaking for the premiers, Bernhard Vogel of Rhineland Palatinate expressed concern about the growing hostility towards the foreign population — and said everything should be done to remove the causes of such antagonism — by sending them home!

Why did they come?

During the reconstruction after the Second World War, the German working class could not meet the steadily increasing demand for labour. However, until the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the labour shortage was alleviated by almost 10 million refugees from East Germany, displaced persons from Poland and returning prisoners of war from the Soviet Union. But even this mass influx of workers was not enough to satisfy the hunger of the economy. From 1955 the government signed additional agreements with South and South East European states to recruit more foreign workers. By 1973, Germany had around 2.6 million 'gastarbeiter' (guest workers), together with 1.4 million of their relatives and dependants.

Right-wing Christian Democratic federal states like Bavaria and Schleswig-Holstein were attempting to systematise the principle of 'rotation'. They insisted that residence permits should be extended to a maximum five years only. The national government, social democratic provinces, trade unions and even employers' organisations opposed such crass discrimination against foreigners who were willing to stay and work. They opposed such restrictions because they considered they were not in the best interests of the German economy. They worked out a new concept — 'integration by time' — whereby foreign workers and their families were permitted either to remain or return. Foreign workers and their dependants who wanted to stay were provided with basic housing, education, social services and an improved legal status.

In 1973, the government stopped the recruitment of foreign workers from outside the EEC. Between 1974 and 1977, the total foreign population declined by around 180 000. The integration of

In France, socialist president Francois Mitterand has taken advantage of recent bombings to launch a clampdown on all foreign immigrants, under the guise of keeping terrorists out. Official anti-immigrant policies have given a free hand to racist terror on the streets: two blacks have been shot dead by French racists in recent weeks.

All over Europe capitalist governments have made immigrant communities and migrant workers bear the initial brunt of the recession. Foreign workers have been kept out of, sent back from and beaten down in all the major EEC countries. Here Fenna King examines the fate of Turkish workers in Germany and Helen Swift reviews the latest debate on immigration in the British Parliament.



those remaining proceeded steadily.

Respectable politicians encouraged the growth of racist sentiments. Leading SPD member Hans-Jürgen Wisniewski remarked that Germans can't be expected to tolerate as neighbours people who slaughtered goats in the bathtub! In November 1980, general secretary of the German Red Cross Jürgen Schilling argued that the Nazis' racism was based on 'grotesquely wrong premises' — because they overlooked the 'high grade West Slavonic, particularly Polish elements' amongst the German people. In contrast, he argued, it is *not racist* to say that the masses of today's gastarbeiter had 'no such relatively high natural affinity' towards Europe, that they could or would not 'integrate, ie assimilate'. Hence the majority of gastarbeiter, especially unemployed ones, should be repatriated, perhaps accompanied by an increase in development aid to Turkey and Portugal.

New Christian Democrat interior minister Friedrich Zimmermann recently commented that: 'Each person has the right to be allowed to live in his home country'. 'This sentence', Zimmermann said, 'is meant to say that we would prefer to see

as many as possible making use of that right to return to their countries and establish a reasonable existence there with the money they have earned here' (*Der Spiegel*, 25 October 1982).

Brother, go home!

The intensification of state racism, the delays in family integration, and in the issue of permits, and the use of any incident, like a car accident caused by a foreigner, as grounds for deportation — all this has left many gastarbeiter angry and bitter.

Errol Özdel has been a worker at Peine & Salzgitter steelworks since 1963. Since 1975 he has been a shop steward representing 350 workers, all but four of whom are German. He sums up the attitudes of many German workers towards their foreign brothers and sisters:

'All of us sense it. The hostility towards foreigners has increased in the last few months. Many of our workmates say there would be more jobs if us Turks were sent home. But we aren't the cause of high unemployment!' (quoted in *Metall*, journal of the metalworkers' union, 9 June 1982)

Next to the huge factory area of the steel-

works of Peine and Salzgitter are the gastarbeiter hostels where around 400 Turks live. Whatever they do, they are in the wrong. When they work hard, they are accused of taking jobs away from Germans; when they become unemployed, they are just layabouts living at the expense of 'our' unemployment benefit system. And if they should marry a German woman, they are regarded as having 'stolen' her.

The only place where foreign workers are tolerated is at the point of production itself: where they work themselves flat out in noise, steam, dust and heat. There, they are a 'kumpel' (a mate). They still do jobs that no German, despite growing unemployment, would touch. 'You have to be like a snake — hard work and little pay', says Aydin Feratettin who has to climb into long pipelines of only 40-50 cm diameter lying on his belly, to weld and sand down seams. The same goes for the gastarbeiter in the foundries section. But if something goes wrong, 'we're told: off to Turkey', complains Dogan Karadag. And one of their foreman's unwritten laws is: 'Each German is a foreman as far as you're concerned'.

'We're not racist but...'

One of the resolutions at the German TUC (DGB) Congress in May 'opposes all attempts to deny or restrict the democratic rights of foreigners'...condemns the growing hostility towards foreigners' and demands 'energetic counter-action by political parties, state governments, churches and unions'. But because of its loyalty to German capitalism, the German labour movement has proved incapable of turning vague anti-racist sentiment into effective solidarity with immigrant workers.

The DGB has gone along with the argument that immigration restrictions should be tightened in response to the recession. This is how one official put it in a recent edition of the metalworkers' union journal:

'There is no doubt about it: because of the small territory of the Federal Republic it cannot be a country of immigration; somewhere there must be limits.' (*Metall*, 9 June)

The DGB favours immigration controls, but not deportations. Why? Because the removal of immigrant workers would damage those sections of industry that rely on them and weaken the whole economy. And because it might damage German trade with Turkey, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, etc some of which relies on repatriated pay packets from Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Munich, etc. But German capitalists know their business better. They know that they can force German workers once again to do the dirty jobs. And they know that the wages of gastarbeiter are a minor factor in their export considerations. The German unions' acquiescence to the needs of the German economy renders their anti-racist rhetoric meaningless. When the government declares that it needs to expel more foreigners if the economy is to survive it will be powerless to resist.

Indeed, the unions are powerless to resist anti-immigrant sentiment in the SPD. A resolution at a recent Salzgitter branch meeting put it straight. In order to counter increasing hostility towards Turks, they proposed, they should be deported, as 'our democracy' would be endangered by 'Turkish terrorists' and a 'Turkish sub-proletariat'. Urum Onder, hearing of this motion, wondered that they had not understood anything yet. What German workers need to understand is that the gastarbeiter are their potential allies — not the DGB nor the SPD whose sole concern is the health of the German economy.

A question for Roy Hattersley

THE FOLLOWING exchange took place during a recent debate on amendments to the new Nationality Act in the House of Commons:

'Mr Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook, Labour): We have always accepted the need for immigration control, of which the regulations are a part, but, we insist that regulations must be humane and just. As I propose to demonstrate

Mr Nick Budgen (Wolverhampton, South West, Conservative): If the right hon Gentleman rejects all the concepts of racism and sexism, as he dubs all immigration controls, will he explain why the Labour Party is still in favour of immigration controls?

Mr Hattersley: For the simple reason that I shall offer the hon Gentleman in simple language. We believe that entry to the United Kingdom should be limited to a number of people who qualify for it because of either British citizenship or permanent residence here. Our distinction and our argument with the hon

Gentleman is that we do not believe that another qualification should be imposed that states that the person may be British, but he is black, or she is a woman, so that person shall not have full rights. If I put it in such simple terms I hope that even the hon Gentleman will understand it.' (*Hansard*, 11 November 1982)

It is kind of the Shadow Home Secretary, the right hon Roy Hattersley to explain Labour policy so patiently. His reply, however, raises a further question. How can a major capitalist country like Britain (most of whose citizens and permanent residents are white) operate immigration regulations against poor countries like India and Pakistan, Kenya and Uganda (most of whose people are black) which are not racist? As another Tory racist put it succinctly, 'one of the difficulties of this type of debate and a trap into which many opposition Members fall is that they fail to recognise that discrimination is of the essence of immigration law'.

Stop the union sell-out

HEATHFIELD

Five months too long

BLACK WORKERS have now been on strike for five months at Heathfield's cable drum factory in Slough. They have maintained constant picketing throughout the increasingly cold weather. All this time white workers at the factory have continued to scab on the dispute. The all-white SOGAT branch at Heathfield has ignored union instructions to respect the picket line.

If ever there was a dispute that needed the wholehearted backing of the labour movement in order to win, this is it. But the official line from the strikers' union the GMWU is 'we've done all we can'. After some belated and unsuccessful attempts to secure blacking by workers at BICC and other Heathfield customers, local officials just shrugged their shoulders in despair. Along with the local Labour Party and the SWP they feel nothing can be done when the shadow of mass unemployment hangs over the trade union movement.

Fighting to win

The strikers and their WAR supporters do not agree. In recent weeks we have been making direct approaches to convenors and shop stewards in all the major firms that trade with Heathfield. Meetings have been set up between the strikers and trade union representatives from BICC, Delta Enfield, Ward and Goldstone and other key firms to secure effective blacking action. Secondary picketing is being organised to deal with firms that continue to scab.

Far from it being impossible to build solidarity, we have received a sympathetic response from many quarters. The main complaint we have heard is that the GMWU has not supplied enough information or given clear enough instructions to make the blacking bite. Where local trade unionists admit to difficulties — like how to convince their members to continue blacking in the face of threats and intimidation from management — we have refused to

take no for an answer. Direct, face-to-face contact between the Heathfield strikers and these workers is essential to strengthen their resolve.

WAR has also been successful in winning backing for the strike from other sections of the labour movement. It was WAR supporters who got Hackney NALGO to donate £250 to the strike fund and send regular delegations to the pickets. A WAR member in Sheffield got her COHSE branch to send £100 and write to SOGAT '82 condemning its members for scabbing on the strike. Our Sheffield branch is arranging for a contingent of steelworkers (themselves under threat of redundancy) from Firth Brown to come down and swell the picket line.

All these things are possible providing there is the will to tackle the arguments in the labour movement. That means stressing, rather than down-playing, the racial dimension behind the dispute. Fellow trade unionists have got to be confronted with these issues and shown how Heathfield demonstrates exactly how racism is used to divide and weaken the whole movement. It also means countering the deep-rooted pessimism of the GMWU officials and their radical left supporters, who end up blaming the rank and file for their own deficiencies.

Join us on the picket line and help extend the blacking of Heathfield products nationwide. Anything less than a complete victory for these strikers will be a disgrace to the entire labour movement.

Mass picket

EVERY THURSDAY

7am onwards

at

Heathfield & Co Ltd, Western Rd, Slough.
Phone WAR on 01-274 3951 for transport details. Contact same number for lists of Heathfield's customers and suppliers.

RACE CHECKS

National Health

Question: how much does it cost these days to have a fishbone removed from your throat?

Answer: it depends.

IF YOU ARE the Queen Mother, or another true blue British citizen, it's free on the NHS. For anyone else, it is increasingly down to the discretion of hospital administrators whether to charge up to £130 a day for medical treatment.

That message has been driven home to thousands of black people this month, as the DHSS's new 'charges for overseas visitors' begin to bite. And to their shame, the major NHS unions have proved more than willing to collaborate with this racist scheme.

NALGO and NUPE have issued identical circulars, advising members that it is OK to cooperate with the DHSS — provided they get extra training and upgrading for the work. But many rank and file members find this attitude disgusting. NALGO's North East District Council (covering 49 branches) recently passed a motion condemning the NEC for 'paying lip service to a policy of total opposition to the charges whilst allowing that they be implemented if staff responsible get more money'.

WAR supporters in NALGO lobbied the NEC this month, and disrupted the union's annual junket (at which Tory

ministers, lords and ambassadors were guests) to reinforce the point. Our members in NUPE are raising motions which censure the union for reneging on the resolution passed unanimously at this year's conference. The resolution was tabled by WAR members, calling for industrial action against the checks.

Meanwhile, WAR has been doing the work the unions should be doing, at hospitals throughout Britain. We have organised dozens of pickets and protests since the checks were introduced on 1 October, distributed thousands of leaflets and addressed union meetings everywhere. We have been letting hospital workers know what is happening, and convincing them to oppose the scheme. Bulk orders for our new eight-page factsheet on the checks are flooding in from union branches, eager to know exactly what the DHSS is up to.

Fact sheets

TWO NEW FACT SHEETS ON
FIGHTING THE CHECKS
IN HOSPITALS AND DOLES

10p each (20 for 50p)

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

OVERSEAS STUDENTS

NUS helps BUPA

WHILE THE National Union of Students Executive is busy crossing the picket lines set up by strikers at its Endsleigh Street headquarters, WAR has been fighting hard for students' interests. In particular, it has been fighting for overseas students who face crippling fee increases, deportation threats and daily racist harassment.

This month, our Leeds and Sheffield branches have won an important victory for Basil Gwatidzo, a Zimbabwean student under threat of deportation. Although he is technically an 'illegal overstayer' he has secured a full grant and a place at Leeds University. Sheffield Council is about to debate a motion committing it to support Basil's right to stay in Britain.

In London, WAR has been putting the heat on the NUS leadership; we have exposed its complicity with the DHSS's attempts to charge overseas students for health treatment by widely circulating

the union's 'advice' to its foreign members — a document urging them to take out private medical insurance! Student leaders are actively assisting the Government's plans to privatise the NHS and boost profiteering medical insurance firms. As we go to press, students from the South East and the Midlands are getting ready to picket the NUS offices in protest at this sell-out of its overseas members.

Between 3-6 December NUS Conference will be debating motions on the NHS charges and deportation attacks on overseas students. WAR delegates will be there to make sure the issue does not get relegated to 'Any other business.' Join the WAR society in your college and help turn the NUS into a union capable of defending all its members, black and white.

UBO'S

A vigorous campaign to wreck the checks has been mounted by WAR supporters in dole offices. The CPSA's assurances that it intends to oppose the Department of Employment's 'visual monitoring' of black claimants from 4 January are belied by its words and actions. A recent CPSA circular (4 November) made it clear that 'the union is, in principle, in favour of monitoring' but 'it is the method we oppose'. Instead of compulsory visual assessment it wants 'voluntary self-registration'. Dole workers can have little confidence in the union's talk about selective strike action. CPSA's President — Militant supporter Kevin Roddy — has been working overtime to get his striking members in Birmingham and Oxford back to work.

WAR has been organising local strike committees and strike levies in preparation for all-out action against the checks from 4 January. In South Yorkshire and elsewhere the CPSA rank and file is backing our initiatives. We are raising the need for this kind of action at the CPSA's Broad Left and emergency pay conferences this month.

Month of action

ON 1 JANUARY the Nationality Act comes into operation, depriving many black people of British citizenship — and therefore of their entitlement to state benefits. WAR has called a month of action against the Act, and the race checks. Meetings, demonstrations and pickets will be held in every major city to build up opposition to this onslaught on black workers' rights. Join our campaign — and make the unions fight!



NORTHERN DAY OF ACTION AGAINST RACISM

Smash the Nationality Act!
No pass laws
in the NHS and doles!

Demonstration
assemble 11am
Hallamshire Hospital
march to City Hall

Action Conference
2pm onwards
Memorial Hall

plus Benefit
in the evening

**SATURDAY 15 JANUARY
SHEFFIELD**

For full details about this
and other regional events
contact WAR on
01-274 3951.

Afia must stay

East London Workers Against Racism is campaigning against the deportation of Afia Begum and her baby. On 13 November 300 people marched in protest through the Brick Lane area where her husband was recently burnt to death in a tenement owned by Tower Hamlets Council. We are fighting against all immigration laws — and for a council home for Afia Begum.

Racists in Tower Hamlets think the borough has too many immigrants already. The Labour-controlled GLC is so concerned about offending them that it has shelved an inquiry into Tower Hamlets Council's apartheid policy. We are demanding that the council's left caucus backs Afia Begum all the way.

You can't win a dispute

THE TUC WELCOMED the NHS dispute. It was an opportunity for a much-needed display of strength against the Tory Government and a chance to rally some public sympathy by using the popular cause of nurses' pay. The TUC had failed to generate any resistance to rising unemployment and setbacks on trade union rights. It had allowed major unions go down to a series of defeats at the hands of the Government — steelworkers, civil servants, railway workers. And it was fast losing membership, income and influence. The TUC needed the NHS dispute to advance its continuing claim for wider consultation in pay determination in the public sector and to demonstrate its preparedness to fight for the low paid 'caring' NHS workers.

The TUC wanted to be at the head of a popular protest against the Tory Government. But it did not want to lead a campaign of militant strikes to force the Government to pay the health workers a decent wage. Len Murray considered that 'such action would eventually imply grave political threats, designed to make the country ungovernable' (*The Guardian*, 23 September). Indeed, this would run directly counter to the central concern of the labour bureaucracy at present. It is desperate to show that the country is governable, by an alternative party of government — the Labour Party. The TUC thus found itself running a dispute in which it could not afford to raise the stakes by unleashing effective strike action. The result was a drawn out campaign of token stoppages, selective actions and empty rhetoric.

Countdown to disaster

April	24-hour 'token stoppage'
May	24-hour 'token stoppage'
June	24-hour 'token stoppage'
July	Three days 'intensive nationwide industrial action'
August	Five days 'intensive nationwide industrial action'
September	24-hour 'day of action' including sympathy stoppages
October	Regional 'days of action'
November	Transport workers' solidarity day — cancelled.

For the TUC the high point of the campaign was the 22 September 'day of action'. Many workers from other industries stopped work for the day and more than 100 000 attended a mass demonstration in London. The minutes of the following day's Health Services Committee meeting record the bureaucrats' sense of satisfaction:

'It was recalled that media coverage had been sympathetic and the Government's aims for undermining the event had failed. Speakers at the rally had emphasised their support for the health service workers and not commented on wider political matters. In further comments concern was expressed about the assembly point for the march and toilet facilities.' (*HSC minutes*, 23 September)

The toilet facilities were a problem but what mattered was that the speakers had kept politics out of it. This was what the TUC liked — something big and national, but diffuse and directionless. Better to have 100 000 listening to apolitical speeches in Hyde Park than 100 or even 10 causing trouble on picket lines.

The September day of action was the high point for the TUC but the beginning of the end for NHS workers. The origins of the sell-out, however, are to be found much further back — in the politics of the TUC Health Services Committee. The top level bureaucratic combine was set up in 1971 to bring together the 14 TUC unions in the NHS. Its main function is to strengthen the TUC's role in mediating between NHS workers and the state through fostering institutions and procedures for pay bargaining and the management of disputes.

In October 1981 the HSC met to formulate 'a common core claim' for the

NHS unions. It also decided that the HSC 'should act as a co-ordinating committee to oversee the staff side campaign during the 1982-83 pay round' (*HSC minutes*, 29 October 1981). In December after appropriate consultation the 'common core claim' was set as 12 per cent, reckoned as the minimum necessary to maintain living standards. The Government refused to budge from 4 per cent. The committee, whose only aim was to avoid and prevent strikes in the NHS, suddenly found itself in the lead of the biggest strike the service had ever seen.

The objectives of the HSC never changed. It still hoped to resolve the dispute through official channels and established formal procedures rather than through aggressive rank and file action.

Testing whose resolve?

The discussion at the HSC on 16 March — before the industrial action even began — reveals the cynical calculation behind the bureaucrats' whole conduct of the dispute. The debate began in earnest when one official tentatively 'suggested that some form of industrial action might be necessary'. Why were such extreme measures being contemplated? Because 'it was important to test the resolve of the NHS staff in how far they were prepared to pursue the common core claim'. This was the attitude of the bureaucrats throughout: industrial action was considered and organised to 'test the resolve' of the NHS workers not to test the resolve of the Government! The HSC wanted a quiet start: 'it was suggested that the committee should organise workplace meetings, perhaps of one hour duration...with full emergency cover provided'. The HSC also suggested that the various unions should consider other forms of industrial action for the future. The HSC outlined its fighting strategy:

'It was important that the unions should show some leadership and exhaust all options which were available to engender an atmosphere against the existing offers. If the staff then showed themselves to be unwilling to respond to the lead of the committee, then it would be clear that the existing offers might have to be accepted.' (*HSC minutes*, 16 March)

The HSC's perspective was to organise the campaign to create a situation in which the workers would fail to respond to calls for further action. Then the HSC could turn round and say — 'we were prepared to lead an all-out strike, but the members were not prepared to follow'. The bureaucrats could then accept the offer and blame the rank and file for not being prepared to fight. Given the militancy of the NHS workers this situation was difficult to set up. But after eight months of delaying and disorganising the action, the bureaucrats finally succeeded in the aim set out at their March meeting.

Summer of discontent

The March HSC concluded with a declaration of intent...to seek a meeting with Tory Health Minister Norman Fowler. But the Tories proved unwilling to make any concessions and the NHS workers began to increase the scale of their disruption of hospitals throughout the country. Despite the feeble lead, workers rallied to back the pay campaign with selective walk-outs, pickets and other forms of direct action. The action gradually built up momentum through the summer reducing services in many areas to cover accidents and emergencies only. The union leaders dragged along behind.

The March meeting had agreed that 'it was essential that unions maintained control over the campaign'. Staying in control became the officials' biggest problem. In May it set up regional and local coordinating committees under the regional TUC bodies and local health union structures, to keep a grip on the campaign. By July the local committees were coming under heavy pressure from workers angry about the lack of leader-

The dispute in the National Health Service has been the longest national strike since the Second World War. It has involved not only the 500 000 plus health workers represented by unions affiliated to the TUC, but also miners, engineers, postal workers, printers, transport workers, civil servants and many more in diverse forms of solidarity action. The dispute is also significant in that it is the first industrial action since the 1926 General Strike to be formally led by the TUC. The TUC's leadership has made sure that the most important strike in 1982 drifts inexorably to defeat.

Secret minutes in the possession of the next step reveal that the TUC leaders on the Health Services Committee

● constantly restricted the scope of the dispute for fear of losing control and embarrassing the Labour Party with a pre-general election



COHSE's Spanswick: bluster



Health workers: no lead for a real fight

ship and coordination of industrial action. In some areas, when they began to increase the level of disruption, they quickly came into conflict with the TUC. The July HSC admonished them severely, reminding them that their function 'was essentially to discuss, plan and agree the local implementation of the strategic decisions agreed by the HSC' (*HSC minutes*, 22 July). It was 'not appropriate' for the committees 'to act in a semi-autonomous manner seeking to influence national strategy'.

The TUC's major weapon against militants, however, was its 'emergency cover and industrial action' code of practice for the conduct of the disputes in the NHS. The real purpose of these guidelines was not to protect patients' health nor to safeguard workers from being exposed to damaging anti-union publicity. The workers' own operation of emergency cover would have been the best defence of these working class interests. The TUC guidelines, when implemented, simply made the strike ineffectual. Most importantly, they had the effect of taking control of the industrial action out of the hands of the workers and returning it to the direction of the officials, and often that of the management. As the action increased, the TUC's insistence on its code of practice increased. Often officials seemed more concerned with enforcing TUC guidelines than with organising effective action.

Constitutional restrictions

It soon became clear to most NHS militants that the only way to win their claim was through all-out indefinite action. Pressure for a national lead on this course built up rapidly. The NUPE national conference in June passed a resolution in favour of an all-out strike. The COHSE conference, however, voted against an all-out stoppage. This difference became of crucial importance in the HSC's response to Rodney Bickerstaffe's recommendation of his union's conference policy:

'While there was considerable logic to NUPE's proposal, the fact that a number of unions were constitutionally restricted, either

by their rules or by conference decision, from an all-out stoppage, meant that a recommendation to this effect would split the unity of the unions.' (*HSC minutes*, 24 June)

The unity of the committee demanded that NUPE repudiate its mandate for an all-out strike — not that COHSE overturn its conference decision against a strike. As always, union constitutions prove to be a barrier to working class action in defence of living standards; constitutional commitments to inaction are sacrosanct. While maintaining a militant posture, NUPE meekly acquiesced to the abandonment of the only tactic that could have won the strike.

The HSC did see some use for the threat of an all-out strike. It proposed that unions consider the possibility further and report back. The idea was that 'this might have a major propaganda effect in appearing to escalate the action' (*HSC minutes*, 24 June). While playing at 'appearing to escalate the action', the HSC cautiously moved up to call

The RCP and the

Supporters of the RCP and the next step played an active part in the NHS dispute around the country. In a series of articles in the next step we insisted that the strike could only be won through all-out action, controlled by rank and file hospital workers themselves. We campaigned in union meetings and on picket lines for the workers to take control of emergency cover and run the dispute.

The only challenge to the bureaucracy to emerge during the dispute was a muted one. An unofficial conference of shop stewards in Sheffield on 30 October proved unwilling to take up the sort of decisive challenge to the TUC leadership that was essential to win the dispute. Workplace representation in the NHS is a relatively recent creation of the management and the union bureaucracies. Most shop stewards are more reliant on the union machine and on management support than they are on the workers they represent. This lack of independence was evident at the conference, despite the radicalism of some of the delegates.

The conference took the TUC's consultations regarding an all-out strike at face value. Instead of

without going on strike

- were more concerned with establishing a new system of pay determination in the NHS than with winning the strike
- deliberately dragged out industrial action to demoralise militancy and increase pressure for a settlement
- were prepared to compromise on the health workers' 12 per cent claim even before the action began
- finally accepted a settlement that was in some ways worse than the original offer.

The TUC leaders wanted to stage a display of industrial militancy in the NHS without actually organising a strike against the Government. Their vacillation has resulted in a setback to the entire labour movement. Feature by Mike Freeman and Cathy Barrett.



NUPE's Bickerstaffe: rhetoric

for three days and then for five days of... 'intensive nationwide industrial action'. The bureaucrats carefully avoided calling for strike action to allow maximum scope for the more right-wing workers and those inexperienced in trade union activity to back out and weaken the impact of the action. What mattered to the HSC was 'the propaganda effect'. But who was the target of the TUC propaganda? It was not trying to give a decisive lead to the NHS workers — its propaganda was aimed at the Government:

'The escalation of the stoppages to three days was necessary in order to indicate to the Secretary of State the strength of feeling about the inept manner in which he had handled the discussions with the TUC unions.' (HSC minutes, 24 June)

For the HSC, the main object of industrial action was to press the Tories to be more polite to the TUC.

While the strike action intensified, the HSC kept on crawling abjectly back to the Government. In June, the

bureaucrats bleated that 'it was essential for the committee to demonstrate that they were ready to negotiate at any time, and that it was the intransigence of the Secretary of State that was preventing a speedy settlement to the dispute'. Certainly nobody ever accused the HSC of being intransigent in its defence of NHS workers. Again, in July, 'it was proposed that the committee should seek an urgent public meeting with the Secretary of State to demonstrate publicly the unions' continued readiness to negotiate a fair settlement, and to expose the intransigence of the Government's position' (HSC minutes, 22 July). But the Government maintained its intransigent position — and the TUC continued to vacillate.

Death without dishonour?

The summer of discontent culminated in the 22 September 'day of action'. However, a ministerial statement in the week before the 'day of action' revealed that Fowler had been involved in secret talks with COHSE leader and HSC chair Albert Spanswick and TUC official and HSC secretary Peter Jacques. He claimed that Spanswick and Jacques had been receptive to his offer to include consideration of the 1983-84 pay award in some reshuffle of the 1982-83 deal. The HSC was embarrassed by these revelations and Fowler's offer was rejected. However, it accepted that the chair and secretary should carry on their 'informal and confidential' contacts (HSC minutes, 23 September).

Discussion centred around the formulation of a negotiating package, although there was some concern that if this became public, workers might find it 'astonishing' that the TUC was doing a deal so soon after the success of the 'day of action'. There was agreement, however, that the Government 'should now be given a short breathing space'. Meanwhile, the bureaucrats proposed to organise a vigil at the Tory Party conference. They also decided to dissipate the whole campaign in a series of local 'days of action' though the month October.

By the meeting of the HSC at the end of October, the campaign was clearly getting nowhere. The local 'days of action' had seen small turn-outs of increasingly angry workers: both Spanswick and Murray were heckled by militants demanding an all-out strike. The HSC noted the changing mood and the stark alternatives:

'The members were beginning to express the view that they could not win. The unions were moving to the position where there had to be an all-out stoppage or move towards an unsatisfactory settlement.' (HSC minutes, 21 October)

The HSC knew what had to be done. But it had to pretend to push towards an all-out strike in order to get the membership to agree to a settlement. This became the TUC line in the closing weeks of the campaign. It had dragged on the dispute until workers became demoralised — then it chose its moment to recommend all-out action. 'There was a risk that the members might overturn this recommendation but there was nothing dishonourable about this.' The TUC did not 'risk' calling for an all-out strike in the summer when workers were ready for it — but it was happy to 'risk' such a call when it could be certain it would be rejected. 'Nothing dishonourable about this' — the bureaucrats can always put the blame on the workers.

While the HSC agreed to seek a mandate from all NHS unions for an all-out strike, its schemes to make a deal moved on apace. There was one problem however — the transport unions had agreed to a national 'transport solidarity day' of sympathetic strike action on 8 November. At the October meeting, it was observed that it might be 'unwise' to be proposing a compromise to the Government at the same time as the committee was calling for action on 8 November. This might 'not be understood' by the members. This consideration was even more pressing at the November meeting when the HSC decided to plead with the Government's arbitration service ACAS, that it intervene to resolve the dispute. The problem for the bureaucrats was that ACAS would only agree to mediate if the TUC was prepared to accept certain preconditions — that it back down on the 12 per cent claim. The HSC officials did not know which way to turn:

'Accepting preconditions at a time when organisations were seeking or reviewing mandates for industrial action would show considerable weakness. Many members were nowhere near giving up. As against this, it was said that other members were very tired and anxious for a settlement.' (HSC minutes, 1 November)

The proposed day of action was only a week away. The meeting closed with agreement only on further talks with ACAS.

Four days later ACAS chief Pat Lowry emerged from negotiations to announce that the transport workers' day of action had been called off at his request. Spanswick indicated that the TUC had won nothing in return for effectively declaring an end to the dispute. 'We have been made no specific offer', he stated (Financial Times, 6 November).

The result

Within days, the terms of the final settlement became clear. Spanswick continued to bluster. 'Everything will be OK', he told reporters on 6 November. The following day he claimed to have made 'immense progress' in lengthy negotiations at ACAS. But nothing could disguise the terms of the Government's final offer; the percentage rises were:

	Nurses	Ancillaries
March	6.4	4.0
June	7.5	6.0
November	7.5 (82-83)	6.0 (82-83)
	+4.5 (83-84)	+4.5 (83-84)

The NHS workers gained *nothing* in the 1982-83 pay round after the increase the Tories conceded in June. The only result of a further six months of industrial action was an agreement to increase the proposed four per cent offer for next year by 0.5 per cent. In other words, the NHS workers have been forced to accept a two-year wage deal which promises to bring a substantial cut in real wages. The Tories have also made it clear that they intend to fund these miserly rises by cutting jobs and services in the NHS. The last word of the HSC was that it had 'unanimously concluded that these proposals represent the maximum that can be achieved through negotiation' (Financial Times, 13 November).

The Government took full advantage of the TUC's weakness and offered the bureaucrats nothing. Fowler added insult to injury by setting up a pay review body for professional groups in the NHS, including nurses, on which the TUC will have little influence. No new pay machinery was proposed for ancillary workers. In a desperate attempt to save face with their members, the bureaucrats were obliged to keep up the pretence of leading a strike they had already betrayed. 'The NHS dispute is still on', said Spanswick on 11 November, as COHSE called a national conference on 15 December to debate an all-out strike.

Spanswick's main concern, in the dying days of the dispute, is not to be outflanked by Bickerstaffe. Thus, he has kept up a pathetic facade of militancy. When COHSE heard that the NUPE executive intended to recommend rejection of the Government offer and an all-out strike, Spanswick declared that his executive would probably take the same line. Fearing a mass desertion of disgusted members to NUPE, Spanswick insisted that nobody would 'drive a wedge' between us and NUPE. Not that his members would fare any better under Bickerstaffe's leadership. Certainly, Spanswick's moronic public statements did much to discredit the whole campaign. But NUPE proved as unwilling as COHSE to give a decisive lead, despite a clear conference mandate. It also restrained its members and failed to coordinate effective action. Behind much rhetoric about fighting low pay, NUPE played a full part in making sure that many NHS workers remain below the poverty line for years to come.

The TUC leaders tried to use the NHS strike to strengthen their own position. To some extent, the bureaucrats' schemes exploded in their faces. They did not dare to unleash enough militancy to force concessions out of the Government. Their cynical manipulation and containment of the health workers' industrial action and their failure to win their demands has discredited the officials in the eyes of many workers. On the other hand, the TUC has demonstrated a usefulness to the ruling class that has not gone unnoticed. It has succeeded in containing a militant threat to the Government, in a sector which the Tories are very keen to rationalise drastically. As one bourgeois commentator observed, 'for the TUC, this has been a great experiment'.

'For the first time it has coordinated the claims and responses and in the end taken over as negotiator for several discrete negotiating groups involving many different unions... There has probably been just enough success to build on for the future.' (The Guardian, 10 November)

The fate of the NHS dispute reveals that the bureaucrats' success is bought at a high price. Civil servants and others are still being victimised for taking sympathetic action. Many angry health workers face a lean Christmas and an uncertain future. Their struggle shows that the TUC is a barrier to the most elementary defence of working class interests today.

the NHS dispute

exposing the HSC's manoeuvres, most delegates favoured accepting the TUC's leadership and the limitations that imposed on the strike. The conference refused to call for immediate all-out action in favour of campaigning through official channels for a strike in January 1983. Many of the delegates shared the bureaucrats' pessimism and their contempt for rank and file NHS workers, whose militancy during the strike surpassed all expectations — especially those of the union officials. Many also shared the TUC's concern to return a Labour government — they did not want another winter of discontent to sour Labour's electoral prospects.

The RCP intervened in the NHS dispute to expose the bankruptcy of the labour bureaucracy. The dispute made clear that the trade union leaders and their Labour Party allies are a parasitic layer the working class cannot afford to maintain. Their manoeuvres are essential to preserve their increasingly unstable position in a society in the grip of a capitalist recession. The defeat of the NHS strike reveals the urgency of settling scores with the TUC leadership. Let's make sure it happens in 1983!

Building the Party... in Manchester

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM IN 'THE HEARTLAND OF SOCIALISM'

From cradle to grave

WHEN THE Trafford Park industrial estate opened in Manchester at the turn of the century, it was the first estate of its kind in the world and the proudest boast of the city's prosperous industrialists. Henry Ford built his first British plant at Trafford Park and Rolls Royce too made its first car there. At the height of the Second World War, 70 000 workers were employed in its heavy engineering factories. Today, Trafford Park is a wasteland employing less than half that number. Manchester has become such an unattractive site for industrial investors that the Tory Trafford Council has taken desperate steps to halt the decline. It is trying to buy 11 acres of the estate from Esso, on which to build an ecological park which it hopes will attract aesthetically-minded capitalists alongside the busloads of ramblers and schoolchildren it expects.

Trafford Park's dereliction is only the most obvious example of the disintegration of Manchester's manufacturing base, which began long before the present crisis caught up with the rest of British industry. Based on the long-obsolete cotton and engineering sectors, Manchester's industry saw little growth even during the boom years. In the 'sixties, while manufacturing employment rose by more than 10 per cent in most of Britain, it fell by 20 per cent in Manchester. The recession of the late 'seventies and 'eighties has accelerated the process, sending the city's traditional industries into apparently terminal decline.

In 1981, 40 cotton mills closed in Greater Manchester, and a further 17 shut their gates in the first nine months of this year. By the end of 1982, the cotton industry in the area is expected to be employing around 33 500 workers — only 10 per cent of the workforce of 30 years ago. One local mill owner recently summarised the bosses' predicament:

'I expect the industry will continue to decline to the point where it can no longer be described as an industry without offending the Trades Descriptions Act.' (*Manchester Evening News*)

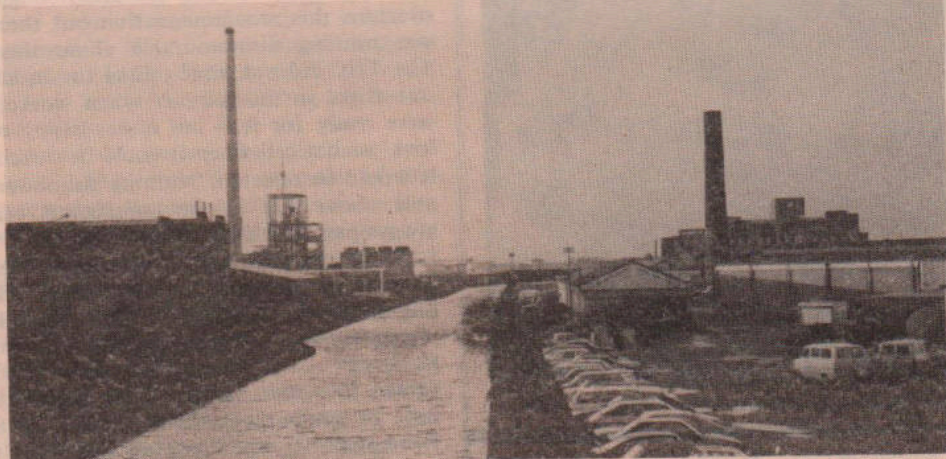
The only 'growth' area in textiles is the use of derelict mills as tourist attractions: foreign visitors are encouraged to tour Manchester's 'industrial heritage'.

Engineering has been hit nearly as badly in recent years. A decade ago, engineering in the north west employed 200 000 workers. Today that figure has been halved. Since 1980 alone, closures and lay-offs have put paid to 40 000 jobs in the industry.

Despite these closures, Manchester's unemployment figures were kept down until the late 'seventies by the growth of jobs in the service sector. Between 1966 and 1977, employment in services rose by 120 000 to reach 638 000, as Manchester consolidated its position as the largest banking and communications centre outside London. Local government and employment in retailing also expanded. The recession of the 'eighties, however, has halted the growth in the service sector and accelerated the decline of manufacturing. *The Times* put it bluntly: 'The effect has been rather as if the city's economy has suddenly hit a brick wall' (17 February). Unemployment has soared above the national average for the first time. Four wards within Greater Manchester now have levels of more than 35 per cent. They include

Three years ago the RCP formed its first northern branch in Manchester. Since then it has grown in size and influence and helped to build up a network of branches in the North — in Leeds, Sheffield, and soon in Liverpool. The expansion of the RCP in the Manchester area has taken place at a time of industrial decay, mass unemployment and political stagnation in a city once reputed to be the heartland of British socialism.

Manchester was the first of the industrial centres on which British capitalism's claim to be the 'workshop of the world' in the nineteenth century was founded. One hundred and fifty years later, it is in danger of becoming the first major base of manufacturing industry to collapse completely. The prosperity of Manchester's mill and factory owners was based on the degradation of the working class; but the subordination of the workers was only achieved through long and bitter conflict. The Manchester workers' tradition of class struggle spans the Peterloo massacre, their backing for the Fenian exploits of the Manchester Martyrs and their early support for the suffragettes. In the 1980s the bosses need to reduce the working class back to the conditions of the nineteenth century. The traditional parties of the working class in Manchester — the Labour Party and the Communist Party — have become bureaucratic and politically incapable of giving a lead in workers' struggles to defend their living standards and their rights. Yet outbursts of resistance, such as the recent Moss Side riots or the Laurence Scott occupation, show the potential for a resurgence of working class action. Over the last three years, Manchester RCP has begun the fight to realise that potential.



Moss Side, where the RCP candidate in the 1981 council elections won considerable support for the Party's position of opposition to all redundancies.

A recent report by the city's planning department predicts that male unemployment throughout the city will reach 29.5 per cent by 1985. Local bosses may derive some benefit from the £200 000 they have raised to spend on a publicity campaign to revive the city's flagging retail trade, but city-centre displays of Christmas lighting, even if they are switched on by the stars of Coronation Street, are no substitute for restructuring industry.

If capitalism is to survive in Manchester it needs to develop a viable manufacturing base built on new technology. The experience of recent years has shown that companies that have the capital to invest in technology have been able to survive by turning their attention to export markets. GEC Turbine Generators of Trafford Park won a Queen's Award earlier this year for doing just that; in seven years its export-ratio has risen from 24 to 90 per cent of current orders.

But most of Manchester's industry has not been so lucky. Investment in Manchester has been miserable, even compared to the low levels in most of British industry. Investment in manufacturing industry in Manchester is, on average, £77 per head of the workforce — in Wales it is £152, in the north £186. The message now coming from the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and the North West CBI is clearly 'invest or die'. But any industrial recovery achieved through restructuring means harder work for fewer workers. The chairman of the region's CBI put it straight, at the bosses' latest conference:

'We must have the guts to stand up and say clearly that investment in new equipment is vital, but it will almost always lead to a short-term loss of jobs.' (*Manchester Evening News*, 1 November)

Such candid admissions of the need to save capitalism in the city at the expense of the working class have not deterred the Labour-controlled Greater Manchester Council and local trade union leaders

from throwing their weight behind the employers' campaign. They have echoed the bosses' call for more state investment to improve Manchester's infrastructure, but without success. Under regional development grants in 1980, Manchester received only £3.70 per head of the workforce; neighbouring Merseyside got £70.90 per head. Earlier this year it lost its 'assisted-area' status altogether. The campaign to force the Government to develop Manchester's airport as an alternative to Stansted seems uncertain of success. The council has even proved unable to persuade the state to pay for such basics as the repair of the city's 100-year old sewers, which frequently suffer embarrassing subsidence. The result has been that Manchester has lost out in private industrial investment too, as capital is attracted to the state — subsidised new towns which ring the city.

The county and city councils' response to central government indifference has been to form a bloc with local industry, presenting an image of 'little Manchester' embattled against the world. The councils appeal to a parochial version of a more general British chauvinism in an attempt to win Manchester's workers to supporting their efforts to resurrect 'our' manufacturing industry in 'our' city. 'Manchester has simply got to stand on its own feet and start again', declares the Labour leader of the city council (*Financial Times*, 9 November 1982).

To that end, the councils, along with local trade union bureaucrats and businessmen, have become centrally involved in the North West Industrial Development Authority. NORWIDA has appealed to traditional prejudices against the 'soft South' by demanding that state investment be redistributed away from the South East to the North West. As well as trying to spread the effects of the crisis more evenly across the whole of the working class, Greater Manchester Council has set up its own Economic Development Corporation to provide advice and services for potential investors. Besides running competitions to find Manchester's most promising entrepreneurs, the corporation has been busy discussing rationalisations with the bosses,

helping them to decide how to push through the redundancies and speed-ups they need with the minimum of fuss.

Local authorities have pinned their hopes on the new Enterprise Zone which now encroaches on Trafford Park. The Tories of Trafford Council and Salford's Labour councillors showed their equal commitment to local industry by jointly promoting the zone. But even the offer of 10 rate-free years has tempted few investors and produced few jobs.

Manchester was truly the cradle of the industrial revolution; now, as the CBI has acknowledged, it has become 'a graveyard'. Through our involvement in workers' struggles, Manchester RCP is building a movement which rejects the sectional chauvinism of the Labour and union leaders. Our aim is to defend every job and every worker's living standards; we know that to achieve this we will have to fight all the way against Manchester's capitalists and the rest of their class.

Mick Hume

The nurseries scandal

'IF YOU want to get your kids into a nursery, beat them up.' That was the advice of one Trafford social services administrator to a Manchester woman trying to find local authority nursery places for her children. He wasn't joking. Access to state nursery places has long been restricted to 'priority' cases, the children of mothers who can't look after the next generation of workers in the way the capitalist class expects. Unless a woman is handicapped, suffering a breakdown, young and single, beating her children or has a four-year old 'soiling' itself more than twice a week, she has little chance of finding a place in a day nursery.

When we began campaigning for a woman's right to work in Manchester earlier this year, the demand for free 24-hour nurseries was the first we took up. The campaign had little time to lose. A recent report by the Manchester social services committee reveals that cuts in day nursery provision are underway which will restrict working class women's access to jobs in the city further still.

In comparison with many cities, Manchester has a good record of providing local authority nurseries, with 57.9 places per 1000 under-fives compared to the DHSS guidelines of eight places per 1000. The figures are misleading, however, as nursery provision varies dramatically from ward to ward. In Moss Side, which has the highest proportion of under-fives and large or single-parent families (28.7 per cent) there are only two small, overcrowded nurseries. Nevertheless, the city's administration has decided that they are being over-generous in their expenditure on nurseries. The social services committee's review of day care services for the under-fives sets out to restrict the definition of priority cases and raise charges for other children.

The report complains of 'instances' where the needs of children given day-care places 'could have been met more appropriately by some other form of provision'. Just what those 'other forms of provision' might be is unclear, except that the onus would be on women to find and pay for them. In future, the report makes clear, free places will be granted

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'only because the alternative might be that the child or children would have to be received into care'. Nothing less than the daunting prospect of having to pay for a child's entire upbringing will persuade Manchester's social services to offer a free nursery place. Unless her family is on the verge of total collapse, a woman will have to pay for childcare. Even if she can find a council nursery place to pay for, she probably couldn't afford it. The report proposes raising the fees for non-priority children from £8 to £15 a week.

The response of the local Labour Party and trade union leaders to these attacks on women workers has been a disgrace. The right-wing Labour city council passed a resolution supporting the idea of a workplace nursery in the town hall. But at the same time, the council has sacked 32 nursery officers — 20 of them in the last few months — and halted the city's nursery replacement programme. And, while the NALGO branch at the town hall has voiced its full support for the workplace nursery, NALGO officials have shown little practical interest in fighting to improve the childcare facilities in the city. The planned closure of the staff nursery at Manchester Royal Infirmary has been ignored by the unions. The lack of pressure on the union leaders from their membership over the closure is not surprising: the unions' indifference to the plight of female nurses and ancillaries had allowed the hospital administrators to raise the nursery fees to the point where only doctors could afford them. Similarly, while the North West TUC supported the recent token Education Week of Action, it has remained silent over the crippling cost — £12.50 a week for students on a basic grant — and blatant inadequacy of the single nursery which Manchester's three major colleges share between them.

Campaigning for nurseries can be neither a token nor an afterthought. For us, adequate childcare facilities are a vital precondition for women to have the right to work. While the social services committee compiled its report, we took our own nursery questionnaire directly to working class women in Longsight, Moss Side, Chorlton and Rusholme. The results exposed the authorities' lie about 'over-provision' and dispelled the bosses' myth that women don't want state nurseries. Of the five women we met who had children in council nurseries, one was the wife of a prisoner, two were single teenage mothers, one had a crippled husband and the last described herself as 'very lucky'. For the overwhelming majority of women, state nurseries are disliked because of the high cost and poor facilities. The widespread support we won for our demand for childcare services which really meet the needs of working class women confirmed the urgency of a campaign for 24-hour nurseries. Manchester, birthplace of the Pankhursts and home of the Equal Opportunities Commission, looks like being the launching pad for the first communist movement for women's liberation for 60 years.

Gail Daniels

Two ways to fight redundancies

THERE HAVE BEEN two major fights for jobs in Manchester's slump-struck engineering industry over the past few years. One took place at the Eccles diesel engine manufacturing plant of L Gardner and Sons, the other was at Laurence Scott and Electromotors of Openshaw. The first was led by the dominant faction in the local engineering unions, the Broad Left of Communist Party and Labour left supporters, backed

by the Socialist Workers Party. At Laurence Scott, the control of the Broad Left was much weaker and the strike was more open to the influence of the RCP and its supporters in the factory.

Both struggles ended in defeat. At Gardner, hundreds of jobs have been lost and union organisation effectively smashed. The Laurence Scott factory has shut down altogether. But, whereas the cutbacks at Gardner have resulted in the demoralisation of trade union activists, notably those influenced by the SWP, the Laurence Scott struggle has provided some of those involved with a much clearer understanding of how to carry the fight for jobs forward against the resistance of the bosses and the trade union bureaucrats. This difference is the consequence of the different strategies advanced by the Broad Left and the SWP on the one hand and the RCP and its supporters on the other.

The dispute at Gardner in 1980 arose when the employers insisted on mass redundancies in addition to the concessions on job-sharing and short-time working that the unions had already accepted. After a four-week occupation in October the dispute ended when Communist Party convenor and local Justice of the Peace Tom Macafee agreed to voluntary redundancies and ordered a return to work — 3000 workers took severance pay immediately.

Macafee's position — in which he was fully supported by his deputy convenor SWP member Mick Brightman — was that some sacrifices were unavoidable to keep Gardner profitable. He was prepared to accept short-time work and job-sharing, and, when it came to it, voluntary redundancies. But as his slogan went, 'enough is enough'; compulsory sackings — especially when his own name was on the list — were too much. The occupation slowed the pace of the redundancies. It was acclaimed as a great victory by the left. 'Gardners win — at last a jobs victory' proclaimed *Socialist Worker*. Brightman congratulated the officials, singling out the leading Broad Left bureaucrat in the engineering union in the Manchester area for special praise. He had had 'more successes over the last 10 years than almost any official in the country' (*Socialist Review*, 15 October 1980). When you thought about it, that really wasn't saying much.

Within 12 months the Gardner workers discovered that once they had accepted responsibility for the fortunes of the company, there would be no limit to the sacrifices that would be demanded of them to keep it viable. In November 1981 the bosses demanded a further 450 redundancies and the unions were powerless to resist — enough simply was not enough. By January of this year the Broad Left activists were isolated and impotent. The disillusionment of the activists gave an opening to the right. A right winger defeated Macafee in the elections for shop steward in his own tool-room section and went on to beat Brightman in the vote for convenor. Seizing their moment, the bosses tried to victimise Brightman. Fortunately they failed — but they succeeded in gravely weakening shop-floor organisation. By the summer of 1982 shop stewards at Gardner were collecting for the South Atlantic fund.

Supporters of the next step argued throughout the Gardner dispute against the politics of the Broad Left leadership. We insisted that workers can only win by fighting in their own class interests — for every job — and by rejecting any concern for the employers' interests. We carried forward this approach in the Laurence Scott struggle in 1981.

At Laurence Scott the Broad Left, whose politics dominated the strike committee as well as the local trade union bureaucracy, was subjected to a constant challenge from the RCP. We fought consistently to raise the stakes and in opposition to the bureaucrats' attempts to restrict the scope of the struggle and compromise with management. It was RCP supporters who called for immediate occupation when the officials wanted to delay; who organised flying pickets and blacking when they proposed using

official union channels; who called for mass meetings instead of bureaucratic cliques; who refused to be intimidated by the courts and the police when the state finally moved in to crush the occupation and the mass picketing.

And, when the Laurence Scott struggle was defeated, we did not pretend that it was a victory. Our intervention clarified the issues at stake — and it clearly exposed who was to blame for the loss of 650 jobs. One outcome of the strike was a challenge to the leadership of the AUEW, a challenge we extended to include the Manchester Broad Left as well as the national right-wing leaders.

Events towards the close of 1982 reveal the consequences of the two different strategies pursued at Gardner in 1980 and Laurence Scott in 1981. The SWP, bemoaning the downturn and the demoralisation wrought in part by Broad Left policies it endorsed, has wound up its rank and file groups in the unions. The RCP, learning from its experiences in Manchester, is building up a network of trade union supporters to carry forward its offensive against the reactionary bureaucracy within our own movement that holds back every struggle to defend working class living standards.

Dave Hallsworth

Cleansing our ranks

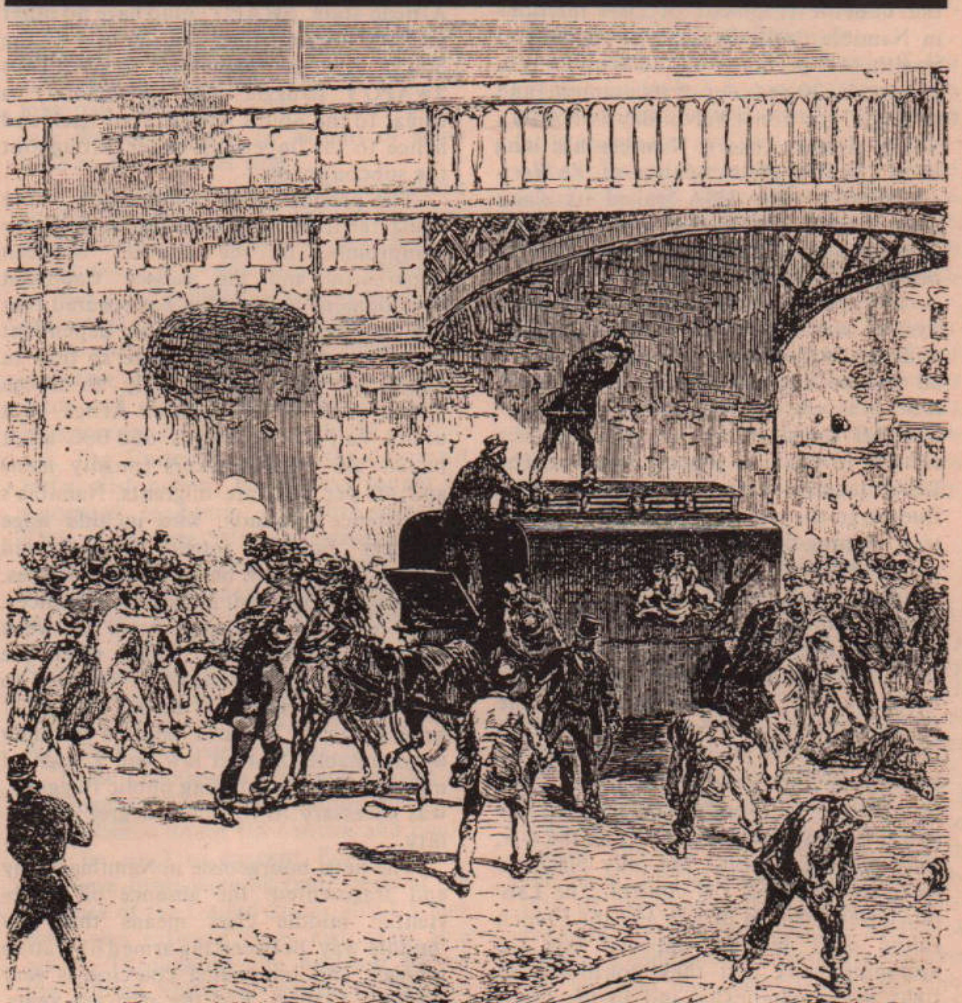
CAMPAIGNING AGAINST the race checks in hospitals and doles has been a major focus for Manchester's large and active WAR group. It was WAR supporters at Manchester Royal Infirmary hospital who first raised the issue nationally in NUPE and got this year's NUPE Conference to endorse a call for industrial action against the checks. The local CPWA WAR activists' group has given a national lead on how to fight 'ethnic monitoring' in dole offices by organising office-based meetings throughout the region. At Aytoun Street dole office all 36 CPWA members attended a meeting and voted unanimously for all-out strike action against the race checks this January.

In Manchester, the Area Health Authority initially opposed the introduction of race checks into local hospitals — on the grounds that it would not make any savings for the NHS! Local NHS bureaucrats adopted the same position. Not surprisingly, when the DHSS introduced the scheme on 1 October, neither the AHA nor the union officials did anything about it. WAR immediately picketed the area health authority and organised protests at Wythenshawe, the Royal Infirmary and all the major hospitals. At Oldham Royal we have been successful in blocking the introduction of the scheme.

Manchester WAR has also been fighting against the victimisation of black workers in industry. At J Tanner & Co in Oldham — one of the numerous textile firms that have profited from sweated black labour for decades — an Asian worker contacted WAR when he was sacked for being a 'trouble-maker'. The all-Asian nightshift came out on strike in protest and WAR was successful in getting many of the white day-shift workers to join the picket line. Management were forced to back down, but as we go to press it looks likely that they will try to victimise the same worker again. WAR is pressurising the local union representatives — from the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers — to defend him all the way.

WAR has presented an alternative to the long-established reformist campaigns on racism in Manchester. There are numerous deportation campaigns in the area. Their main limitation has always been to fight each case as a 'special case' and appeal exclusively to the local black community for support. WAR is forcing local white workers to see immigration attacks as an attack on their class. Our work has made us a lot of friends, but also some enemies. Local Communist Party bureaucrats, like Frances Dean of Manchester Trades Council, are embarrassed by WAR's exposure of their cosy relationship with the police liaison committee. They worked overtime to try to undermine trade union support in the area for the Workers March Against Racism. But we have got them on the run. More and more workers in Manchester are saying racism has got to be rooted out of the area.

Charles Longford



A contemporary cartoon illustrating the freeing of the Fenian leaders from a prison wagon in 1867. Three Irishmen — the Manchester Martyrs — were subsequently hanged for this 'crime'. This year 800 people, including a large contingent of Manchester Irish Freedom Movement supporters, marched to commemorate this event and to demand the realisation of the cause for which the Fenians fought — an Ireland free of British rule.



The battle for Namibia

Namibia has become the key battleground in the conflict between the black masses of southern Africa and the white supremacist bourgeoisie of the state of South Africa itself. The liberation struggle in Namibia is often presented in radical circles in Britain as a glorious repetition of Zimbabwe's independence struggle. However, as Ben Campbell and Karen Black of the Namibia Support Group argue, Namibia is different from Zimbabwe and so is its war to free itself of imperialist domination.

THE MOST CRUCIAL difference between Namibia and Zimbabwe is that it has been ruled directly as a colony of South Africa, not by a fully-fledged settler state such as the British established in Rhodesia. South African colonialism replaced German imperial rule after the defeat of the German settlers by a joint South African-British expeditionary force during the First World War. This force was supported by many dispossessed Namibians — two-thirds of their people had been slaughtered by the Germans to make way for capitalist agriculture in the central plateau region. The Namibians joined the fight in the hope of regaining their stolen lands and cattle, but they lost out to another gang of brigands under the formal command of 'His Britannic Majesty' who assigned control of the territory to South Africa. The peculiar form of imperialist rule in Namibia gave a distinctive character to the subsequent national liberation struggle.

Squabbles among thieves

The South West Africa People's Organisation, formed in 1960, was moulded by the conflicts among the different imperial powers over the fate of Namibia and by the underdevelopment of class relations in Namibia itself. Because of its mineral wealth (80 per cent of the world's gem diamonds, 20 per cent of its uranium) and strategic position (Walvis Bay is NATO's South Atlantic base), Namibia has long been a central preoccupation of the Western nations. The USA staked its claim after the First World War, and after 1945 it moved more decisively to advance its position in Africa.

The newly devised UN Trusteeship System was used to give nominal independence to the former German colonies — all except Namibia. Despite heavy American pressure and appeals to the International Court of Justice, South Africa refused to relax its grip on Namibia. The USA steadily extended its economic influence in the region. In 1964, two American mining-finance companies, AMAX and Newmont, bought up the huge Tsumeb mine, producing copper, lead, zinc, cadmium, silver and pyrites. They acquired the mine for £1m — by 1969 sales had reached £400m. Against this background of increasing investment the US government stepped up its political offensive against South Africa. In 1969 it backed an unprecedented measure — the termination of South Africa's Mandate and the transfer of sovereignty to the UN, thus making Namibia the only place on earth under direct UN control. The Labour government in Britain and the French ruling class bitterly opposed this US aggrandisement and they continued to fight it diplomatically and in the international courts. The South African occupation continued. However, in 1971 the International Court of Justice ruled that South Africa was in illegal occupation — a ruling never accepted by the British or the

French.

These squabbles among the super-powers, and their cynical use of the UN and the ICJ to disguise their imperialist designs on the area, discredited these supposedly neutral institutions in the eyes of the masses. As SWAPO launched its armed struggle in 1966 it commented that recent events would 'relieve Namibians once and for all from any illusions which they may have harboured about the UN as some kind of saviour'. Again, the 1971 verdict led to a major challenge to imperialist control — a two-month long general strike against contract labour. Workers paralysed 21 towns and 11 major mines in the biggest revolt seen for decades.

No half measures

Although SWAPO has much in common politically with the national liberation movement in Zimbabwe, the retarded development of the Namibian state has imposed a different character on SWAPO's struggle. In Zimbabwe the nationalist forces fought for many years for reforms within the Salisbury state — for one man, one vote, and other demands. In Namibia the masses were directly confronted from the start by the naked might of the South African state. SWAPO could have no other primary demand than the removal of the South African occupying army. Thus SWAPO's struggle was immediately a threat to the South African state itself and hence to the imperialist order throughout the subcontinent.

The peculiar class composition of the 'trust territory' also militates against any compromise in the conflict between imperialism and the masses. Capitalist development in Namibia has ensured that the majority of households are dependent on wage labour — even more so than in Zimbabwe and second only to South Africa itself in sub-Saharan Africa. Just under half of Namibia's 650 000 adult blacks are wage workers (mostly men) and 40 per cent are migrants. Namibia's subsistence peasants, who include wage workers' families forced by apartheid labour laws to live on arid rural reserves, are largely dependent on wage remittances. The result is a strong bond between workers and peasants. Thus, when the army deported thousands of workers to the northern reserves during the 1971 general strike, the area became virtually ungovernable. Martial law and a reign of military terror, including public floggings, was necessary to restore a degree of stability.

The petit bourgeoisie in Namibia is tiny and fragmented: the absence of a substantial middle class means that any 'middle way' between the armed liberation struggle and imperialist coercion is very difficult to find. For the past ten years, however, the imperialist powers have sought to stabilise the region by promoting some sort of Zimbabwe-style solution. However, diplomatic solutions to the Namibian conflict appear to be increas-

ingly transparent cover-ups for ruthless South African military repression.

A new carve-up?

In the mid 'seventies, the USA moved to advance its interests in southern Africa by encouraging settlements in Zimbabwe and in Namibia, from which it expected to benefit at the expense of Britain, South Africa and other European powers. Top US negotiators Kissinger and Haig met South African premier Vorster in Zurich in September 1976 to discuss Namibia. They agreed on an 'organised delay' in international talks so that a moderate black leadership could be groomed and grafted on to the white settler state as a precondition for conceding a token independence. The key architect of the plan was British Labour leader James Callaghan. In April 1977 the five imperialist powers with most capital in Namibia — the USA, Britain, France, Germany and Canada — met and formed a 'contact group' to mediate between the UN and South Africa on moving towards Namibian 'independence'.

But Namibia proved a more difficult problem for the imperialists than Zimbabwe. The 'contact group' put forward a scheme for UN-supervised elections involving the biggest UN 'peace-keeping force' since the Korean War and the withdrawal of all but 1500 South African troops. South Africa, aware that SWAPO would win overwhelmingly in any election in Namibia, has stalled and stalled.

South Africa could only withdraw from Namibia if it established control over Angola on Namibia's northern border. Hence, South Africa's insistence on the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola as a condition for any moves towards elections in Namibia. South Africa has enough problems maintaining order internally without allowing the instability of the countries to its north to permeate across its borders. It simply cannot afford to allow a SWAPO government to come to power in Namibia with a radical MPLA government in control in Angola. Even though South Africa would maintain its economic stranglehold over the whole region, the consequences for its internal political stability could be catastrophic. As South Africa cannot control events in Angola, it has to make sure of Namibia. Hence it has no intention of withdrawing and all the 'solutions', 'settlements' and 'elections' are simply a disguise for its military coercion.

The imperialist powers have become increasingly realistic about the problem — they do not want to encourage the explosion of anti-imperialist sentiment in southern Africa any more than does South Africa. Hence they have conspired to assist South Africa's delaying tactics. France and Germany would like an early solution — they are well placed to take advantage of any disruption of South African business links. The USA, however, has modified its position. It is now prepared to subordinate its immediate economic goals in Namibia to its wider concern to establish South Africa as a secure policeman for the whole region. Covertly, because of the Commonwealth anti-apartheid lobby, Britain has gone along with US strategy.

'Mudgerewa'

The most transparent device in the South African scheme for Namibia has been its attempt to promote an 'internal settlement' along the lines attempted by Ian Smith with Bishop Muzorewa in Zimbabwe. The South Africans' stooge is Dirk Mudge of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance. This organisation was set up at a 'constitutional conference' in 1976 in the Turnhalle (gymnasium) in Windhoek. It is composed of the South West Africa National Party, representing European settlers, and ten delegations of tribal chiefs and headmen, all long on the state payroll. Whereas Muzorewa turned out to be a flop in Zimbabwe, Mudge is simply a non-starter in Namibia.

Decades of direct rule from Pretoria meant that there was no local state apparatus; rigid apartheid structures meant that there was hardly anybody

who could help build and staff a governmental machine. With full South African backing, the settlers and their stooges, set about a crash programme of state-building. But most white settlers considered themselves 'South Africans'. In the absence of any indigenous manufacturing or finance, they felt little need for a nation state. The authorities had long used apartheid regulations to prevent black people from becoming educated: now the shortage of trained workers left the South Africans without a local layer of Namibians they could incorporate as a buffer between themselves and the masses.

In the end, the thing that unites the rival imperialist powers and the South African ruling class is their common determination to crush the anti-imperialist struggle. At present SWAPO's small guerrilla army faces one of the world's most powerful military machines. One third of the South African army is tied down in what is, according to the *Windhoek Observer*, 'in proportion to the number of citizens... the world's greatest military occupation'. More than 100 000 troops terrorise 1.5 million Namibians — one soldier to every six or seven adults. Over the last few years, South African forces have penetrated deep into Angola to cut off SWAPO's supplies and training camps. Around 50 Angolans and 50 Namibians are slaughtered every week.

Britain is deeply implicated in the Namibian bloodbath. British Buccaneer and Canberra bombers, Plessey aircraft guidance systems, Marconi radar, Saracen and Centurion tanks are all part of the South African armoury.

The enemies at home

Namibia is a popular cause for the left in Britain. The TUC regularly denounces the South African government and the Labour Party is a strident critic of apartheid. However, for the British labour bureaucracy and the Anti-Apartheid Movement which reflects its views on South Africa, the issue of Namibia is not raised to challenge the role of British imperialism, but to question Thatcher's support for Reagan's pro-South Africa line on the conflict. Indeed, British labour leaders criticise Thatcher's position for being 'unpatriotic' — Britain's best interests would be served by standing up to South Africa and promoting trade with black Africa and the Commonwealth. The leadership of the AAM thus makes no distinction between the interests of British workers and British capitalists over Namibia: both should unite in opposition to the intervention of the apartheid state.

In reality, there is no convergence of class interests on Namibia. The British ruling class has vast investments in South Africa and Namibia and it shares US concern to keep imperialist law and order in the face of anti-imperialist movements throughout southern Africa. This is a far more important consideration than Britain's Commonwealth concerns — although the Government always welcomes labour movement backing for its exploitative interference in the affairs of other African and Asian countries. The British working class, on the other hand, has everything to gain from the defeat of the South African state and its allies — notably Britain — in Namibia.

Behind the official labour movement anti-apartheid rhetoric lies a shameful record of collaboration with British imperialist exploitation in southern Africa. It was Tony Benn who signed the contract for Britain to expropriate half its supply of uranium from Namibia. The giant British mining-finance company Rio Tinto Zinc earned £63m from the Rossing mine alone last year on the strength of this deal. Successive Labour governments have colluded with Britain's NATO allies and South Africa to cover up and carry on the relentless war against the Namibian masses. The first step in support of the Namibian struggle is to expose the labour bureaucrats' complicity with British imperialism; the next step is to rally working class sentiment and action against one of the main enemies of the Namibian people — the British state.

Is there life after Brezhnev?



Yuri Andropov's succession to power in the Kremlin confirms the ascendancy of the security forces and the military in a society wracked by food shortages and stretched to breaking point by the demands of national defence. Brezhnev maintained a precarious stability by playing off conflicting forces at home and abroad; Andropov will have to play the same game for higher stakes in a much more uncertain future.

YURI ANDROPOV is the first KGB chief to make it to the top. This success — and that of the clique around him — is evidence of the increasing militarisation of Soviet society. The KGB is generally associated with spying and corruption. But it has a much broader function.

What is the KGB?

The Soviet Union has neither an effective market nor a planning system which can allocate the resources of society in any rational way. Neither workers nor managers have any interest in passing on accurate information about what is happening in the economy. For Soviet society to function at all there has to be some agency for organising communications and checking up on the grosser violations of administrative directives. This role is filled by the KGB.

The growing chaos of the economy means that the KGB has its hands full. A very large proportion of production now comes from private plots, unofficial activities in factories and moonlighting in the black economy. Misuse of resources, uncompleted projects and production of useless goods — always a feature of Soviet society — have increased with the complexity of the technology used.

The economy, however, has not stood still. Soviet living standards are considerably higher today than they were 20 years ago, at least for those living in the towns of the Russian republics. Diet, accommodation and health have all improved, and certain basic household goods such as TV sets and refrigerators are now much more widely available. But it would be wrong to draw the conclusion of much of the British press — that these material improvements have imparted a fundamental stability to the system.

Living standards under attack

In fact, the real standard of living has been declining for several years, despite a steady increase in money incomes. For more than 50 years cheap public housing, transport and bread have been used to stabilise the regime. Recent articles in the Soviet press suggest that this policy is coming to an end and that the bureaucracy intends to remove these subsidies. Shortages of food led

Brezhnev in May to announce a 'food programme' designed to raise investment in agriculture. But the failure of past attempts to reallocate resources suggests that the bureaucracy is very unlikely to achieve this new target. It is not just that the state economic administration can get no cooperation from workers: it has only tenuous influence over the lower and middle ranks of its own apparatus.

Resources for consumption have always taken second place to the hardware needs of the military. In October, Brezhnev took the unprecedented step of appearing before the leaders of the armed forces before the annual budget review to assure them that their requirements would be met. The military was concerned about the poor performance of advanced Soviet weapons in Lebanon and the advances in Western arms technology as a result of increased NATO budgets. The bureaucracy's public commitment to divert resources to the food sector, at a time when industrial output growth is down to 2.7 per cent and continuing to fall, forced the military lobby to step up its efforts to get the resources it needs.

Investment in heavy industry has always been closely tied in with the needs of military production. The military defence of the Soviet Union's territory has been the central concern of the nation's industrialisation since the first five-year plan in the 'twenties. This will continue to be so, particularly in a period of capitalist recession and growing imperialist rivalries. The Soviet Union's own economic crisis implies that the resources for the military will in future have to be supplied by continuing to squeeze consumption, not only relatively, but absolutely as well.

State repression

Since the Stalin era, methods of internal policing have become more subtle and less openly repressive. The reason for this apparent liberalisation is that the benefits of introducing modern technology are undermined if policing is conducted along the terroristic lines of the 'thirties. The role of the KGB has increasingly involved organising communications. Western observers believe that disconnection of the trunk-dialling telephone set up for the Moscow Olympics and the reduction of

lines to the West by two-thirds in July were a preliminary to installing the equipment in three new bureaucratic complexes in Moscow: at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the KGB headquarters and the military chiefs of staff building.

Soviet workers lead extremely uncomfortable and frustrating lives and can see the products of their labour squandered under their noses. Yet, the bureaucracy has nevertheless managed to prevent coherent opposition forces developing. In the 'thirties and 'forties this was achieved through a combination of naked terror, the creation of a new elite of intelligentsia and bureaucrats promoted from the ranks of workers, and ideological manipulation, particularly through appeals to patriotism and Great Russian chauvinism. In the years since Stalin, improved living standards made it possible for the bureaucracy to apply terror in a more differentiated way: individual opponents of the regime could still find themselves imprisoned in the Gulag, but they might equally be sent to psychiatric hospitals or allowed to emigrate. Where opposition has been organised, generally under the influence of nationalist ideology in the western provinces or among the Muslim minorities of the south east, the security forces have simply cordoned off the regions concerned and gunned down anyone left on the streets.

The Soviet bureaucracy has no other means to prevent unrest spreading once it has come out into the open. In the future, as workers search for organised means to oppose a regime which can no longer feed them, the bureaucracy will need leaders with the kind of experience of controlling the flow of information and ideas which Andropov has acquired in the KGB.

The enemy abroad

Faced with the need to develop specific items of technology — tanks, ballistic missiles, blast furnaces, electric power transmission lines — the Soviet bureaucracy has shown time and again that, if it chooses to devote sufficient resources to the task, it can come up with the goods. But it can never do this across the board. The Soviet economy lacks the dynamism to develop the productive forces to a level where it can compete with capitalism. It must always remain parasitic on imperialism. In order to keep the productive forces from stagnating, the bureaucracy is therefore engaged in a continuous search for ways to exploit the capitalist division of labour and graft Western technology and managerial systems onto Soviet industry. This is typically achieved by exporting energy and raw materials, whether for hard currency to buy Western goods, or as part of some kind of direct barter deal.

It has always been clear to imperialist strategists that the Soviet Union was subordinate to capitalism and that at some stage the opportunity would arise to force its collapse. At the same time, individual capitalist firms and governments have an interest in helping to maintain the Soviet economy through trade and credit — an interest the Soviet bureaucracy has become adept at exploiting. The United States, as the dominant imperialist power, has always sought to safeguard long-term capitalist interests. Thus in the late 'fifties it established the Co-ordinating Committee (CoCom) to enforce a joint imperialist boycott of key technology exports of particular military interest to the Soviet Union. The United States also intervened on several occasions in the 'sixties and 'seventies to forestall specific export contracts such as the 1962 West German/Soviet pipeline deal.

These US-inspired sanctions played an ideological role in consolidating the Western Alliance under US control and could also be used to prevent European and Japanese firms winning trade deals at the expense of the United States. But US business also suffered from lost deals as a result. Throughout the post-war period the United States has sought to control the direction of Soviet economic development in such a way that the country's eventual economic collapse would lead to its re-integration into capitalism on US terms.

US sanctions against the Soviet Union are not simply economic bluff. Evidence of their impact is available in reports of the near-disaster of the Kamaz truck and diesel plant 600 miles east of Moscow, commissioned 12 years ago and intended to be the largest plant of its sort in the world (see *Financial Times*, 10 November 1982). Renault, Pullman-Swindell, IBM and other companies won orders for the plant worth around \$1 billion. Yet Nixon's refusal to allow Ford and later Mack Trucks to act as general contractors was a major factor in undermining the project, which today produces only half the planned annual output. The Soviet economy needs not only capitalist hardware but also, just as critically, it needs capitalist software and the managerial expertise that goes with it.

Reagan's failure to enforce his sanctions on European equipment for the Siberian gas pipeline is clearly a major diplomatic success for the Soviet bureaucracy in exploiting the competing economic interests of the imperialists. But this should not obscure the gradual hardening of imperialist trade policy against the Soviet bloc. There has been a general agreement to increase CoCom restrictions on exports of hardware of potential military use to the Soviet Union. Future European natural gas import contracts are more likely to be signed with Norway or Algeria. For its part, the United States may well agree to include its grain sales in a NATO review of East-West trade. All the imperialist nations want trade with the Soviet Union, but they want it on their own terms — and in line with the shifting power balance within the crumbling Western Alliance.

Elbow room in Asia

Brezhnev's last major diplomatic initiative was to re-open talks with China after 20 years of open hostility; his funeral provided the opportunity to continue this dialogue. The Soviet leadership is desperate to find ways to ease the burden of defence spending on the decaying economy. Attempts to negotiate arms limitation agreements with the imperialists have got nowhere in the last six years. Unrest in Eastern Europe requires greater troop concentrations on the western borders. The rapid progress of Western military technology compels the Soviet Union to invest more to keep up. Roughly one-third of the Soviet Union's total land, air and sea forces are assigned to the country's eastern regions. Any opportunity to reduce the size of these forces would be welcome to the Soviet bureaucracy.

The main diplomatic interest of the Chinese leadership is consolidation of an alliance with the United States in order to facilitate greater access to credit and technology. Its confrontation with the United States over US arms sales to Taiwan is part of its negotiations. Its response to Soviet overtures is another. Chinese foreign minister Huang Hua, wants a reduction of Soviet troops on the Chinese border; cessation of support for Vietnam's military presence in Kampuchea; and recall of troops from Afghanistan. Whatever its response on these issues, the Soviet Union's leeway for reducing the diplomatic and military pressure it faces from imperialism in Asia is strongly circumscribed.

Confrontation — not reform

Soviet workers face a future of violent confrontation with the Soviet state. Any move to 'liberalise' the Soviet economy along Hungarian lines, partial as such moves must be, will be at the expense of living standards. The forms which Soviet workers' struggles will assume are as yet undetermined, but the Polish experience indicates the broad lines they are likely to follow. The objective conditions of life in the Soviet Union today create the possibility of overcoming the atomisation workers have suffered for 50 years. Andropov inherits a sophisticated repressive machine but he lacks one essential asset for stability: the cooperation of anybody outside the immediate circle of those who benefit from the system. In a period of economic collapse that missing element will be crucial.

Gareth Evans

It takes two to QUANGO

KEN LIVINGSTONE'S radical Labour group at the head of the GLC set up the Women's Committee in May. Its objectives are to promote the welfare and interests of women in London, to advance the cause of equal opportunities for women and to advocate the abolition of practices which discriminate against women. The committee includes seven Labour members (Valerie Wise, chair, Ken Little, vice-chair, Frances Morrell, Deirdre Wood, Andy Harris, John McDonnell and one vacancy); three Tories (Sonia Copland, Baroness Gardner and Simon Randall) and Ann Sofer (SDP) and eight co-opted places (as yet unfilled). Right from the start the committee had some difficulty in explaining its relationship to the women's movement.

The first statement of the committee broached this delicate subject:

'It is not intended that the GLC Women's Committee will take over the women's movement. Rather it will work alongside the women's movement and add strength to it.'

'Alongside'? The next paragraph was more to the point:

'The Women's Committee has its own budget, some of this money is for giving grants to organisations taking up women's issues. The closing date for receipt of applications for the current year is 31 July.'

The Women's Committee began life with a grant of £332 000 (£62 000 for staff; £10 000 for conferences and publicity; £200 000 for grants). Within six months it was advertising for a further six full-time workers (to join the existing staff of eight) on salaries of £11 800 plus. It also applied for a budget for next year of £8.3m. This opened up the sort of dialogue the women's movement was enthusiastic about getting alongside.

Right turn

As Kate Marshall argues in *Real freedom*, today's women's movement is in a phase of retreat marked by a shift to the right. In the early 'seventies feminists, in what they then preferred to call the Women's Liberation Movement, took on some of the major issues facing women. They demanded equal education and job opportunities, equal pay, free 24-hour nurseries and free contraception and abortion on demand. But times have changed. The recession has pushed middle class people, including most feminists, in a right-wing direction. The women's movement has given up fighting for liberation. Instead it has become a social milieu within which individual women seek personal fulfilment. Its preoccupations are no longer the basic problems of women's oppression but its most extreme manifestations (rape, battering) and its ideological reflections (sexist language, pornography).

In pursuit of its new objectives the women's movement has moved into two new spheres of activity — self-help social work and Labour Party politics. Rather than forcing the state to provide the resources necessary for every woman to become independent, feminists have taken on the provision of services themselves. In women's refuges, well-woman health circles and childcare groups of various kinds feminists have become social workers. The state has often been prepared to subsidise these activities — it gets services on the cheap. The Labour Party has proved an efficient means of integrating the women's movement into this soft face of the state apparatus.

The women's movement has been forced to turn to the Labour Party and the state because of its own weakness and fragmentation. And it has found an unpopular and defensive Labour left receptive to its approaches.

The Women's Committee of the Greater London Council is where what's left of the Women's Liberation Movement engages in a meaningful dialogue with what's left of the Labour left. For the representatives of women's organisations, the Women's Committee is a means of getting state subsidies for their pet projects. For the Labour left, the Women's Committee is a vehicle for broadening the appeal of the party by winning feminist support. The GLC, like central and local government at every level, is keen to encourage self-help schemes of any kind — it saves them from providing the services people need.

Labour left wingers, like Ken Livingstone and his colleagues at the GLC recognise that the party has little appeal to the working class. Hence, they have set about trying to compensate by extending Labour's popularity among London's black population, other ethnic minorities, the Irish, gays... and among feminists. Women's Committee chair Valerie Wise has a positive assessment so far and is optimistic for the future:



Valerie Wise: financing Labour-feminist alliances

'Many women are now having a dialogue with the GLC who would never have touched us with a barge-pole before. Only good can come out of this for the Labour Party.' (*London Labour Briefing*, October 1982)

She claimed that some women have already joined the party because of the Women's Committee: 'It's uphill all the way though because many women distrust the Labour Party (hardly surprising, in view of our record) and so this trust is having to be built up slowly'. Given the problems caused by Labour's shameful record on women's rights, and its current lack of dynamism on the question, the Women's Committee has been obliged to resort to organisational measures in its attempts to win feminist friends.

The dispute over the eight co-opted places on the Women's Committee reveals the tensions created in the Labour Party by its attempts to win a feminist base. The October open meeting (a three-monthly event attended by 200-300 people) wanted four places reserved for ethnic minorities, one for lesbians, one for the disabled and the final two to be filled from the open meeting itself. This corresponds to the need for the Women's Committee to appear to be representative of all women by including one of every kind. It raised some traditionalist hackles, however. The policy committee of the London Labour Party insisted on reserved places for nominees from its regional executive. This body at present includes seven women and 41 men. Valerie Wise pleaded that 'all the goodwill and trust that we are building with women will be greatly harmed if this goes ahead'. The South-East Region of the TUC accepted the first six reservations but demanded that its equal opportunities committee be allowed to nominate the remaining two. The GLC Labour group endorsed this proposal, which now seems likely to go ahead. Thus, although the feminists are well represented, the veteran quango operators of the labour bureaucracy retain their grip.

The GLC is concerned to encourage feminist entrepreneurs — this fits in with its general strategy of backing small

capitalists in London. However, its main interest in the Women's Committee is in the sphere of childcare. The GLC — through the Inner London Education Authority — has responsibility for pre-school nurseries in the London area. Nursery facilities in London are so bad that there has been an upsurge of local self-help schemes, often inspired by feminists, to establish basic childcare and playgroup facilities to allow women to get out to work. The GLC and ILEA and the individual London boroughs have consistently failed to finance a decent level of childcare. But the Women's Committee aims to provide substantial cash incentives to women who are prepared to take the burden on themselves. Thus of the £8.3m 1982-83 budget, £5m is earmarked for grant-aiding various childcare schemes.

But why shouldn't feminists claim state money to subsidise their projects? Because with their efforts they are covering up the failure of the state to provide basic facilities for women. They are colluding in the cuts. Self-help childcare can only encourage the state to push more and more of the burden of domestic work on to women's shoulders. In reality, feminists are subsidising the state, not vice versa.

But why can't feminists take advantage of state funding to challenge government attack on women's rights? Because grants of capitalist cash are only made to people who accept the dictates of capitalist politics. The feminists on the GLC Women's Committee have exhibited a remarkable moderation since they became dependent on its payouts.

On every issue GLC feminists have confined women's interests within the narrow limits of what is acceptable to a Labour-controlled council preoccupied with cutting costs. On the central issue of childcare they have accepted that the GLC should not expand its own provision of nurseries. The Women's Committee is concerned that the GLC as an employer should give a lead in all areas of women's rights. The GLC at present provides no creche facilities for its thousands of female employees at County Hall. But this is not an important priority for the Women's Committee. Its draft 'Programme for women in London' notes that 'one suggestion is that the creche be set up within a year'. Only 'a suggestion'; no hurry — the committee has urgent business like banning women wrestlers from the London area.

The women's health working group of the Women's Committee has put forward its proposals for the draft programme. The drastic curtailment of abortion facilities in the London area is entirely ignored. There is no mention of fighting the cuts in NHS facilities that have so gravely affected women's access to health care. There are only complaints about male-dominated medicine and encouragement to women to look after themselves. The group's concluding demand is that 'community and voluntary health work should be supported and funded'. These sentiments should find receptive ears not only in the GLC Labour group but in the Tory Cabinet.

When it comes to women's employ-

ment, the 'employment and industrial strategy' group has nothing useful to say to working women. It simply gives Labour Party rhetoric about planning for social need a feminist thrust:

'The approach that we want to see pursued by the GLC is one of restructuring the basis of employment around women's needs and the needs of parents and carers of dependents. If popular planning is to be effective it cannot solely be dictated by economic factors but must embrace the requirements of women if we are to achieve a fairer distribution of employment.'

To the extent that this means anything, it means that to help women, the GLC must establish a communist society first. As this is not in its manifesto, it will have to settle for less ambitious objectives. The Women's Committee is indeed much less ambitious. It recommends that the GLC behave like the more paternalistic capitalist employers. It makes no mention of fighting redundancies nor any practical proposals for challenging discrimination and unequal pay.

When the Women's Committee has taken a stand in defence of women's rights, it has usually been for the wrong reasons. Thus, it backed the health workers' pay claim, not because they needed the money, but because 'low pay lowers the morale of health workers, makes staff recruitment more difficult and leads to a deterioration in the quality of health care'. The committee also decided to oppose the Nationality Act, because it 'legitimises sex discrimination', not because it is racist. In both cases, the committee decided to launch 'inquiries' as a means of postponing action on these issues into the indefinite future.

Feminising the police

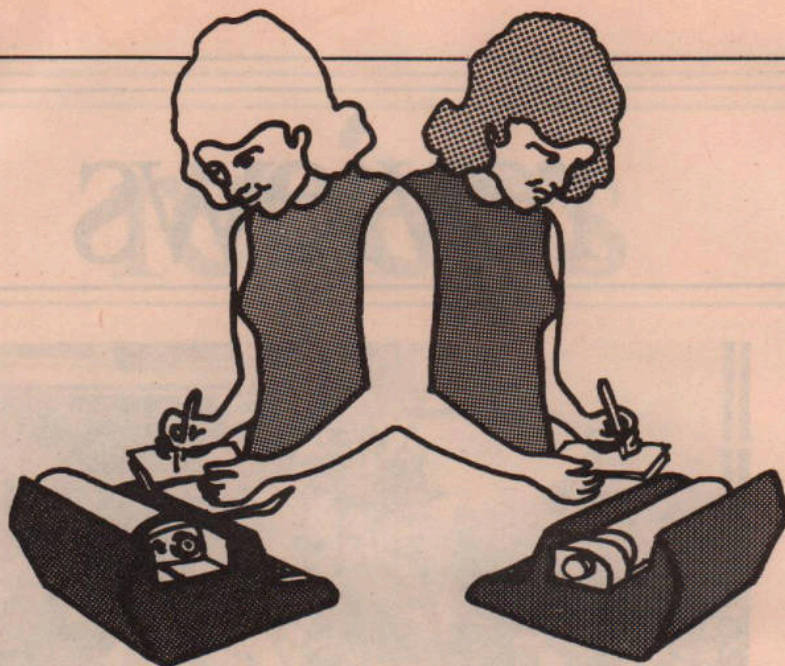
The feminists on the GLC Women's Committee have abandoned any serious fight for women's rights on the issues that matter. Thus they have much more time and energy to devote to the secondary aspects of women's oppression that are their main preoccupation. They are campaigning vigorously against sexist advertising and for the GLC to extend its powers of censorship to stamp out pornography. This is an open invitation for the state to assume an even more authoritarian role in cultural affairs. Any increase in state control can only be to the detriment of those whose oppression the state enforces — including women.

Not only has the women's movement become part of the soft side of the state, it has also become very soft towards its repressive wing. For the GLC Women's Committee the police are just another social service. Thus the women's centres it proposes to spend £2m on next year will provide 'lists of sympathetic, usually women, doctors, lawyers, tradespeople, trade union officials, police officers, local councillors'. The committee wants to make sure that the 'male-dominated' Metropolitan police force is 'sensitised to the needs of women inside the force and in the community'. While feminists propose consciousness raising for pigs, in the real world police harassment of women — whether they are NHS strikers, social security claimants or Kings Cross prostitutes — continues apace.

The GLC Women's Committee, widely seen as a progressive development, is nothing but a quango. For feminists it provides money and more scope for self-indulgence. For the Labour Party it provides a means of recruiting activists and affecting a concern for women's rights. For the GLC it promotes childcare on the cheap. For working women it is a cynical irrelevance.

Marcelle Reynolds

The job-sharing fraud



Who opened the door to Norman Tebbit?

NORMAN TEBBIT is on to a real winner with his job-sharing scheme due to begin on 3 January 1983. The Tory Employment Secretary plans to give £750 to every employer who is prepared to split an existing full-time job into two part-time jobs. Each sharer must work a minimum of 15 hours each week and the job must remain split for a period of 12 months. The Government's proposals have met with a generally favourable reception.

Two cheers for Tebbit

The British Institute of Management held a major conference at the Cafe Royal in London to celebrate 'the flexi-time revolution'. Guest speakers included junior employment minister Michael Allison, senior directors of GEC Telecommunications and Barclays Bank, and top TUC woman Marie Patterson. Earlier in the month the Confederation of British Industry conference endorsed Thorn-EMI boss Sir Richard Cave's recommendations in favour of job-sharing. Tebbit himself claimed that his scheme 'could provide many thousands of people with the kind of job which suits them and also create new jobs for the unemployed'.

There were some more lukewarm responses. TUC equal rights committee chair Ken Gill was all in favour of *voluntary* job-sharing, but he dismissed Tebbit's scheme as 'a gimmick' and 'a diversion' from 'the fight for real jobs' (*Financial Times*, 10 September). Some feminists were also unenthusiastic. While they agreed with the sentiments behind Tebbit's scheme, the 'New ways to work' collective felt that his plans were 'a negative measure in the context of unemployment, rather than being offered as a positive option to all those who wish or need to work part-time' (*The Guardian*, 16 August). However, both the bureaucrats and the feminists were only half-hearted in their opposition to Tebbit's plan. Both the official labour movement and the women's movement have long advocated the sort of work-sharing measures that have now been implemented by the Tory Government.

Feminists have backed job-sharing as a solution to the problems of childcare.

'Take a job, split it in half and you have two people out of the dole queue instead of just one. Or, looked at from another angle, two people have more time for important, but non-profit making interests' (Jean Endersby, 'Share your job and cut dole queue blues', *Northern Echo*, 7 June 1982). Or looked at from yet another angle, women's domestic burden is maintained and unemployment is disguised and perpetuated.

Given the shortage of nursery facilities, job-sharing allows women to carry on working while making their own childcare arrangements. Many see this as a welcome alternative to what they perceive as the authoritarian and sexist character of local authority provision. And they also approve of the opportunity job-sharing creates for men to play a bigger part in child-rearing. The trade union leaders go along with this. The TUC has been campaigning to urge male trade unionists to help out with the housework and in looking after the children.

Both feminists and bureaucrats see job-sharing as a central part of their 'alternative strategy' to deal with problems of unemployment. In the women's movement job-sharing is promoted as an almost magical method of making two jobs out of one. It is seen as a means of breaking down distinctions between male and female roles and establishing a more equal society. The trade union officials are more pragmatic: for them, it is a matter of better half a job than none at all. Thus, when GEC Telecommunications in Coventry split 88 jobs between existing staff and unemployed youths on YOP schemes, national officer of the electricians' union Roy Sanderson greeted the scheme warmly:

'I would rather job-sharing were not necessary, but this is a rather ingenious scheme. Trade unions have been in favour of work-sharing rather than seeing people without a job of any kind, and I regret that even more firms do not adopt it.' (*Sunday Times*, 30 May)

Not the answer

In reality, job-sharing is no solution to the problems of women's domestic work or unemployment. It began as a middle class style of part-time work. The 1981 survey of job-sharing conducted by the Equal Opportunities Commission indicates

that it was confined to lecturers, doctors, community workers and other professionals. Most were earning around £5000 a year for about 16 hours' work a week. However, job-sharing has become increasingly popular with employers further down the labour market ladder. Tebbit's scheme shows how job-sharing can become an even less desirable option for working women than part-time work.

For many bosses, Tebbit's minimum - 15 hours - will turn out to be a maximum. This is because 16 hours a week is the minimum level which entitles workers to the minimal protection of the Employment Protection Act - for redundancy pay and against unfair dismissal. The 12 months' minimum stipulation means that workers will effectively be on a short-term contract which can be terminated at the employer's whim after one year. Full-time workers whose jobs are split will not be able to claim unfair dismissal if they are sacked for refusing to have their job - and their wages - cut in half. This scheme will be another weapon in the hands of the bosses to use against women at work.

Job-sharing will not do anything to relieve women of domestic work. At best, it can achieve a redistribution of the work of housekeeping and child-rearing *within* the working class family. This is agreeable to feminists and reformists because it gets them out of the awkward task of forcing the state to take on the burden of providing childcare facilities. At worst, job-sharing simply means reorganising women's work to ensure that they get their domestic work done. It is an attempt to find an individual solution to a social problem - the inability of capitalism to provide the basic facilities to allow every woman the right to work and participate fully in society.

Nor is job-sharing a solution to the problems of unemployment. For the

Tories, it simply provides another opportunity to fiddle the statistics: they expect Tebbit's scheme to remove 150 000 from the dole figures at a stroke. This is part of a broader strategy for concealing unemployment, and particularly female unemployment, in the run-up to the next election. Implementing Rayner's scheme (to force women to prove they have made adequate childcare arrangements to make them genuinely 'available for work' before registering) removed over 100 000 women off the books in one month.

Tory fraud

Tebbit's scheme will also save on benefits. Women on job-sharing schemes will not be able to claim supplementary benefits or family income supplements. As far as women are concerned, the bitterest blow of all is Tebbit's insistence that jobs can only be shared with people who are *already registered as unemployed*. This provision - made to ensure that the scheme has a direct effect on the statistics - automatically rules out vast numbers of women. Married women with children who are not registered because they are not entitled to benefits for various reasons are excluded. The naked prejudice and cynical calculation behind this measure did not escape even the bourgeois press:

'71.9 per cent of registered adjusted unemployment is now made up of men, and only 28.1 per cent of women... this emphasis on helping jobless men - could be an electoral advantage.' (*Financial Times*, 1 November)

We are opposed to job-sharing. Our emphasis is on the urgent need for adequate nursery facilities for women to work full-time. All women who don't have a full-time job and a full wage are unemployed. If the Government makes them 'unavailable' for work through its failure to provide nurseries, then it should pay benefits up to the level of a living wage. It's time we began a real fight against Tory attacks on women along these lines. And while we're taking on Tebbit, let's not forget the feminists and the labour bureaucrats who made his onslaught on working women so easy.

Mary Harper



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Up against the Kaiser

F L Carsten, *War against war: British and German radical movements in the First World War*, Batsford Academic, pp285.

WHEN THE FIRST World War broke out, it took most of Europe's socialist parties less than 24 hours to forget the resolutions they had been passing for years and line up behind their ruling classes instead. The attitude of Plekhanov, the Russian Menshevik, was typical. 'To bayonet our German comrades', he said, 'would give me great pleasure'. The merit of this book lies in the contrast it draws between the disgusting performance of the Social Democrats and the preparedness of the workers to put class interests to the fore.

Berlin goes red

In Germany women workers took to the streets against the effects of the First World War — low pay and high food prices — as early as March 1915. Soon unrest had grown to such an extent that a left faction of the SPD, led by Haase, was formed. This became known as the Independent SPD (USPD) in April 1917. The USPD was militant, but leading SPD theoretician Karl Kautsky knew that it was no real threat to the war effort. As Carsten reveals, Kautsky wrote to his Austrian counterpart Victor Adler to tell him that the Haase grouping was the only means of stopping genuinely anti-militarist revolutionaries like Karl Liebknecht from winning mass support.

In April 1917 most of Germany's major cities saw massive strikes against a 25 per cent cut in the bread ration. The workers' demands took on a political character: they included the freedom of all political prisoners, the right to free association, a free press, universal suffrage and, above all, peace. By 1918 the German Army was nearing collapse and soldiers on leave were agitating for an end to the war. They reinforced the demands of the factory workers. In October Karl Liebknecht was released from prison and greeted by a crowd of 20 000 at Berlin station. The army was in mutiny on all fronts and the Navy refused to put to sea. And the USPD? Haase met SPD dignitary Noske and agreed that 'a disaster had to be averted'.

During November a great and spontaneous uprising took place throughout Germany. Workers' and soldiers' councils took command of large parts of the country. By 9 November the movement had reached Berlin; but, though the SPD and USPD were not in control of it, neither were the revolutionaries. That same day, SPD leader Scheidemann declared 'the German Republic' from the balcony of the Reichstag, while Liebknecht stood on the balcony of the royal palace and declared 'the German Socialist Republic'.

The working class was within an ace of state power. But, on 10 November, a cabinet of three SPD leaders (Ebert, Scheidemann and Landsberg) and three USPD leaders (Haase, Dittmann and Barth) was appointed. Liebknecht boycotted it, but the workers' struggles began to ebb away. As Carsten notes, 'there was indeed a German revolution in November 1918, but the revolution was aborted'.

The blame for the trenches

In Britain opposition to militarism never assumed the dimensions it did in Germany. The Government's most radical critic, the ILP, was more concerned with who ran the war than with stopping it. To this end, the ILP helped form the Union for Democratic Control — a talking shop which argued for parliamentary control of foreign policy.

Nothing, predictably, came of it. Insofar as workers took industrial action during the war, the ILP was not able to turn their spontaneous feelings into a real anti-war force. Leading ILP member G D H Cole was typical in actively opposing the strikes armaments workers on the Clyde and in Sheffield led over gruelling wartime factory conditions. 'This was not the time' the great chronicler of British socialism said, 'for industrial upheaval, the consequence of which would be disastrous, not only for the nation but also for the working class'.

The most important lesson of Carsten's study is that mass working class action does not by itself lead to the establishment of socialism. Despite having effective control of society in 1918, the German working class

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German revolutionaries Liebknecht and Luxemburg

handed power back to the bourgeoisie. Hatred of war was based not on an understanding of its inevitability under capitalism, but rather on a rejection of its consequences. Had a revolutionary party created a working class leadership conscious of the causes of the war and clearly distinct from the Social Democrats, then the mass movements of 1918 might have had a happier outcome.

A second lesson from *War against war* is that the most important enemies of the working class are not so much its outright nationalist leaders (Kautsky, Noske and, today, Michael Foot), but the social-pacifists (Haase, the ILP and, today, Tony Benn). The role of the social-pacifists is much more subtle than that of the right wing of the labour bureaucracy: it is to appeal to workers' natural instinct for peace, but to channel that instinct into support for the aims of imperialism. That is why the fight against social-pacifism must begin now — before it's too late.

Keith Tompson

Doomed from the start

James Jupp, *The radical left in Britain, 1931-41*, Frank Cass, 1982, pp261.

THE THESIS of this book is straightforward: 'the left has a useful function in enlivening the Labour Party but no future as an independent force in British politics'. For Jupp the lesson of the 'thirties is that through the Labour Party the left can at least exercise a modicum of influence but outside the Party it is doomed to irrelevance.

At first sight Jupp's views appear to make sense. The Labour Party has always had a monopoly over the loyalty of the working class. All past attempts to construct an alternative have failed. The Communist Party, the Independent Labour Party and a plethora of radical left organisations — all have remained on the margins of British political life. And Jupp seems to be right when he notes that today's left 'seems unlikely to coalesce into an effective leadership for any large section of the British people'.

Closer examination, however, reveals the author's arguments to be shallow and simplistic. It is open to debate whether there has really ever been a serious attempt to build a political alternative to the Labour Party. Moreover, if the left cannot survive on its own, the influence it can wield through the Labour Party is illusory and entirely subject to the dictates of the Party leadership.

No alternative

During the 'thirties there was considerable scope for building a working class revolutionary party. The cumulative impact of the depression and the drive towards war had a politicising effect on sections of the working class. But the British left proved unable to realise this potential. The reason for this failure is clear — although the left was organisationally separate it was politically subservient to the Labour Party. Even Jupp is forced to acknowledge that the left never amounted to anything more than a pressure group in the orbit of the Labour Party:

'The left, whatever it might have urged to the contrary, functioned as an ancillary to the Labour Party throughout the 'thirties.'

During the 'thirties the left became preoccupied with narrow tactical questions. Left groups held major debates about the rights and wrongs of the 'united front', the 'popular front' and 'entryism'. There was only a minimal discussion about policy and the left never really fought for a clear anti-capitalist programmatic alternative to the Labour Party. The inability of the left to relate to the problems facing British workers became particularly apparent from 1934 onwards. As the author notes, from this time onwards 'the emphasis in left politics began to shift from domestic to international affairs'.

As internationalists we would not criticise anyone for concerning themselves with issues such as European fascism. But any effective approach towards international questions presupposes an ability to respond to domestic events. Unfortunately the left did little to challenge the Labour Party on domestic issues, particularly on economic matters and therefore its discussion on international questions became a substitute for organising in industry and the community. Moreover the Labour Party too could afford to be radical on international matters — the further away from home the more radical.

Jupp characterises the left propaganda of the time as being of 'outspoken irresponsibility' in contrast to the 'dull practicality' of the official labour movement. It is true that the left went in for rhetorical gestures. But that was as far as it went. On everyday issues left politics were merely an extension of basic Labourist doctrines.

Anti-fascism

The British left, however, was far from irrelevant. Its radical rhetoric had a resonance among the more active section of the working class. Many workers who were profoundly suspicious of the Labour Party moved towards the radical left. Unfortunately the ideological subservience of the left to the Labour Party meant that these workers were drawn towards reformist solutions albeit by a different route.

The left's subordination to the Labour Party was particularly striking over the issue of fascism. British workers had a healthy hatred of all things fascist. The radical left was instrumental in reconciling this positive anti-fascist sentiment with the needs of British imperialism. As rivalries between imperialist powers intensified, the left justified the war plans of British capitalism on the grounds that they were directed against fascist Germany. Thus the left reinforced illusions in British democracy and endorsed British nationalism as progressive.

In the end anti-fascist sentiment was harnessed to the imperialist war drive. Left wingers became the strongest advocates of war, as Jupp notes:

'The left was psychologically equipped for the reality of war, which had not been the case in 1914. Then it held out against a wave of patriotism among a public which was totally unaware of the reality of modern warfare, never having been touched by it. In 1939 nearly everyone had a direct or indirect memory of mass warfare and mindless patriotism was much less important than a conscious commitment to the idea that aggressive fascism could not be stopped by any method short of war.'

Jupp counterposes the 'mindless patriotism' of the First World War to the 'conscious' anti-fascism of the Second. In both wars the dynamic was imperialist rivalries. It fell to the British left to portray Britain's role in these rivalries in a positive light and, through giving anti-fascism a nationalist content, to win proletarian support for the war.

The British left became irrelevant not because it existed outside the Labour Party but because the left itself became complicit in the ideological subordination of the working class. Its own actions ensured that the main influence over the labour movement would be nationalist, not class politics. Jupp's book should be read despite its shoddy analysis. His detailed account of the past activities of the radical left shows the dead end of pressure group politics. Today's radical left will readily rediscover itself in this account. Perhaps it will force some to rethink their slavish commitment to changing the Labour Party.

Pat Roberts

Waging war on crime

David Cowell, Trevor James and Jock Young, eds, *Policing the riots*, Junction Books, 1982, pp172, £5.95.

Paul Gilroy, 'The myth of black criminality' and Joe Sim, 'Scarman: the police counter attack' in Martin Eve and David Musson, eds, *Socialist Register 1982*, Merlin, 1982, pp314, pbk £4.50.

EVER SINCE March 1982, when Police Federation chairman James Jardine issued his strident call to 'go to war against the muggers', representatives of the Labour Party and the Communist Party and a host of academic socialists have eagerly churned out articles grappling with 'the problems of black criminality'. These selections bring together the salient features of the debate.

Labouring the law

Every rising Labour politician wants to make law and order a major issue for the party. From 1979, when the Tories came to power on a vociferous anti-crime ticket, through the long, hot summer of 1981, and the 'mugging' furore in the early months of 1982, the Labour Party has been pushing forward its claim to become the law and order party. As Roy Hattersley put it recently, 'the insistence that "law and order" is a "Tory issue" is absurd' (*New Socialist*, July/August, 1982). Behind Hattersley stand radical academics Jock Young and John Lea. They too resent the Tory monopoly on the law and order issue:

'A challenge to this long established domination by the right must begin with the simple recognition that crime is a pressing problem for the poor and for the black community, and that the control of crime is a vital issue for socialists.' (*Marxism Today*, August 1982)

This is the starting point for all the authors. They all accept that crime in general, and black crime in particular, is a major problem for the working class.

The notion that the issues of crime and law and order have been consciously manu-

factured and manipulated by the ruling class does not even enter into the calculations of the authors. They fall roughly into two camps. On one hand, Hattersley, Lea and Young slavishly accommodate to the criminalisation strategy adopted by the ruling class during the past 12 months. On the other hand, Paul Gilroy and Joe Sim offer a limited critique of the events of the past year and the subservience of the left to the public hysteria whipped up by the bourgeoisie and the media.

Crime and punishment

While most of the authors merely take the crime statistics about 'black muggers' at face value, John Lea and Jock Young go one step further. They argue that the police figures are 'an underestimation of the true problem' (*Policing the riots*). Insisting that 'we should resist a romantic view of black crime', Young and Lea cite the 'soaring rates of street crime' among black youth in Lambeth:

'It would be implausible to believe that a high recorded rate of street crime for black youth is merely a function of police prejudice.'

After depicting the lifestyle of black youth as a 'minority and deviant subculture' and reinforcing racist stereotypes of all blacks as potential 'muggers' and criminals, Young and Lea contend that the intensive and brutal policing of black ghettos in 1981 and 1982 was merely a pragmatic response to an unacceptable rise in the level of street crime in the inner cities.

A socialist criminal policy?

Since the 'problem' can be reduced to a group of 'deviants' and 'criminals' within the black community, the task is to work out an effective strategy for dealing with it. It's no use being soft:

'A diminished police presence can, in our opinion, hardly be seen as a plausible response to rising crime rates.'

The question is how much repression is necessary. How brutal should the police be?

'The issue is not whether the inner cities should be policed but what that policing policy should be.'

Everybody agrees: what is required is some form of improved police accountability.

The only recommendation put forward for community policing is that it will be that much more effective in dealing with crime. The Tory approach has failed in this respect, argues Hattersley, as he puts forward Labour's alternative. Community policing serves as 'a tangible deterrent to criminals, a reassurance to law-abiding citizens and an essential service of crime prevention information' ('Copper bottomed reform', *New Socialist*, July/August 1982).

Another contribution from this school to the debate on Labour's crime policy comes from Ian Taylor, writing in a recent issue of the *New Statesman*. His only reservation is that Labour's enthusiasm for 'law and order' might be seen as indistinguishable from the Tory line. Pondering the section on 'crime and human rights' in *Labour's Programme 1982*, Taylor is concerned that 'the programme itself seems to be towards adoption of an essentially "realist" and conservative position' (12 November).

Taylor is also worried about Labour's admission that 'crime, like mass unemployment, is here to stay...significantly beyond the control of governments'. Coming to the rescue of the party, however, he proposes a 'socialist criminal policy'. But he still cannot explain how this differs from the Tories' criminal policy. When it comes to the police, Taylor thinks that *Labour's Programme* really does go a bit too far - to the left! He complains that 'the party has no constructive view of the police as peacekeepers, crime fighters or social service agencies...it is not part of a socialist perspective on crime to withdraw police from such duties'. Like Hattersley, Taylor is troubled that the Labour Party may allow itself 'to become the anti-police party, better known for our unfair attacks than for our constructive criticism'. The record of left-wing Labour MPs and councillors in Brixton (see pages 8 and 9) shows that Hattersley and Taylor have little cause for concern.

Paul Gilroy and Joe Sim appear to provide an alternative to the reactionary convergence of the Labour left and the bourgeois law and order consensus. They both have serious limitations, however. Sim's thesis on the Scarman Report and what has followed it is



The Webbs with Arthur Henderson at the 1923 Labour Party conference

misguided because he sees the police narrowly as the main determinants of events. He argues that the police regarded Scarman as a 'threat to their power base and autonomy' and set out to destroy his recommendations before they ever got off the ground. It is true that the police released the crime figures, and helped to promote the law and order debate. But Sim is wrong to see the police as autonomous from the state. Ultimately, it is the ruling class that calls the shots - not the police. As well as lending a great deal of credibility to the Scarman Report as a positive 'alternative', Sim seriously underestimates the role that Scarman has played for the ruling class. Again, see pages 8 and 9.

Paul Gilroy's article is an attempt to refute the arguments of Lea, Young et al - and is also a general critique of the way in which the left has succumbed to bourgeois law and order hysteria. At the same time, Gilroy limits himself to their terms of reference, reciting the history of black crime and attempting to explain it socially, politically and culturally. While he offers some explanation of why the issue of law and order has come to the fore and why black people have been singled out for special treatment, he has no alternative to offer. Gilroy simply pleads for 'more imaginative and bold initiatives from the left' and leaves it at that.

The limitations of Sim and Gilroy's critique are not surprising: both are paid workers for the GLC police committee. The chairman of this Labour quango is prospective black Labour MP Paul Boateng. Boateng is also a member of the governing body of Bramshill police college - and on good terms with its former head, the new commander of the Metropolitan Police Kenneth Newman. The aim of the GLC police committee is to make the policing of London more effective by bringing the Met under GLC control and thus 'winning back the confidence of the community in the police' (*The Standard*, 9 September). Newman is not in favour of this measure but he welcomes the assistance of the GLC committee in helping to make the increasingly coercive activities of the police in London more acceptable.

The real criminals

The real criminals are the capitalists who mug the working class every day with wage cuts, redundancy notices and assaults on trade union rights - and the police who do their dirty work on picket lines and in Britain's inner city ghettos. Crime and law and order are not working class issues: they are part of an ideological offensive against the working class. The works of these reformist criminologists are part of the problem not part of the solution. Once the working class has dealt with its real enemies - and their ideologues right and left - it will have no problem dealing with anti-social behaviour in its midst.

Joan Phillips

reviews

The formation of a Fabian

N J McKenzie, ed, *The diary of Beatrice Webb, volume 1, 1873-92: glitter around and darkness within*, Virago Press, pp386, pbk £15.00.

BEATRICE WEBB and her husband Sydney have had an enormous influence on the British labour movement. The first volume of her diary reveals some of the motives and influences which inspired this tradition.

Beatrice Webb enjoyed all the privileges of a British ruling class background. By bourgeois standards her family was enlightened and from childhood she was exposed to a wide range of literature, travel and society. These experiences moved her to try to achieve influence in her own right. Like many other bourgeois women of the late Victorian period, she rejected the conventional role of housewife and sought an independent role in society. She had to fight hard to escape the rigid conventions of late Victorian England and to maintain her intellectual pursuits. Her rejection of a proposal of marriage from the prominent bourgeois politician Joseph Chamberlain shows a strength of character and determination.

Social position

Beatrice Webb embarked on a career as a social reformer, not because she felt that everybody was unequal, but because she considered that the less fortunate needed the guiding hand of benevolent patrons. At the outset, she had a strong commitment to individualism, a sentiment she retained even when she assumed the rhetoric of socialism. Her career began as a social investigator - her objective was to find answers to the problem of poverty. Her adherence to ruling class values was not altered by the suffering and degradation she witnessed during her work in East London. Poverty simply confirmed the need for more efficient social organisation within the existing system. Thus, she dismissed Eleanor Marx because 'she refused to recognise the beauty of the Christian religion' and criticised her lack of respectability.

Nor could Beatrice Webb overcome her prejudice against working people. Her descriptions of life in East London show an underlying fear, even hatred for the masses:

'Where is the wish for better things in those myriads of beings along the streets night and day? Even their careless, sensual laugh, the coarse jokes and unloving words depress one as one presses through the crowd, and almost shudders to touch them.'

Beatrice Webb saw workers as passive, base and indolent, people incapable of reflecting on the higher things in life. In 1886 she com-

plained: 'In spite of the numberless out-o'-work it is difficult to find really good workmen; for they become quickly demoralised and lose their worthfulness. This again is depressing for how can one help these people if they are not worthy of life from an economic point of view?'

Her contempt for workers is an enduring theme throughout her work. From her early charitable work through to her later relationship with the labour movement, Beatrice Webb saw history as a process through which a small select group of brilliant individuals manipulate events for the benefit of society.

Social voyeur

The emergence of militant trade unionism in the late 1880s took Beatrice Webb by surprise. During the 1889 dockworkers' strike the indolent masses were taking matters into their own hands. Beatrice Webb observed with some trepidation: 'The dock strike is becoming more and more exciting even watched at a distance'. Their strike showed the social power of the proletariat and emphasised her own individual 'powerlessness'.

'I have been disheartened by a consciousness that my little mite of knowledge is not of much avail, that the great instructive movements of the masses are perhaps after all, more likely to (have an) effect than the carefully reasoned judgements of the scientific...observer.'

The dock strike marked a turning point in Beatrice Webb's life. Her considerable power of observation allowed her to see the potential power of the emerging trade unions. In September 1889 she went to the TUC Congress at Dundee and began her long association with the labour bureaucracy. Many middle class intellectuals followed her direction. Aware of their individual powerlessness, they sought sustenance from the strength of the working class.

State socialist

The growing middle class interest in the labour movement is chronicled in the diary: 'The Fabian essays in socialism are making way: it is curious how many persons wake up to the fact that they have always been "socialists"'. Two months later, in April 1890, Beatrice Webb confessed that 'everyday my social views take a more decidedly socialist turn'. Of course, her socialism wasn't really socialist. In fact, throughout her life, she retained a profound hostility towards socialists. Beatrice Webb saw socialism as state intervention in social and economic life. 'State socialists' looked to the state to eliminate the irrational aspects of the system to the benefit of all.



Beatrice Webb was a social voyeur - but her intelligence and capacity for insight allowed her to see the emergence of new social problems such as the class struggle in industry which would require new solutions. The rise of the imperialist epoch brought new opportunities for professional reformers. In a sense, Beatrice Webb was very much a woman of her time. Her outlook was that of an imperialist reformer and despite her erudition she expressed all the prejudices of her class. The first volume of her diary ends as she is about to embark on her honeymoon to Ireland - struggling with her 'innate dislike and distrust of the Irish people'. A letter sent by her from Dublin (not published in the diary) sums up the outlook of a British social reformer:

'We will tell you about Ireland when we come back. The people are charming but we detest them, as we should the Hottentots, for their very virtues. Home Rule is an absolute necessity in order to depopulate the country of the detestable race.'

The publication of the diary is to be welcomed. It explains the source of much of the prejudice which afflicts the British labour movement. To this day, middle class intellectuals have been able to climb on the back of the labour movement and influence its values and institutions. This diary should give all active workers an impetus to rid the labour movement of its false friends.

Frank Richards

Mitterand in perspective

Dorothy Pickles, *Problems of contemporary French politics*, Methuen, 1982, pp160, pbk.
John Ardagh, *France in the 1980s*, Pelican, 1982, pp672, pbk £4.95; Secker & Warburg, 1982, hbk £15.00.

ACADEMIC DOROTHY PICKLES is a well known right-wing commentator on French politics. Journalist John Ardagh is to France's bosses what Anthony (*Anatomy of Britain*) Sampson is to England's: a well-connected, liberal and technocratic ally. But together, the two provide useful background accounts of France which help to explain how Mitterand's 'socialist' Government has succeeded in pursuing aggressively bourgeois policies at home and abroad.

Why Mitterand can hold on

Earlier this year 1000 immigrant members of the CGT at the 6500-strong Autnay-sous-Bois Citroen factory, Paris, went on strike for the right to organise. When management sent in scabs, the pickets tore up railway lines nearby to use them as barricades. Later, when the struggle spread to Levallois-Perret, the workers stoned the scabs. One merit of Ardagh's book is that it points up the contrast between aggressive rank and file tactics such as these and the politics espoused by France's meek and docile trade union leaders.

French unions, Ardagh notes, have a bark worse than their bite — 'they brandish revolutionary slogans, they angrily denounce the Patronat: but in day to day shop-floor relations they tend to be fairly amenable'. A number of reasons account for this. First, there is the gradual but currently accelerated rise of works councils (*Comités d'entreprise*), where union representatives mediate between management demands and rank and file aspirations. Second, ever since the heady days of May 1968, union 'participation' in the running of firms has become more and more popular. Third, one of the major results of May 1968 was the passing of a law formalising the role of shop stewards in industrial relations by granting them the right to do union work on the firm's time and in management-supplied offices. Then there is the spread of union-approved 'quality circles' to companies like Aerospatiale. And there are the reactionary schemes for workers' 'self-management' (*autogestion*) developed by CFDT general secretary Edmond Maire.

Given all these factors, France's unions were well integrated into the capitalist system

even before the new Mitterand Government took steps to speed up the whole process. What it means, as Ardagh observes, is that the unions 'have for some years found it hard to rouse the workers out on strike'. It also means that even seemingly militant tactics such as sit-ins 'can be seen as one more token of union weakness and lack of following'. Like one-day strikes, the union bureaucracy uses sit-ins to keep militants busy, managers around the negotiating table, and itself in a more secure position.

Ardagh's judgement of the union's feebleness is an acute one. It helps us explain the political resilience of Mitterand's regime. The unions (especially the Stalinist-dominated CGT) huff and puff about his austerity measures but in practice nod them through. The outcome of the five-week Citroen Autnay dispute also confirms the book's analysis. The black strikers there battled heroically against capitalist terror — for example, managers dropping Citroen spare parts on them from specially chartered helicopters. However, the CGT used their heroism in a completely cynical way. They got a measly few francs with which to boost their pittance wages, no relaxation of holiday restrictions, and no guarantee that the company's practice of keeping files on them and of sending thugs to beat them up would cease. And the CGT? It got 1500 new members and 'recognition': in other words, seats on government-established 'commissions' on union rights and on pay and conditions. If Autnay is anything to go by, the pitched battles with the police and the disruption of rail links which characterised the Lorraine steelworkers' struggle

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against redundancies this autumn will come to nothing.

De Gaulle lives on

While Ardagh believes — rightly — that the unions act out of weakness, Pickles believes that they, or at least those of their members that are in the Communist Party (PCF), are bent on setting up the dictatorship of the proletariat. But this doesn't stop her from giving us some useful insights into the all-pervading phenomenon that is Gaullism.

De Gaulle's regime, Pickles points out, was marked by the elaboration of tripartite (government/employer/union) five-year plans for the modernisation of the French economy. More broadly it issued pro-EEC, pro-Soviet and anti-American rhetoric designed to wipe away popular memories of war-time defeats and post-war humiliations. While the unions were — initially, at least — resistant to Gaullist schemes in the realm of industrial democracy, the General's appeal to nationalist feeling commanded almost total assent.

There were two other, equally popular elements in De Gaulle's appeal. He roused a fear of West Germany, and, in particular, of West German rearmament (both nuclear and conventional). And he pursued a policy of consolidating French imperialist influence in North Africa and the Middle East by aid, trade and especially arms sales.

When Giscard d'Estaing came to power in 1974 the consensus De Gaulle had built up appeared to be breaking up. Giscard favoured a more clearly elitist approach to labour/management relations and pursued an Atlanticist

line on foreign affairs. The stagnation of the EEC and the years of Soviet-American detente made De Gaulle's vision of a global role for France look impossibly grandiose. The regime adopted a new posture towards West Germany, as Giscard held regular meetings with Schmidt and repeatedly stressed how well they got on together.

To the casual observer, it might have seemed that the Socialist Party's election to power in May 1981 had finally laid the ghost of De Gaulle to rest. In particular, Mitterand's response to the Soviet Union's December 1979 invasion of Afghanistan was, as Pickles points out, even more critical than Giscard's and in his early months as President he appeared to be Ronald Reagan's most reliable European ally. However, as Pickle's treatment of Giscard's rise and fall shows, the French bourgeoisie is in no position to drop Gaullism in favour of something more 'progressive'. In retrospect Giscard's party, the UDF, stands revealed as the SDP of French politics — programmatically vague, wholly middle class in social composition, and reliant on economic prosperity for its success.

Now things are different. With French capitalism in crisis, Mitterand has to dole out Gaullist nationalism to his subjects and exhibit Gaullist intransigence towards his imperialist rivals. At home, union/management 'national solidarity' is the watchword of the new regime. There are rewards for mothers of big families; and there is, in the realm of research and technology, an 'almost Gaullist campaign to strengthen France's industrial muscle' (*Financial Times*, 16 November). Abroad, Mitterand has, since this summer's Versailles summit conference and especially since the Siberian pipeline affair, emerged as the European leader most hostile to Washington. In EEC affairs his government is regarded as the most rabidly protectionist of the Nine. Franco-German relations? The main upshot of Mitterand's recent meeting with West German premier Helmut Kohl was his proposal that Bonn and other European administrations drop their recent flirtation with conventional weaponry and follow France on her all-out nuclear rearmament programme — the better to go independent from the Americans (*The Economist*, 6 November). As for the Middle East and North Africa, the two areas of policy in which Giscard did not deviate from De Gaulle's path, it's a case of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Mitterand is jockeying for position even harder than his predecessor, having journeyed to Israel earlier this year, sent troops to the Lebanon and held a French/African summit conference in Zaire in October that was a resounding success.

James Wood

Irish POW replies

First of all, may I thank you and your friends for your very welcome letter supporting my application for a place with the University of Kent at Canterbury. As you say, it appears that the only reason for my rejection relates to my position as an Irish republican political prisoner. I had been told that the philosophy department was satisfied that I was academically acceptable and I had felt that everything else would be a formality. I was not the first prisoner to apply for an MA and, indeed, in the recent past another prisoner here completed an MA in Philosophy with Kent.

However, I was informed that I would not be accepted because the arrangements made in the past were no longer acceptable to the university and also because I may not be in the country after next year when I am due for release. I feel that these reasons are not convincing and am particularly disappointed about their statement relating to my position on release; as I had told them that I intended to complete the degree if possible and to live as near the university as possible to facilitate this. However, it is only fair to point out that I cannot guarantee that I will be permitted to live in England on completion of my sentence because the Prevention of Terrorism Act is frequently used to get rid of political opponents of this regime and almost always to banish political prisoners on completion of their sentences. Because of the nature of the British police state I cannot guarantee that Special Branch detectives will not have me excluded

from Britain next November when my sentence is completed.

The situation now is that I am left without a course for next year, and while I am considering a possible Open University course, I feel that this will not be particularly suitable. The result of all this is that in a four-year sentence I have received no help whatsoever from the prison education authorities, having had to find the money to pay for this year's course from private sources. This year I have been informed that I am not even allowed to pay for a course myself which excludes another one year associate studentship with the Open University.

I am not surprised by this as it has long been the policy of the British Home Office and prison department to attempt to destroy and frustrate all attempts made by republican prisoners of war to educate themselves whilst in gaol. In our turn, we accept this as the consequence of being committed enemies of this state and do our best to develop our minds behind bars. Despite the hardships inflicted on us, we all engage in political, social and other forms of education to develop our usefulness to the republican movement on release and to Ireland when we achieve our freedom. I can assure you that I shall continue with this elementary task of the political prisoner.

Lenin once wrote that prison holds no terror for a revolutionary — it does him or her good. It steels the will and sharpens the mind, an excellent training centre for revolutionaries. I shall return to the struggle as soon as I am

released, a better republican than I was before my imprisonment.

However, it is essential for me to let people know that I am only one of 53 republican prisoners and 14 victims of British frame-up show-trials in English gaols. More than that, I am a very fortunate prisoner insofar as I am no longer on the Special Category 'A' list as my short sentence makes a mockery of that categorisation. Of course, like all POWs, I was categorised as an 'A' man on conviction and held as a Category 'A' prisoner while on remand in the punishment block at Leicester Prison.

My comrades are held in the dispersal system, subject to regular transfers from prison to prison with no regard to their families. They are subject to special restrictions on their correspondence and visits and face all manner of hardships and special treatment. It is important that socialists in Britain tell the people of Britain what is being done in their name. Our prisoners of war are the only long-term prisoners not allowed transfers to gaols near their homes — this is despite the claim by the British government that there are no political prisoners in British gaols. Each and every one of us demand the right to serve our sentences with our comrades in Long Kesh or Armagh. We demand this because we are political prisoners — we ask for no humanitarian favours. We demand the rights which should accrue to all captured soldiers — the rights of POW status. We are forced to endure the discrimination and ill treatment which accompanies our political status — we are perfectly entitled then to

demand what few benefits should also accompany it.

I hope this letter will explain my own circumstances and remind you all of my comrades who are serving savage sentences in maximum security prisons — Britain's Robben Island. We ask British socialists to explain the nature of Britain's war in Ireland and the reasons for our militant resistance. Our struggle for freedom and justice is against the British ruling class, the same class which exploits and oppresses the British working class people — be they white or black. Our struggle is really your struggle and we ask you to support our fight for freedom and justice just as we shall support your struggles in the years to come.

Gerry MacLochlainn
HM Prison
Maidstone, Kent

Gays and the Party

Sexuality, its *social mobilisation* and its *conscious organisation*, is the product of a very long and complex *social evolution*. Like speech, it is a necessary means of human association essentially unrelated to biological function and is unique to our species.

Sexuality has always been the subject of social mobilisation and conscious organisation precisely because it is not the product of some instinctive 'urge' or 'drive' — nor is it a mysterious life force.

Humanity has in the course of the struggle for survival used much magic, taboo, animalism, romance, natural rhythm and 'bio-psychology'

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to validate historically specific sexual imperatives and forms of sexual organisation.

Sexuality, unlike rubbing sleep from our eyes, is not *and never has been* a private matter of concern only to the participants of particular physical acts. Like diet, hygiene and an individual's thoughts on the 'meaning of life', sexuality — its *definition and practice* — has always been a public question independent of the solitary or private circumstances of experience.

Since the emergence of homosexuality and its corollary, heterosexuality, in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and their definition as general categories of being in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the determination of sexual orientation has arisen as an unresolved problem expressed in the specific oppression of homosexual people and the general suppression of homosexual desire.

That it is an unresolved problem is clearly illustrated by the existence of the illness model, the criminal model, the sinful model, the marginal disability model and the 'sexual pluralism' model — all existing in an unstable kaleidoscopic relationship to each other — with no single model necessarily cancelling out all the others. Homosexuals can be ill, criminal, sinful, slightly disabled and an example of human diversity all at the same time.

The general suppression of homosexual desire and the specific oppression of homosexual people has given rise to the fetish of heterosexuality. Not only is heterosexuality deemed natural and necessary, it is also considered to be healthy and wholesome. The fetish of heterosexual desire admits of no other legitimate or equivalent possibilities. Being heterosexual is about *not* being homosexual. And it is a central working assumption of bourgeois ideology that everybody is heterosexual unless they are proved to be homosexual.

Bisexuality, the dance between heaven and hell, has no special role and is assigned no specific or independent significance. It is not recognised as, nor is it, a capacity to relate sexually, irrespective of gender, but merely the ambidextrous ability to exercise both heterosexual and homosexual fetishes.

Heterosexuality is a key assumption of bourgeois ideology. All people: young and old, male or female, proletarian or capitalist, married or single, plain or beautiful, gregarious or solitary, sensual or frigid are assumed to be heterosexual. This assumption is only undermined by *explicit and public* evidence of homosexual behaviour. Heterosexuality is a *public assumption*. Homosexuality requires *public proof* in the form of public disgrace and humiliation or public affirmation.

But, in arguing that the sexual orientation (expressed as the private sexual practice) of revolutionaries is irrelevant the RCP constantly undermines its *formal* agreement with our analysis.

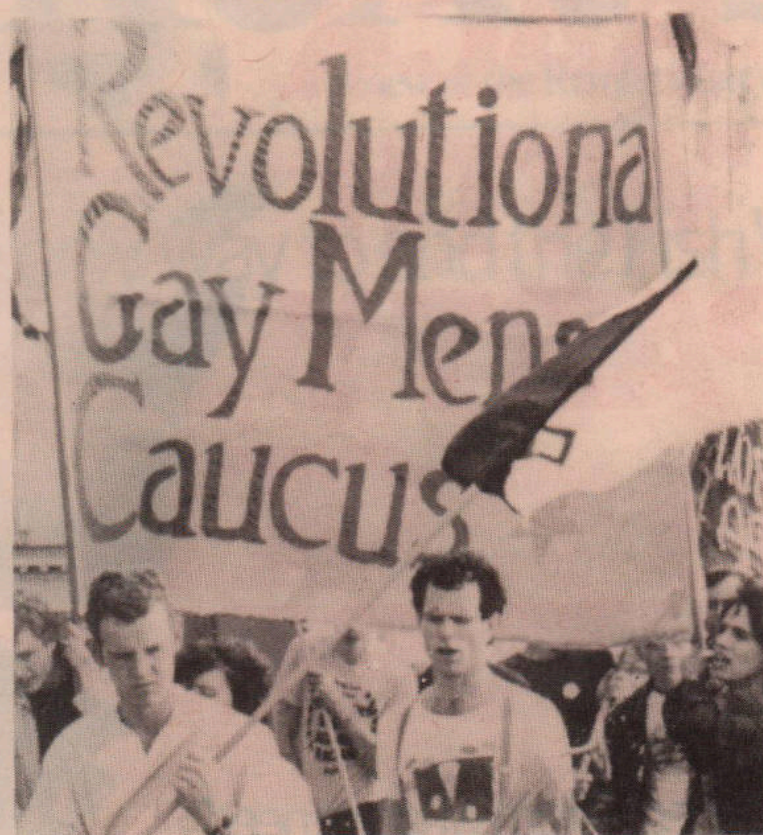
We agree that the private sexual practice of revolutionaries is irrelevant but the public assumption of heterosexuality is not. Irrespective of the nature or character of their private sexual practice, to the best of our knowledge all members of the RCP present themselves to the working class as heterosexuals.

For comrades to suggest that they present themselves 'neutrally' or asexually is an evasion of the problem of gay oppression entirely consistent with the maintenance of bourgeois ideology. Such a stance merely ensures that all members of the party, irrespective of their sexual orientation, support the bourgeois assumption of heterosexuality.

However, it is clear that the RCP is moving towards a more coherent understanding when you say in *the next step*, No 28, October 1982, 'the revolutionary party must struggle to create a climate where coming out becomes that much more acceptable'. Our position is that the only way coming out can become more acceptable is if the party in both its internal life and its public work openly challenges the assumption of heterosexuality within the working class. The party has a responsibility to ensure that homosexuals within its ranks *can and do* come out. *Only if this is done will it be possible for heterosexual comrades to become revolutionaries first and homosexuals second.*

Heterosexual comrades must learn that their sexual orientation and the social assumptions that define and sustain it are part of the dominant ideology, historically specific to bourgeois society, and not the product of their natural condition. Their inability to personally transcend fetishised forms of sexual association imposed by capitalist social relations is not in question. But a clear understanding that the heterosexual orientation is *socially produced* is

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a precondition for effective communist involvement in the struggle against the oppression of homosexuals within the working class.

The theoretical foundation for this further development of the communist tradition is being laid by the REVOLUTIONARY GAY MEN'S CAUCUS. It cannot be laid by closet homosexuals or by comrades who believe that 'revolutionaries' are individuals who have subjectively transcended the fetishised forms of sexual association imposed by capitalist social relations.

The RCP sees the oppression of homosexual people as an offence against a minority. The defence of that minority is an essential part of the struggle for the defence of basic democratic rights within the working class. The social construction of heterosexuality as a corollary of the emergence of homosexuality is not understood and cannot, at present, be addressed. Consequently, the party cannot fight for gay liberation, but only for the rights of a minority surrounded and imprisoned by the ascendancy of the heterosexual assumption. An assumption objectively sustained by the idea that closet-gays and heterosexual comrades are revolutionaries first — and out-homosexual comrades, who 'obsessed' with their sexual orientation, only manage to be revolutionaries second.

Not until heterosexual comrades understand that our 'obsession' is a product of their 'assumptions' will it be possible for us all, irrespective of our sexual orientation, to become revolutionaries first — *by demonstrating within the working class a clear understanding that the proletariat can have no interest in sustaining the sexual definitions imposed upon the masses by capitalist social relations.*

Andrew Robertson
Revolutionary Gay Men's Caucus

Pat Roberts writes:

The difference between us isn't so much the question of sexuality but the role of the party, of leadership and its relation to the struggle of the working class. The revolutionary party is defined by its political programme and revolutionaries are assessed by their ability to develop and operate that programme. Any other criteria can only be arbitrary and subjective. People become revolutionaries for many different reasons. But the individual motives are irrelevant for determining the activity and development of individual revolutionaries. Revolutionaries are not individuals with a particular grievance. What they do is determined, not by their individual experience, but by the dictates of the class struggle as defined by the party.

The RGMC misses this fundamental point when it protests, 'for comrades to suggest that they present themselves "neutrally" or asexually is an evasion of the problem of gay oppression entirely consistent with the maintenance of bourgeois ideology'. Nobody is arguing that cadres present themselves 'neutrally' or 'asexually'. What we are saying is that comrades are

defined by their politics and that is all. No doubt the world will choose to define us in numerous less complimentary ways — but we are determined to ensure that it is our political programme that becomes the subject of discussion. Any other discussion simply detracts from the realisation of our objectives.

We did not accuse RGMC members of being obsessed with their sexual orientation. We would say that, rather than adopting an objective point of view, they allow their experience to overwhelm their action. Therefore, while they subjectively aspire to revolution, they respond from the standpoint of the victim of oppression rather than that of a revolutionary leader. It is not at all clear from the letter whether there is a difference between a revolutionary who happens to be gay, and any gay person determined to resist his or her oppression.

At present there is nothing distinctive about the RGMC's political approach other than the occasional reference to the working class. Thus a letter from a reformist gay in *London Labour Briefing* (October 1982) is fully consistent with the RGMC's preoccupation: 'For most gay people their sexuality is the most important concern'. This is fair enough from an ordinary gay person who simply responds to the experience of being oppressed. But it is not the statement of a revolutionary. The *London Labour Briefing* letter has the merit of drawing out the consequence of its standpoint: 'In many ways I have more in common with a gay Tory than a straight socialist'.

To provide a semblance of theoretical justification for his approach Andrew Robertson collapses into crass idealism. He writes that 'heterosexuality' and 'homosexuality' are socially constructed. If they are socially constructed it must be more than just an 'assumption'. All forms of ideology must have some material foundations or they could not operate as ideologies. Homosexuals and heterosexuals are not just assumptions — they actually exist. It is not revolutionaries who support the 'bourgeois assumptions of heterosexuality', rather it is a material reality, part of bourgeois ideology which is spontaneously reproduced through the reproduction of capitalist social relations.

By trivialising the problem of ideology and reducing it to the level of an assumption the RGMC concludes that individual example can challenge 'the assumption of heterosexuality within the working class' and that this 'assumption can be undermined by *explicit and public* evidence of homosexual behaviour'. Unfortunately this is not the case, just as the feminist project of portraying women in a better light in books and film cannot work.

There are many social constructions just as irrational as those concerning sexuality. But, whatever people's individual intellectual understanding, their actions are socially determined. The RCP can fight attacks on gays but it cannot change socially imposed views sustained by material life. Nor can the RGMC or anybody else.

Andrew Robertson seems to imply, although he does not explicitly state it, that those comrades who lead heterosexual lives acquiesce to the oppression of gays. By this logic a married comrade would be defending the bourgeois family and enforcing the oppression of women. These points are used to justify why at this stage in time it is not possible for RGMC members to become revolutionaries. This is the real issue at stake. The RGMC's starting point is that of the victim of oppression who is not prepared to fight for leadership.

It is ironic that the RGMC criticises the RCP for believing that revolutionaries 'are individuals who have subjectively transcended the fetishised forms of sexual association materially imposed by capitalist social relations'. In fact we make no such claims. If anything the RGMC veers in that direction with its concept of 'assumptions'. If the RGMC actually believes what it says, and agrees that bourgeois norms of sexuality cannot be subjectively transcended, then it must agree that the question of sexual orientation is irrelevant to being a revolutionary. The RGMC approach at present remains restricted to a spontaneous response to oppression. It is hardly the basis for the further development of the communist tradition on gay oppression. Certainly on the basis of this approach the RGMC cannot claim political independence from the existing gay rights movement.

PTA and the Protestants

I was pleased to see the RCP has recently set up in Liverpool, but puzzled by your new branch's silence over the arrest of four Liverpool workers under the PTA on 11 November. These men may have been Irish Protestants, but they are also trade unionists — one of them is actually the chairman of the TGWU branch at the city's Prince Alfred Road bus depot. Surely the RCP cannot condone the use of the PTA against *any* British trade unionists, whatever their political view? This seems to me exactly the sort of case which you could use to good effect in the labour movement to build union opposition to the use of repressive legislation against workers.

Your organisation has an exceptional record of active opposition to the PTA. But that record has been spoilt for me by what I can only assume is a case of putting your party's sectional preference for Irish nationalists over Protestants before opposition to all state repression.

Alan G
Merseyside

Mick Hume replies:

Our correspondent's concern over the harassment of the four Orange Lodge members is shared by the TGWU branch chairman's wife. She told the Special Branch men arresting her husband that 'they should be checking up on the IRA who blow up the soldiers and police, instead of troubling people who are sticking up for the Queen and country' (*Daily Post*, 13 November 1982).

Her chauvinist anger reveals a better understanding of the real purpose of the PTA than Alan G's abstract fear of repression. The PTA is a charter for terrorising supporters of Irish freedom. It is not used against *any* British trade unionists, but specifically against those who challenge the British state's oppression of Ireland. The state may occasionally be driven to pick up Loyalists whose over-enthusiastic support for British imperialism threatens the fragile stability of a divided city like Liverpool. That does not alter the fact that effective opposition to the PTA can only be built on the basis of support for the national liberation struggle, and not by appealing to the basic instincts of trade unionism.

Our opposition to the PTA is unconditional. We will never 'condone' its use. But neither will we waste our time building trade union support for Loyalist thugs who have temporarily upset their political allies in the Special Branch. The RCP's 'sectional preference' is for the international working class over its oppressors. Our correspondent correctly identifies the PTA as part of that oppression, but he fails to realise that the Loyalist guarantors of British rule in Ireland are equally guilty. It is with both of these conditions in mind that campaigning against the PTA will be at the centre of our work in Liverpool.

BERMONDSEY FIGHT BACK WITH THE PARTY OF THE FUTURE!

“We begin from what we need
~ not what they say
they can afford.”
— Fran Eden



BERMONDSEY, like many of Britain's inner-city areas, has rotting factories, rotting housing and a rotting Labour Party. For as long as most people in the area can remember, they have had a Labour MP in Parliament and a Labour council in Southwark. The present state of dereliction and decay in Bermondsey is a tribute to the Labour Party, nationally and locally.

The Revolutionary Communist Party will be standing in the forthcoming by-election in Bermondsey to challenge Labour's claim to represent the area, and to begin a real fight for workers' interests. Apart from its long record of betrayal, the Labour Party has nothing to offer for the future. Shadow Chancellor Peter Shore's latest economic programme promises to try to reduce unemployment to one million in five years from the next general election — if Labour wins it. For the people of Bermondsey, this is as good as a promise of permanent mass unemployment.

The parties of the past

For the RCP, Fran Eden will be standing for a programme of action, *beginning now*, to fight for jobs, housing and people's rights in Bermondsey. She faces a Labour Party which has lost its base in the working class and is more concerned with fighting for its own survival than with fighting for the people of Bermondsey. In fact, she faces two claimants to the heritage of Labour politics in the area.

Former council leader John O'Grady has pledged to continue the traditions of Bob Mellish, for 37 years Bermondsey's MP and now a highly paid re-developer of docklands. O'Grady, as an independent Labour candidate, stands for the Labour Party of the 'fifties and 'sixties, the party

of corruption, careerism and contempt for the needs of local people.

The prospective official Labour candidate is Peter Tatchell, a moderate draped in extremist clothing by the Labour leadership and the press. Tatchell stands for the Labour Party of the 'seventies — the party of Tony Benn, radical chic and middle class 'community' activists. For Tatchell, as for Benn, holding the Labour Party together and getting it back into government are much higher priorities than unemployment, bad housing and poverty in Bermondsey.

Who needs Parliament?

We are pragmatic about Parliament. A parliamentary by-election provides us with an opportunity to bring our politics to a wider working class audience. We will be fighting to win in Bermondsey, because having Fran Eden in the House of Commons would give us many more opportunities to challenge our political opponents and raise a working class alternative.

Unlike Mellish, we do not see Parliament as a place to sit and prosper, from which to look down with scorn on the people of Bermondsey. And unlike Tatchell, we do not see Parliament as a place to be reformed, improved or pressurised by mass protests outside. Ultimately, the sham democracy of Parliament will prove a barrier to the advance of working class interests and it will have to be swept aside. In the meantime it can provide us with a platform from which we can build a fightback against attacks on workers' living standards and political rights. Our programme is not a strategy for a parliamentary government of the indefinite future; it is a strategy to guide Bermondsey workers' actions *now*.

JOBS

Tens of thousands of jobs have disappeared in Bermondsey in the past 20 years. The docks have shut and related industries — especially food processing — have slumped. Now unemployment in the area is around 20 per cent and more than 20 people are chasing every job.

- a job or a living wage for all!
- no to all redundancies!
- no to all restrictions on trade union rights!
- all benefits to be brought up to average wage levels and cost of living index-linked!

WOMEN

Women in Bermondsey have suffered heavily from rising unemployment and cuts in social services. There are three nurseries in Bermondsey providing a total of less than 200 places for pre-school children.

- no to all cuts in hospitals and other services!
- for free 24-hour nurseries!
- free abortion and contraception on demand!
- no to all discrimination against women!

IRELAND

What has Ireland got to do with Bermondsey? Sixty years ago Bermondsey workers appreciated the importance of standing up against the oppression meted out by the British state in Ireland and supporting the Irish liberation struggle. They protested against the Black and

Tans and marched in thousands in Southwark Park in solidarity with republican hunger striker Terence MacSwiney, before he died in Brixton jail. Bermondsey workers still have every interest in taking an independent position against their own government over the Irish War.

- troops out now!
- self-determination for the Irish people!

HOUSING

More than two-thirds of Bermondsey people live in council housing and much of it is appalling. Yet Southwark Council axed a major building programme in 1981. This year it has begun 138 improvements, made 20 acquisitions and 42 new starts.

- decent homes for all!
- rehousing for people in unsatisfactory accommodation!
- repairs and modernisation for those who need them!
- a new building programme to relieve overcrowding and bad housing!
- freeze rents and rates!

RACISM

The Labour Party has a disgusting record on racism in Bermondsey. Mellish urged the government 'to keep them out' and the council has ghettoised 'them' on the worst estates.

- no to the Tory Nationality Act!
- no to all immigration controls!
- stop police harassment!

Join our regular estate and street sales of the next step in Bermondsey!
Phone 01-274 3951 for details.

FRAN EDEN

Prospective Revolutionary Communist Party parliamentary candidate