

The Red Mole

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**STRUGGLE
DECIDES
NOT THE
LAW!**

**OCCUPATIONS - INDOCHINA
LCDTU CONFERENCE
IRELAND - BANGLADESH
EQUAL PAY CAMPAIGN**

Red Mole

STRUGGLE DECIDES NOT THE LAW

The simplest lesson that any trade union militant knows about industrial relations is that it is only strength that matters. Any contract or agreement is decided not by what it says but by what power you have to back it up. If a good agreement is reached that only shows that the balance of power is in your favour.

Exactly the same is the case with the law and with the courts. If a group of workers is weak, a law can always be dug up to be used against them. An Act passed in 1345 was used only last week to arrest men for organising against British troops in Ireland. Exactly the same law was used in the 1920s against the leaders of the Communist Party. Yet when the dockers threatened to go out on strike in support of their leaders facing imprisonment an absurd figure, the Official Solicitor, was discovered by the government to get them out of a dock strike.

This is not the first time the dockers and the working class have found themselves in this situation. In 1951 when the Labour government arrested dockers' leaders they got the same response. The mass of dockers walked out of the gate. At that time too a legal loophole was found to release the dockers. It is always strength not law that decides. This is a vital lesson to learn for the entire working class. After the dockers case any Labour leader who declares that the law must be obeyed should be laughed out of court.

CONFUSION IN THE RULING CLASS

The Red Mole has pointed out in the past that the ruling class could not afford to re-boost the economy before dealing with the working class and the trade unions. They have not been able to do so. They have now suffered a defeat from the miners and another one from the dockers. Their economic strategy is in chaos. Every newspaper talks of further devaluations and economic crisis. The Heath government is now in a really deep mess. The working class is faced with an enemy large parts of which are at this moment completely confused about what strategy is needed to sort out the situation in the short term.

At the same time as this is occurring great dangers for the working class are opening up. On the one hand one section of the ruling class is moving sharply to the right. Journals like *The Economist* call for harsher and harsher measures. On the other hand Wilson and the leadership of the Labour Party are talking of new forms of 'arbitration', 'conciliation' and 'consultation' which are aimed at doing by different means exactly what the Industrial Relations Act was aimed to do.

A SIGNIFICANT BUT LIMITED VICTORY

There is no doubt that the fact that the government had to stop the arrest of the dockers' leaders was a big victory for the working class. In one act the dock workers showed the emptiness of Jones' and Feather's talk that it was impossible to resist the law. But that victory is limited. As long as the employers still control the economy, and the police and law are those of a capitalist state, then all the government need do is wait for another and more favourable opportunity. They will try to find other weaker victims to use their power on so that they can intimidate everyone else. As long as the courts, the police, and all the weapons of force and repression remain part of an employers' state and not in the hands of the working class, the ultimate balance of forces will always be against the trade unions and other working class organisations.

Even in the case of the dockers the state can begin to undermine their position. After all it was the Devlin scheme which got the dockers into this particular mess in the first place and despite four years of resistance the employers eventually got Devlin through. Now over something which they regard as far more important even than Devlin the employers will use every stratagem, trick and show of force to get the Industrial Relations Act implemented. Already they are pointing out that it was other

trade unionists who brought the dockers to the NIRC. They hope already to undermine the solidarity of the working class through this. It is not going to be possible simply to erect a 'fence' round the unions against the law. On the contrary it is only when the working class possesses the power to suppress the employers and not simply defend workers organisations against them that the position of the workers' organisations will be secured. The dockers' struggle in that sense is only going to be one act in a very long drawn out drama.

THE RESPONSE OF THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE CP

In a situation in which leaders of the working class were threatened with jail any real leadership of the working class would have launched all its efforts into preventing the arrests. M.P.s should have refused to participate in Parliament while workers' leaders were threatened. Trade union leaders could have broken off all negotiations. Leaders of the Labour Party should have toured the country speaking to mass rallies for defence of the threatened dockers. That is how any real working class party would have acted.

Instead of this nothing was done except provide reasons why the working class could not fight. Callaghan said the law must be obeyed. Feather called on the government to retreat. No concrete simple measures of defence were taken. The Labour leaders in this situation did *nothing* to lead the working class. Everything that was done—the strikes, the mass pickets, the organisation of solidarity—was done without any lead from the Labour Party. What is the use of putting up a sham fight in Parliament against the Act and then refusing to fight it when it is actually used? All that type of behaviour does is make the enemy realise all your loud talk is bluff and encourages him in his attack. A real workers' leadership does not talk big and then back out in the crunch. On the contrary it soberly assesses the state of forces, works out what can be done, and then proceeds steadily to organise it. In any real struggle people have to be judged not by their words in periods of calm but on their actions in periods of crisis. On that basis the Labour leadership, and 'left' wing, did nothing for the working class. What they *did* do was clearly demonstrate their total commitment to the framework of the capitalist system which needed the Act in the first place. The Labour leaders whined for the dockers to go back. The implications of the dockers taking on the law in the only way to win was too much for them. "Leave the fight against the Act to us paper tigers; it may only amount to verbal fire-works but at least we won't rock the system." The Labour Party's prime interest is in making sure the system is not rocked!

Many trade unionists however have little faith in the Labour leadership. They must be all right to vote for in an election but are certainly not people to be relied on in a crunch. It is necessary to organise apart from them to settle anything. This partly is the line taken by the C.P. at their last Liaison Committee conference, and is a step forward. There is no doubt that the network of militants built up by the CP is an important factor in developing solidarity with threatened trade unionists. The question however is to what end this organisation is to be used. At present the LCDTU has no programme of clear political measures which it fights for. In this situation confusion can be created in which the "loud-talk and no action" approach of the Labour leaders can flourish. At the moment the CP controls the Liaison Committee and the confusion of the LCDTU is only a reflection of the confusion of the CP. Nevertheless the lesson of the dockers' victory is not simply that only organisation pays but also that this organisation has to be directed against the real base of power if it is not to be undermined in the long run. It is this fundamental idea that must be fought for not simply in the LCDTU and in defence of future victims of the Act but in every single struggle in which the working class is engaged in the coming months.

IRELAND

The capitulation of the Social-Democratic and Labour Party to Whitelaw is being taken as an indication that the Provisionals are becoming rapidly isolated, and that the calling off of their military campaign as a step to joining the others at the negotiating table is the only way to maintain a united front, and get the best deal possible for the catholic minority. Such a view would lead to a tragic defeat for that minority.

As we have stated, Whitelaw wishes to de-escalate the situation, get the barricades in Derry down, and reintegrate a substantial section of the minority through the local elections in the Autumn. At present the main factor disrupting this strategy is the continued resistance of the Provisional IRA. If he can convince the mass of the people who support the Provos that such resistance is useless he will be able to isolate them and clear them out of the way. The acceptance of one element or another of Whitelaw's strategy by all the other forces involved in the leadership of the minority aids him in this task.

It is this which lies behind the massive press campaign of recent weeks; a campaign which is designed to cover up the very real limits of Whitelaw's success, and the reversals which he has suffered. Thus in *The Guardian* on Saturday, 17 June, Simon Winchester and Simon Hoggart writing about the rapture with which the Secretary of State's television broadcast had been received the previous evening, neglected to mention the most important thing which he said; i.e. that the local elections were to be postponed from October until November or December.

Such a postponement can have only one of two motivations (unless we believe that Whitelaw believes that the people are too thick to understand PR without more time to explain it). Either he knows that he will not get the barricades down as quickly as he had hoped, or he wants to give the Provos time to elect the Free Derry Community Council, with which he can negotiate. Both of these mean that he knows he cannot crack support for the Provos as easily as the Press is claiming.

Two facts bear this out; the reported, but unpublicised fact that a basic demand of the "Peace Movement" has been for an amnesty for all Republicans, and the unreported fact that the organisers of the mass petition in Belfast and Derry had neglected to tell its signatories that it would be handed to Whitelaw. This shook large numbers of people who had signed it out of confusion, believing that it was parallel to the peace demands of the Provos themselves.

The support expressed for the Provos' demands in a 60 per cent poll of Free Derry is also significant; claims by opponents of the Provos that this meant that 50 per cent of the population had voted against or abstained can be ignored, it is rare for any "democratic" ballot to achieve a 60 per cent poll. The massive 23,000 crowd who attended the Provisional commemoration at the graveside of Wolfe Tone is also a gauge, this compares with the 7,000 pulled out by the Officials.

The motivation of the SDLP is clear enough, they want to be able to negotiate the strongest

position for themselves in a reformed Six County state, a state in which the catholics would have a greater level of political power, which would effectively be used by the growing catholic middle class to strengthen their own position. They can only achieve this if support for Republicanism suffers a defeat, and they can once more become the traditional representatives of the catholic minority. The Official Republicans, who share the SDLP's desire for some form of democratised Six County state have, while not breaking the front and going to the negotiating table, made gestures towards Whitelaw by welcoming his promises of Proportional Representation in the local elections. They hope themselves to be a significant force in the elections, and will be running candidates from the Republican Clubs.

On the other side of the coin the cementation of an alliance between Faulkner and the Ulster Vanguard poses a new set of problems for Whitelaw, and enormous dangers for the minority. It means that Whitelaw has to mould his policies according to their pressure, he cannot therefore simply release all internees, and make sufficient concessions to disarm the minority, he has to constantly promise to eliminate the barricaded areas, and has to appear to stand against the IRA.

The danger of a civil war is very real. The possibility that the UDA could get out of hand and launch a pogrom, the fact that the pressure on Whitelaw could lead to an escalation of military action against the minority, the death of a hunger striker; all of these sparks could start a fire which would engulf the North. British imperialism would be obliged to try to quench that fire, and is more likely to attempt to smash the military capacity of the Catholics than of the UDA.

A second danger arises from the dismantling of the catholic resistance. Both the pressure of the UVF, and the need to guarantee stability would lead to an attempt to destroy the military capacity of the IRA, so that they could not again pose a threat. Far from Republicans being able to gain electorally from the situation, they would find themselves isolated and the middle class politicians would push ahead of them. Thus although the situation would in the long term stabilise itself, so that catholics would be in a more favourable position within the State, this would only occur after a swing back to repression which would weaken the forces challenging the State, and strengthen the leadership of the middle class over the catholics. The Officials are deluding themselves if they think that they will gain from this course of events.

The best perspective would be if the present situation could lead to a mass mobilisation of solidarity which would spread the struggle to the whole of Ireland, but the failure of the Republicans, both Official and Provisional, to develop such a strategy earlier makes this very difficult. However, continued resistance would disrupt Whitelaw's strategy, and weaken the hand of British imperialism. It could also lead to a situation in which Whitelaw was forced into a confrontation with the Vanguard. This would lead to a defeat for the Vanguard and a weakening of the Orange monolith, thus creating more favourable opportunities for future attacks on the State.

That is why revolutionaries in Britain must solidarise with those who are holding out against Whitelaw, and must not de-escalate their solidarity.

ISC AND AIL

The Executive Council of the Irish Solidarity Campaign, having discussed the current situation in Ireland, the effects of this on the building of a solidarity movement in Britain, and the relationship of forces between the various organisations active on the Irish question in Britain, wishes to make the following points clear:

1. Despite the lessening in intensity of the struggle in the North, and the growing support for peace, which represents the fear of the people rather than the will of the people, the struggle is not over. In the short term there is grave danger of a civil war, and in the long term the grip of British imperialism will grow ever tighter on Ireland's throat. The need for an ongoing solidarity movement in Britain has not receded, indeed it becomes more vital than ever.
2. The Anti-Internment League has adopted two slogans which place that organisation on a more advanced political level than its previous positions, its adoption of 'Self-determination for the Irish People' is particularly important. However the rejection by the AIL of a slogan expressing explicit solidarity with the military struggle of the IRA leads us to believe that not all of the forces within the AIL are completely consistent in their attitude to self-determination.
3. However in the coming period the maximum principled unity of all forces in Britain supporting the Irish struggle is of prime necessity; the new slogans of the AIL give it a position which is formally

very close to that of the ISC, and while believing that the AIL has still to demonstrate in practice that it is capable of consistently adhering to these principles, we consider that the differences are insufficient to justify the long term existence of two separate organisations, and that the ISC should merge with the AIL. We do not see this as an administrative step, but as a process of unity in action, which has been facilitated by the acceptance by the AIL of a summer campaign proposed by the ISC. We therefore are taking the following steps to facilitate the merger:

- (a) We ask all ISC branches to make the main focus of their work over the summer the AIL's campaign on Free Derry, and against Unionist and Vanguard propaganda in Britain. We urge also that systematic work in solidarity with political prisoners and detainees is carried out, with the AIL and other local forces.
- (b) The ISC will call a delegate conference in the Autumn, before the AIL conference, to assess the experience of this work, the situation in Ireland, and the current situation in the solidarity movement. This conference would take the final decision on the dissolving of the ISC and the integration of its members into the AIL.
4. In the meanwhile the EC asks all branches to ensure the closest possible liaison with the AIL and to make every effort to assist that organisation in carrying out its summer campaign. In most cases this should mean that all of the political activity of the ISC will be carried out through the AIL, and only where there is scope for independent activity which does not cut across the AIL summer campaign, should this be engaged in.

DOCKERS WIN LIMITED VICTORY

The State has backed down in the face of the dockers' refusal to obey the law (whether the actions of the Official Solicitor resulted from a caucus at Downing Street or the Inner Temple is unimportant). Heath's strategy has received another dent. However, before we become euphoric about the current aspects of the docks dispute must be taken into account. The problem with which the dockworker is immediately faced is the unattached worker or pool of unemployed but registered dockers (see articles in the last two issues of *The Red Mole*).

Redundancy in the face of technological change is the major problem in traditional industries. The gains of previous generations of dockworkers who fought for statutory regulat-

ion of the labour force to defend themselves against the twin dangers of cheap labour and victimisation, ensured that the paring of the labour force in the docks was obstructed. The growth of the pool is the result. The response to the pool, like that to redundancies elsewhere, is a good yardstick to the political level of the struggle. The strategy which we would support would be one which demanded 'full maintenance on the pool'. This demand for pay equal to that received by other dockworkers is justified by the fact that workers should not have to bear the burden of the capitalists' need to reduce their costs. Obviously this sort of demand with or without work sharing would only very

Bernie Steer addresses Tower Hill meeting of dockers, Monday, 19 June.



Photo: Mike Cohen

rarely be agreed to by any employers and never be generally granted under capitalism.

The demands for equal pay and work sharing were both advanced by the National Dockers Group and voted for by the men. Now these demands have been at least momentarily neglected.

The delegates at the meeting on Wednesday, 14 June, voted not to go ahead with a national strike for the moment after being advised by Jack Jones that it was worth continuing to negotiate. Jones made this recommendation despite the fact that the employers refused to discuss work sharing and were stalling the discussions on increases in full-back pay (income of the dockworker on the pool). Instead of insisting that these demands be taken seriously Jones was "encouraged" by a big increase in voluntary severance pay and the offering of a high-work into dockland. Dockers can be forgiven their scepticism about this last offer. Bernie Steer pointed out that the employers on the committee were the same as those who closed their plant in dockland and were using cheaper labour elsewhere. One of the suggestions was for the building of cold storage depots in dockland. Given that a 10-year-old storage plant was closed while another was being built in Dagenham, the suggestion appears to be simply a verbal sop.

The shop stewards committee is not focussing on the problem of the pool in any direct way, either. Instead of concentrating on the full maintenance demand, the shop stewards have fought for the return of groupwork now being done by non-registered labour. That means reinforcing the sectorialism of the dockworker rather than using the genuine mood of solidarity and class feeling of many dockers about the pool to conduct a fight on demands which can constantly be justified in ways which break with bourgeois ideas. It is almost impossible for any developed revolution in the shop stewards committee to put their ideas forward given the strategy the committee have adopted. The differentiation which would have been visible to the more political dockworker if the pool had been fought directly will now be seen only in terms of enthusiasm, willingness to go to gaol or some other personal characteristic.

The shop stewards committee have of course achieved a great deal in rebuilding the unofficial leadership virtually from scratch since the eight week continuity strike, which decisively weakened the Dockers Liaison Committee. They have exceeded the power of their predecessors despite the fact that the conditions of piecework

negotiating which fostered unofficial leaderships have ceased to exist. However the struggle of unparalleled militancy which they have led and which will be an inspiration throughout the vanguard, is no break from social democracy ideologically.

The struggle for traditional work can, if won, only ameliorate the condition of the unemployed dockworkers, it offers no fundamental solution.

SECTORIALISM AND THE MEDIA

One consequence of the demand for the return of the groupage, packing and stripping now being done by other workers is the mileage the media can make out of it. As the picketing continues and the charges have been dropped, the dispute will increasingly be presented as one between militant and innocent workers. A bit of background will illuminate this opposition ignored by the media.

1. Virtually all the employers at the inland container terminals are traditional docks employers and know the possible consequences. The Dagenham depots being picketed are owned by Hays Wharf. Chobham Farm is part-owned by T. Wallis of the Royal Group.

2. The Farm depot will unpack the Glen/Ban line, Far East work recently removed from the Royals and Hull. In the Royals this has meant the return of 1700 men to the pool (see *The Red Mole*, 42).

3. Wallis is reported to have been responsible for getting the Chobham Farm men to join the T&GWU, in order to make any fight even more confused.

4. The Chobham Farm men have not only gone to the NIRC - a scab action - but have reported lorry tails to the police as potential hijackers.

5. Despite the manner in which the Chobham men have fought the pickets, Vic Turner and other members of the shop stewards committee say that they will support any picket for redundancy payment by the Chobham men after the dockers get inside.

6. Finally, the dockers have been pursuing the work for three years through normal procedure. The workers at Chobham, drawn from traditional docks areas, are and were aware of this.

Since Labour's "Docks and Harbours Act" in 1966 a legal tribunal has replaced the old Joint Committees which decided which work was dock work. This legal tribunal has insisted on dock work against the dockers despite the inclusive nature of the original definition. Perhaps the decisions of the tribunal will be changed by the dockers in struggle as were those of the NIRC.

E. Waring

FORDS

Paul Smith reviews John Mathews' book on the 1971 strike

It seems that it is easy (to judge from the reviews of *The Ford Strike* in *Workers Press* and *Socialist Worker*) to fall into the trap of reviewing a book simply by describing it. These articles prompt the question, what is the point of reviewing a book for a revolutionary newspaper? It is quite clear that anyone wishing to follow the course of the Ford Strike should read the excellently written account in full. John Mathews develops his story simply and clearly and in an entertaining way. The question for the reviewer however is to assess the aims of the book—and the political ideas surrounding those aims in relation to the story it tells.

The aim of the book is quite clear from the subtitle "the workers' story." The author takes pride in not consulting Ford management. His book is centrally an attempt to justify the actions of the Ford workers in their 'parity struggle' and draw certain lessons from it. This is done in several ways. First he deals with the 'backdrop' to the Parity Campaign, the growth of the multi-national company. In 1922 there were over 200 companies producing cars in the U.S., Britain and Germany. By 1968 there were 23 firms in the whole of the capitalist world, and many of these were specialist, in the sense of not competing for the mass market. The drive to continue accumulating capital, despite stagnant markets, means logically mergers, takeovers and amalgamations.

This concentration of resources, capital, markets and labour in the hands of fewer and fewer companies had its obvious extension in the need to standardise all of the operations of the company. It would be an impossible situation if measurement for Ford parts in Dagenham was not the same as in Genk. On the question of wages however a contradiction

arises. While it is necessary to avoid tremendous administrative tasks where possible, the unevenness of wage rates is an advantage. Skilled workers can be played off against semi-skilled; and many other divisions can be carefully encouraged (like that between women and men workers). But, the way production was now being organised (i.e. equality of conditions etc. in all assembly plants in any company in Britain) contradicted the thousands of different wage rates between the companies and inside the companies in the workers' eyes. It is no accident therefore that the Ford women's struggle for equal pay occurred around the time of the parity struggle, when precisely those issues were being raised. Hand in hand with that realisation, militants also knew that taking on a "multi-national" was at least a national job. The plant by plant struggle was no longer adequate.

It is this background which gives the key note to the success and the failure of the Ford strike. The success lay in the mobilisation of the vast majority of workers in the Ford empire in Britain in the strike; the longest and most important battle in the history of the British motor industry. The failures lay in the increased possibility of the trade union bureaucracy intervening in the strike by posing it as a "national" question. The National Joint Negotiating Council, and the shop-stewards and convenors were entirely unprepared for the intervention of the secret ballot, arranged by Gillen, Scanlon and Jones.

All of this is of course indisputable. The close following of the conduct of the strike in Chapters 4-6 hangs within this framework well. However this is not all that is said. When *Socialist Worker* says that the book has no political conclusion they are incorrect. Not only the conclusion, but the entire terms of reference of the study, developments, statements like "In a well argued wage claim, the Unions showed that Fords was the most profitable, the most efficient and the most productive company in its field. Its workers were top of the big league in everything except wages"; show this. Later in the introduction Mathews says: "It also (the book) asks the key question: how much could Henry afford to pay". Chapter 7 spends 13 pages asking and answering this question.

If the claim is based on Henry's ability to pay, it is based very unsoundly. What the book does not say is that the justification of the worker's claim does not of course rest on the millions owned and spent by Fords. If it did say, and all other management, could simply say, "this year has been a bad year, I'm sorry lads there's no money". More importantly, the difference between reformist and revolutionary politics lies precisely in the answers to the question 'Is capitalism able permanently to meet any needs of the working-class in this period'.

Men at Fords, Dagenham, vote for strike action on 1st February, 1971.



Revolutionaries answer no—and it is always necessary to stress this. Reformists answer yes, and conduct their struggle within those political limits. However any justification for a workers struggle must be one which is centrally an attack on the capitalist system, through attacking central ideas by which it props itself up. One such prop which needs to be dismantled is the notion that workers because capitalism can afford to pay, because: (a) capitalism cannot afford to pay; and (b) even if it could workers' historical interests are not met by containing their demands to that alone.

Flowing from this central confusion the book has several important errors of omission or commission. Throughout the book it is clear that Mathews has no truck with the trade union bureaucracy, but is totally ambiguous as regards the C.P. *Workers Press* rightly takes up the issue of Sid Harrow (dept. convenor, Dagenham) but deals with it wrongly. The question of the C.P.'s actions in the strike was not that they were creeping around trying to find a bourgeois to sell it out to, but rather the absence of any programme within which to place the demand for parity which raised the question of the struggle against the system as a whole. Neither was this point raised in any of their propaganda.

If you start from an implicit reformist framework (as Mathews and the *Workers Press* do) it is impossible to criticise the C.P.'s industrial policy in any terms other than their willingness to "sell it out". And Mathews is confused by this as he finds no direct evidence of any "sell out" by most of the rank-and-file leadership. He therefore arrives at an uncritical position of any of this leadership's actions.

John Mathews' book is certainly worth reading. His political position, however, can only be understood in terms of the role of the "unattached" Marxist intellectual. Because he is incapable of relating the Ford strike to any organised revolutionary programme the book has little to offer in a political sense. It is not enough to call for the rebuilding of the rank-and-file organisations of the working-class movement without the struggle for a clear programme for these organisations. Mathews' book is one of the best examples of work from hopefully a dying breed.

Paul Smith

PAKISTANI WORKERS WIN FIGHT IN NOTTINGHAM

On 9 June, 44 Pakistani workers employed by the Nottingham private firm of Crepe Sizes Ltd. won a two week long strike against five redundancies and for union and shop steward recognition. The facts of the dispute are briefly as follows:-

The factory, prior to the dispute, employed about 60 people—44 of whom were Pakistanis engaged in production work. These latter men were working an 84 hour week, consisting of twelve hour shifts, seven days a week. For these hours the men were receiving gross pay of £40.08 per week (day rate). The long hours, for all practical purposes, were a condition of employment. Crepe Sizes Ltd. have, over the years, given scant attention to matters of safety and hygiene. The 44 men shared one toilet, which was usually filthy. Another toilet which was blocked two years ago had not been cleared up to when the strike started. The machines are dangerous but inadequate first aid facilities were laid on and over the last four years three men have had serious accidents, involving the loss of a finger or part of a finger. Far from receiving any compensation for these accidents, all these three men got from the firm was the sack. During their twelve hour daily stint, the workers had a lunch break consisting of half an hour. The firm's

canteen had only four chairs in it and was used by the handful of English employees, who objected to sharing the canteen with their Pakistani fellow workers.

For some time past the men had been putting demands to the management relating to their basic pay and working conditions. On 19 May they joined the T&GWU. Shortly afterwards the management declared five of the men to be redundant, including a shop steward, due to "contraction of demand within the man-made fibres industry". The workers demanded a reduction in the working week in order to avoid the redundancies. When the management rejected this demand, the men walked out. This was on 27 May. Shortly after the strike began, the management declared that the men had dismissed themselves by failing to report for work, and advertisements were placed in the *Nottingham Evening Post* offering jobs at Crepe Sizes at "up to £40 a week", no mention naturally of the strike, the hours or the conditions.

Throughout the dispute, the men maintained a large daily picket and were successful in preventing any new employees from being taken on. However, Crepe Sizes' English employees remained at work, hoping, no doubt, that their chances of receiving gold watches on re-

tirement would not be jeopardised. The Nottingham Branch of the I.M.G., together with the Black People's Freedom Movement and other organisations formed a Solidarity Committee, which organised a financial appeal, helped with picketing and sought to put pressure on the local bureaucracy of the T&GWU to make the strike official, by contacting individual members of the Union. A public meeting was organised at which over £50 was collected. The T&GWU hardly emerged with distinction. Right up until 9 June, calm reigned at the local Union office; Ray Thorpe, the Area Organizer, retaining a demeanour of serenity, which was truly remarkable under the circumstances, only allowing himself to get upset at the leaflets put out by the Solidarity Committee in support of the members of his Union. However, on 9 June, the clamour was such that he roused himself to see the management, who promptly caved in.

The battle at Crepe Sizes is not over. Whilst hours have been reduced from 84 a week to 60, conditions remain utterly unsatisfactory. However, the men are now in a much better position to fight the management than hitherto.

The dispute highlights a far too frequent phenomenon in industry: the employment of

black workers on wages and conditions which belong to the 19th Century. Taking advantage of the difficulties that black workers have in finding jobs and, also, of the fears that black workers have with regard to the implications of the Immigration Act, firms see opportunities to make super profits at the expense of one particular section of the working class. The apathy which the organised labour movement in Britain has shown towards the conditions of black workers, not just apathy but often hostility, demonstrates the need that black people have for their own organisations.

Nevertheless, a victory has been won in this strike in Nottingham, a victory from which black workers and white workers in similar positions can take heart and learn the important lessons that firms like Crepe Sizes can be beaten and that Union bureaucrats can on occasion be forced into action. The Solidarity Committee formed because of this strike is remaining in being, so that similar struggles can be aided in the future.

B.T. Simister,
Industrial Organizer,
Nottingham Branch of the I.M.G.

WORKER-STUDENT UNITY AT KENT UNIVERSITY

Students at Kent University ended a 17-day long occupation of the main teaching block on Thursday, 15 June. The occupation (reported in *The Red Mole*, 43) largely achieved its aim of reviving the struggle against the 189 redundancies and 10 per cent price increases proposed by the University authorities. The students who occupied understood that by itself the sit-in could not stop the proposed redundancies, that only resolute action by the university workers could do this. The mass rally of workers and students that ended the occupation pledged to continue the struggle which has already been extended into Canterbury through the setting up of an action committee, and nationally through a demonstration, organised by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Student Unions (LCDSU), which attracted around 700 people including delegations from 25 other colleges. The major stumbling block now to direct action by the workers is the general backwardness and weakness of the trade union movement in East Kent which is reinforced by the bureaucratic nature of the unions involved, especially N.U.P.E.

THE NEED TO STRUGGLE AGAINST THE STATE

The crisis at Kent University arises directly from the University Grants Commission's policy of demanding that catering be self-

financing. Instead of loans to meet deficits as in the past, massive sackings and price increases are on the way for workers and students in colleges throughout the country. Surrey, Warwick, Norwich and Essex all face a similar situation, and students throughout the country will be faced with large increases in residence fees next term. The situation at Kent is therefore a clear example of the general crisis of social expenditure in higher education. As such, the UGC's policy on catering is an integral part of the State's need to rapidly expand numbers in higher education, to produce a more highly trained work force geared more closely to the needs of industry, while having to drastically reduce units costs. So to the extent that it is possible (i.e. to the extent that workers and students in the colleges allow it) the State will throw the burden of this expansion onto the workers and students themselves, whether it is by creating redundancies and increasing prices, or by introducing student loans or two year courses, etc.

WHO CONTROLS?

Workers or students can only defend their interests against this attack by developing the theme of a veto over the decisions of the university authorities and the plans of the State in higher education, whether it be a workers'

veto over redundancies (Kent), or a student veto over price increases (Kent), victimisation (Lancaster), course structure (Portsmouth Poly), or any State interference in students unions (N.London Poly, L.S.E.). It must be made clear that neither workers nor students should take any responsibility whatsoever for the running of colleges under capitalism. It is only in this way, in a struggle against the State, that an effective opposition can be built to the plans of the bourgeoisie in higher education. This is the most vital lesson of the struggle at Kent.

STUDENT UNION AUTONOMY

It is precisely to prevent an effective opposition to this offensive in the colleges that the State has moved against what little political autonomy students unions have. Hence, the struggle at Kent raises far wider issues than redundancies and price increases. It is one battle in the war over the political autonomy of students unions and the capitalist technocratic reorientation of higher education. This autonomy does not exist in the abstract, but only when it is exercised. Concretely, this means aligning students unions with the working class in the class struggle, the only alternative being the integration (or rather reintegration) of students unions into the State apparatus.

LESSONS OF THE STRUGGLE

The worker-student *unity in struggle* is an important development in the campaign at Kent. The university authorities were so scared of this embryonic unity that a day after the occupation began all the catering staff, the most militant section of the workers, were locked out on full pay. The workers responded to this crude divide and rule tactic by voting full support to the occupation at a joint NUPE/GMWU branch meeting, and by coming to cook for the occupation. The move also failed to turn third year finalists against the struggle against redundancies. Throughout the eight week long struggle workers, students and a few academics have hammered out tactics and strategy together.

What Kent has also shown is the need immediately to generalise local struggles and turn them into national issues if these struggles are to have a chance of success and their lessons to be learnt. Through the work of the LCDSU students went some way to achieving this at Kent. What is necessary now is for the LCDSU to develop the theoretical and practical meaning of rank and file worker student unity as opposed to the absurd posturings of the CP dominated NUS Executive with Vic Feather and his fellow union bureaucrats.
Canterbury IMG

ROTHERHAM VICTIMISATIONS: THE EMPLOYER'S OFFENSIVE

As readers of *The Red Mole* will be aware, building workers represented by U.C.A.T.T., T.G.W.U. and the furniture trade unions, have submitted a wage claim to the building employers' federation for a 50 per cent increase and a reduction of the working week to 35 hours. Although the unions are nationally very weak (two million operatives—265,000 unionised), they are preparing to take action in support of the claim. National, regional and local action committees have been set up, (1) to keep the men informed of the latest developments, and (2) to organise selective strikes, bans on overtime, go-slows and demonstrations etc. Mass meetings have been held in various areas, where great stress has been laid on the recruitment of new members in preparation for strike action.

Obviously, if the above tactics are applied, i.e. selective strikes, there will be a limited number of firms affected. The firms that will be hit will be those with a big say in the employers' federation, and those (like Shepherds', Rotherham) which are handicapped by a *penalty clause* written into their agreements, whereby the employer is obliged to reimburse the

customer financially if the site is not completed on time.

Here in Rotherham a mass meeting was held some weeks ago, addressed by an IMG militant working on the site. The meeting discussed the need for 100 per cent trade unionism on the site (60 men applied to join after the meeting), and agreed to set up a site committee. This was seen as necessary not simply to conduct the struggle for increased wages, but also to fight for a veto on management decisions, against the "Lump" etc. (see *The Red Mole*, 42). Unknown to the speaker and to the men, management had infiltrated the meeting. One week later the IMG militant was sacked on the feeble excuse of "bad workmanship".

THE FIGHT BACK

What has been made clear at various branch and site meetings since then, is that the employers are preparing for the struggles to come. They have recognised that a strong site committee, not simply fighting over the question of wages but actually coming to grips with political questions facing the working class, is a great threat to their interests.

This was hammered home when on the Tuesday after the sacking a 24 hour stoppage took place, involving other smaller sites in the area. After the token stoppage, pending the victimisation going to the disputes tribunal, seven other militants from another site were sacked for coming out in solidarity. At the tribunal which followed, the employers, armed with computer data, demonstrated their strength by bringing up activities which the IMG militant had carried out in other areas. Moreover, the procedures of the tribunal are heavily weighted against a victory, as a unanimous decision of both management and unions must be reached before reinstatement can take place.

The tribunal has taught us all how success can be achieved only if we fight the employers on *our* territory, i.e. militant action at site level, and not under theirs, i.e. conciliation tribunals heavily weighed against the workers; that the fight for control can only be won if the unions take no responsibility for the running of the site. Last week the seven militants were reinstated only because they pursued such action—militant pickets on the site and the threat by

the union to black the firm nationally.

THE LESSONS

The employers, backed by the State, are well aware of the growing militancy and political understanding of large sections of the working class. In Britain they attack this through the creation of a large pool of unemployed, the Industrial Relations Act, and attacks on the living standards of the working class. On the building sites the I.R.A. is used as a last resort. Because of the weakness of the unions, the casualised nature of the trade, and until recently the absence of a strong rank and file, the employers use other methods, i.e. "Lump" labour, the "blacklist" victimisations etc. The events of the last few weeks show that it is necessary to develop a strong national *political* rank and file movement, in order that we can come to grips with the political problems facing us at every turn.

Mick Blane
Rotherham IMG, building worker.

LCDTU

Conference fails to forge policy for struggle

"We have organised this conference of nearly 1300 delegates in under four weeks. If anyone else can do the same they'll be doing a service to the whole trade union movement." And most people agreed with Jim Hiles, secretary of the LCDTU that the Committee had really done very well. One thing they overlooked maybe was this question: why on earth was it necessary to call an *emergency* conference at only four weeks notice when anyone could see that the TUC's policy of non-cooperation was a dead letter, and that the working class would be faced with the Act?

The failure of the LCDTU did not lie in its lack of numbers; it lay in the refusal of the organisers to allow, and the failure of two-thirds of the delegates to see the necessity for, a discussion on the struggle to come, and the Liaison Committee's crucial place in it. Bill Jones ruled from the chair at the start that the Committee had decided there would be no resolutions submitted but only a declaration from the committee itself. This declaration attacked the 'right wing' retreat in the TUC as a betrayal of the interests of the movement, called for total defiance of the Act and solidarity with those so doing and proposed a one day strike on 5 Sept. or whenever the TUC could be recalled. It made a call for the recall of Congress which should refuse to carry out the instructions of any Court set up under the Act and should launch a campaign against it, should boycott any dealings with the Government while the Act is operative and expel any affiliated Union not complying with Congress policy. It called on the real Labour Government to repeal the Act.

It also made a passing reference to the setting up of local Liaison Committees. However in this case actions spoke louder than words. Various local LCDTUs did in fact try to get delegates to the conference and some had even worked out programmes for the LCDTU (see *The Red Mole*, 43). All of these however were refused not merely speaking rights but also delegate status. This type of thing hardly indicates on the part of the or-

ganisers of the LCDTU any real willingness to set up local groups.

In fact the Glasgow programme was spoken to, but in the atmosphere of verbal militancy in the hall that day there was not one jot of difference between it and what most other speakers had been saying as to what the Liaison Committee's programme should be. Certainly an IS comrade said, "We must have resolutions which can be discussed and thrashed out to make a programme to smash the Act". But this doesn't exactly advance the discussion very far! If the IS has a programme then why did it not present it to conference when one of its members actually had the chance to speak. And if, as a glance at the I.S. leaflet put out at conference would show, its programme differs from the 'Declaration' largely on the (important) question of actually setting up local Committees and coordinating them nationally, then they should not be calling for the "discussion" and "thrashing out" of a programme.

In terms of size the conference was bigger than recent ones although the majority of the delegates were still grouped around the CP and the *Morning Star*. Nevertheless the fact that there were more people there meant that the delegates were not hardened out completely around the CP's positions. Some at least became increasingly irritated when it became clear that the CP regarded the very holding of the conference as an end in itself and it was neither going to permit any real debate of the CP's line nor to allow any real criticism of 'left' trade union leaders.

The way the CP operated was to turn the conference into a show. All the big names were pulled onto the speaking platform including some who were not in the CP such as the convenor of the London Airport Joint Shop Stewards Committee or Derrick Fullick an ASLEF steward at Waterloo Station. Certainly it was interesting to hear accounts of particular struggles; certainly the mood was militant with plenty of thunder being hurled at the TUC, the Law, the Tories ("The wait and see brigade have been completely ex-

posed". "This Act is the spearhead of the Tory attack on the working class"). There were even hints of further activity—"This conference is the launching pad of activity". One speaker from Firth Brown in Sheffield described the actual mechanism of the Act to conference—"The point is that they hope to get the trade union leaders to press down on the rank and file".

But the overall mood was one of self-congratulation on the Committee's struggle against *In Place of Strife* and the Bill (helping to force the March '71 special TUC conference) and on the conference itself—"When was the last conference to fill not only the body of the hall but a good section of the seats upstairs as well?"

The one division at conference came precisely on whether those who had written resolutions should get preference on the speakers' list. The applause that an IMG comrade received on moving this motion forced Bill Jones to take a vote (though even then he confused the resolution so much that it had to be put twice). A good third of conference supported this motion and showed that at least they wanted a discussion on where to go from here instead of a series of speeches on 'look what we've done, boys'

The worst speech, that by Dick Etheridge from Longbridge, Birmingham, summed up all the things which many of the delegates are in fact beginning to break away from. Steeped in localism, he spoke about how the Midlands could become a depressed area as if they should somehow have a special right to a job when most of the delegates came from areas which already had a huge number of unemployed. With amazing arrogance he proceeded to tell delegates, many of whom, like the miners, have just emerged from a battle to secure a wage of just over £20, that the next wage claim at Longbridge was for £52 without indicating any way that the strength this indicated could be used to benefit the entire working class. With the self-confidence of a car worker whose formation was in the booming '50s and early '60s he told conference that "The shop-stewards movement was far too strong to be smashed" and finally he had the insensitivity to quote the most bitter enemy of the working class, Churchill, in a throw-away last line which was both pointless and not a little nationalist.

While that conference displayed an immense militancy to defend the trade-union movement, to fight against any attempt to shackle the ability to fight for wages and conditions in the shape of a law or anything else, it also, with equal resolve, refused to define what the enemy was; it refused to work out a strategy for victory, it refused to recognise that as we wrote in our leaflet:-

"There is a crisis of leadership in the unions. The LCDTU should seek to win the political leadership of the unions. What this means is becoming an organisation that fights *within* the trade-unions on a programme to turn the unions against the capitalist state. For the unions can only defend themselves against interference from the state by going on the *offensive* against the capitalist state, including its legal machinery. If the LCDTU puts forward a clear perspective on this *key* issue, then all trade unionists will look to it for leadership on all the other issues they face." No one who accepts that this is the way the struggle must be fought could possibly quote Churchill—the arch preserver of British capitalism. Only someone, in the CP or not, with a deeply ingrained attachment to bourgeois democracy, Parliament, the lot, and willing to fight *only* within that framework instead of seeing the necessity to challenge it could speak in this way.

It is only by getting the real politics of the situation clear that we can take a clear position on the other major problems facing the working class. How can you oppose *any* form of incomes policy unless it is recognised that whether it be negotiated by a Labour or Tory government, with the TUC and Jones in tow or not, an incomes policy will be in the interest not of 'the nation' but of the ruling class. It is the bourgeoisie who rule 'the nation'. It is their state and they use *their* interests.

Again, the trade unions cannot be turned into real organisations of struggle along these lines unless their leaders are under rank and file control, unless the rank and file is involved, unless all officers are elected not selected, unless the main decisions are taken at mass meetings or by directly elected representatives.

The failure of this LCDTU conference does not mean all is over or that revolutionary workers must not do everything to try to change the nature of the committee and its political aims. But what an opportunity was missed; not just at the conference, but just one week later during the docks strike over the court order for the imposition of Steer, Turner and Williams. Where was the LCDTU then? Was it organising workers all over the country into its committees of solidarity? Had it prepared them over the past period through agitation and explanation? Was it able to point the way forward after the sham appeal court decision had given the bourgeoisie a respite? Was it able to explain to the workers that this was no time to drop one's guard and that the ruling class were waiting only for that? No they didn't, nor do they want to, nor can they, because the LCDTU had not prepared even itself at that conference by forging any clear policy it could fight for within the working class. J. Watts

COVENTRY C & UWU MILITANTS ACT ON UNEMPLOYMENT

In July 1971 the Coventry Spartacus League held a meeting on unemployment and urged the setting up of a Claimants Union. Within several weeks membership of the union had grown to around 100 including pensioners, single parents and a large proportion of unemployed workers. Shortly before the strike of Coventry toolroom workers the Union became

the Claimants and Unemployed Workers Union and during the strike we issued a leaflet explaining strikers' rights and denouncing the press campaign against the toolroom workers. At the beginning of the Miners strike this

Alvis workers discuss with C&UWU militants



year the C&UWU provided similar information to the miners from the local pits and militants from the C&UWU were active throughout the strike in assisting the miners to organise and win benefits.

Throughout this year, while unemployment continued to rise, the C&UWU has developed links with trade unionists in the city. We have received support and assistance from the Trades Council and in particular from local branches of A.U.E.W. (T.A.S.S.). We have now begun a campaign of unemployed factory-gate meetings to bring home to rank and file trade unionists the reality of unemployment and the need to take decisive action to fight against it.

Last week a leaflet was distributed at the labour exchange and at the Social Security offices pointing out the real causes of unemployment i.e. the recurring crisis of the capitalist system and the attempts of the capitalist class to solve *their* problems at the expense of the working class. While claimants and unemployed workers have no economic power, employed workers do have the strength to fight for higher wages, higher pensions and more jobs. Thus the C&UWU supports the struggles of the employed workers and insists that they take action to reduce unemployment.

A similar leaflet was distributed at the Alvis works point out that unemployment is a part of a broad offensive to weaken the military of the working class. We stress that it is absolutely necessary both to defend trade union rights against the Industrial Relations Act and to resist the employers' attempts to maintain their profits at the expense of the workers' living standards. The labour movement must *refuse to accept any redundancies, stop all overtime working and fight for increased basic rates to cover loss of earnings.*

Further demands to create more jobs and secure adequate incomes should include a *shorter working week with no loss of pay and guarantees of five days work or five days pay.* It is of no interest to class-conscious workers that such measures would cut into profit

margins; the crucial point is that *only such measures* will solve the problem for the working class. These demands must be the basis of a real fight against unemployment. Organised workers must take action in this way to reduce unemployment and to defend the old, sick, etc. who can't fight alone; they must act in their own interests and in the interests of the whole working class. Such action would help to win the support and sympathy of all working class people for all the struggles of the organised labour movement.

Following the distribution of these leaflets militants of the C&UWU went to the Alvis works on Friday lunchtime to the posters and slogans putting forward the above points. A meeting was held at the gates and two union members addressed a crowd of about 200 Alvis workers. After these speeches several lively discussions developed with groups of workers and C&UWU militants which continued up to the end of the lunch break. This was an excellent start to our campaign which will include similar meetings at many of the large engineering and auto works in the city once a fortnight until September.

In fact, the response to this first meeting was so good that we were almost caught unprepared. Not having had any previous experience to guide us we had not adequately prepared the C&UWU militants to address a mass meeting. Also, we felt that it was a mistake to have let the crowd break up into smaller discussion groups as many of the points raised here could have been made to the whole meeting by taking questions and answers from the platform. Finally we missed the opportunity—which had never occurred to us until we saw the response—of taking a collection around the meeting to support the funds and activities of the C&UWU.

Having learnt these lessons the C&UWU is confident that the continuing campaign will develop and future gate meetings will be bigger and even more effective than the first. **Unemployed IMG militant (active in Coventry C&UWU).**

OCCUPAT

Just under a year ago, the workers of UCS in Scotland carried out an industrial action from inside rather than outside the factory gate. Since then, the occupation tactic has been used up and down the country in an increasing variety of circumstances and with increasing sophistication. UCS was not the first time that British workers have used the tactic. The stay-down strikers in the Welsh coalfields in the Thirties, and Austin Longbridge in 1962, are past examples. Furthermore, the working class has, in the past, gone beyond simple occupations and created mini-soviets in which workers took over and organised certain cities in the midst of national strikes; Liverpool, for example during the 1911 Railway strike, and Newcastle during the 1926 General Strike. By and large, these examples have been erased from the memory of British workers. The mass occupations in France during 1968 or the student occupations in Britain, have not made any deep impression on the trade unions in Britain. Workers now using the occupation tactic, usually trace it back to UCS. It was this struggle which broke ideological inhibitions about the law of trespass, property rights etc, and led workers struggles over the threshold of the factory door.

The occupation tactic needs to be popularised among British workers. There are many potential tactics and techniques which remain unexplored so far in practice but which have been tried and tested abroad, and would aid enormously the various struggles in Britain if they were applied. But constructing a manual of tactics is not all that productive. What the conscious workers need to concentrate on at the moment is not in refining their tactics in the plants— although that is useful— but in developing a political perspective in the trade unions. The organisational details and practical tasks of occupations depend entirely on the context in which they occur. The function of an occupation can vary enormously— as an efficient tactic to gain unionisation and union-recognition (e.g. Flint sit-down strike in 1936), as a weapon in struggles against redundancy, as a refinement of the strike tactic in pursuit of a wage claim, or as a para-military base in a conflict with the State, e.g. a general strike. At present the real value of occupations is not that they provide a straight line to the revolution. So far, for example, the State has not physically intervened in British occupations and therefore the question of the State is not raised by the occupation tactic. Their real value now is that they provide a much needed base for political agitation within the labour movement in favour of perspectives for the movement as a whole. From the point of view of workers gaining valuable organisational experience as to how to fight the State and the bourgeoisie, the occupations so far in Britain have remained at the rudimentary level. This will probably continue to be the case until the trade unions take initiatives against the employers on a broad scale in which occupations may or may not be used. But a good tactic must not be confused with a political perspective.

What needs to be discussed is the meaning and significance of the wave of occupations which has taken place over the last twelve months, that is, what it reflects about the state of the class struggle in Britain today. In the course of initiating such a debate, the possible scope of the occupation tactic can at least be suggested. The occupations which have taken place so far, have been sparked off by two issues. The first is redundancy (UCS, Plessey, Fisher-Bendix etc), and the second is the wage claim. Occupations in support of wage claims have been exclusively undertaken by the engineering unions in the course of their present national claim.

STRUGGLES AGAINST REDUNDANCY

The UCS struggle was not strictly speaking an occupation, but a 'work-in'. This tactic had not appeared before and has not appeared since (although the Communist Party has tried to popularise it among students without much success - e.g. a work-in has occurred at Newport art college). Its lack of effectiveness is quite obvious, and this is demonstrated by some of the features of the settlement at UCS. The flaw in using the work-in as a weapon to fight redundancy, is that it holds no power of *sanction* for the workers involved. This rapidly became obvious at UCS. The Liquidator installed by the Government to supervise the completion of contracts and sale of plant, was perfectly happy to see the men working-in. After all, the men finished the remaining ships well on time, and with no labour disputes! In the meantime, men who became technically redundant were paid by the labour movement to carry on working. The men themselves could see no reason why the work-in *should* be effective, and since it was perfectly obvious that merely to carry on working did not automatically guarantee one would be working in future, the whole experience was demoralising for many of those involved. What the leadership of the struggle were depending upon was the false belief that if the workers demonstrated that they were 'efficient' workmen, they would

persuade the Tories to reverse their decision in the face of public outcry over their 'butchery' etc. Tory bashing was the sole content of the agitation carried out by men like Airlie and Reid, the two leading stewards at UCS. In fact, the struggle seems to have been conducted as a kind of 'demonstration'—of the need to bring back a Labour Government. UCS was a case of wrong tactics and wrong politics. All the stewards had to brandish at the Government was rhetoric. This did not disturb the Government in the least. They had never counted on being popular when they decided to carry out the 'lame duck' policy, the Industrial Relations Bill, entry to the Common Market, cuts in social services etc. Unpopularity in itself was no threat at all, and the labour movement appeared to them to be unable to launch any sharp threat to the social order given their Labourist politics.

The Tory Government knew that the men at UCS could be easily defeated. There was no strike, therefore orders were safe. No equipment was threatened. There was no attempt to spread the struggle beyond the yards. This could have been a real possibility for the UCS men. In the West of Scotland, the unemployment rate stood at 10%, and a further 8000 men unemployed would have affected the future of every worker in Scotland. More redundancy in the supply industries to UCS would have followed and a chain reaction set in. Under these circumstances, the labour movement in the West of Scotland could have embarked on a regional struggle, with its central focus the question of unemployment. Scottish miners for example, were prepared to strike in solidarity, and current rent struggles could also have been utilised. In the event, this type of perspective was not carried out. In many ways, the tactic of the work-in even cut across this directly— given the state of inter-union hostility in the British labour movement, asking workers to strike in sympathy with workers still being paid is only to put additional obstacles in one's path. Since the struggle was confined to the yards, the general social and political balance of forces in the region was not upset by any generalised conflict. More important, perhaps, the failure to extend the fight over redundancy to more than one group of workers at a time, simply reinforced the lack of perspective for dealing with this question in the British labour movement. No perspective can arise out of *one* occupation. This can more easily arise out of a series of simultaneous struggles, since this poses the problem in its proper context— not at the level of this or that management of an individual firm, but at the level of the economy as a whole. Conversely, of course, the absence of any political perspective in the first place, makes it difficult to actually extend the struggle beyond the yards or plant into a mass movement. We will return to this later, because, this limitation applies to occupations as well as work-ins. But it should be noted for the time being, that such a movement would have forced the Government to make broad concessions in an attempt to prevent a movement with some perspective reaching revolutionary conclusions.

Given all these political shortcomings, the Tories knew that they had the tactical superiority to win. They broke the power and prestige of the stewards by forcing them to back down on their demand that *all* jobs should be guaranteed in UCS. The Tories had refused to do this, and the new company they created - Govan Shipbuilders - covered only three yards, leaving the Clydebank yard to be closed. The method of forcing the stewards to back down on their demand was simple enough. It consisted in removing the work necessary for the work-in. Orders already placed with the yards were suspended by the Government. They then told the stewards that they would only renegotiate these orders if the stewards recognised Govan. If they did so of course, they would be accepting the principle that not all jobs would be guaranteed, but if they continued to refuse recognition and negotiation with Govan, the orders would be lost altogether. This trick worked, the customers showing no signs in the meantime that they were taking their orders elsewhere (since the Government had no doubt dropped a word in to their ear). From that point on, the stewards have been forced to yield considerable concessions (no-strike clauses, productivity concessions, long term pay deals and lower average wages) to make Govan viable. More redundancies have been announced recently. The remaining yard, Clydebank, has been saved by the unions turning to the American-bourgeoisie who expressed interest because of the newly-developed need for oil rigs for the North Sea oil fields.

Since the workers had applied no sanctions, the Tories could deal with the situation by playing at 'business' with the unions. The peculiar character of the UCS struggle was produced by two factors. The Communist Party who led the struggle, saw it as a step along the electoral road, and as a means of increasing its popularity



Workers are occupying the Stanmore Engineering factory in West London over the national

with the labour left etc. It saw itself as an electoral vanguard and not a revolutionary vanguard. The work-in was also symptomatic of the British trade union movement responding to a new situation in an old way. Forced to go beyond a stay-outside strike because of the threat of the yards being dismantled, but unable to conceive of a full-scale strike occupation of four shipyards and all the para-military organisation that would imply, a compromise was reached—the work-in. But the fact that the CP, which had the organisational leadership, settled on a work-in for its own reasons, meant that the very fruitful debate among the workers to which the compromise tactic would have led, never took place (except in the pages of the "ultra-leftist" papers like *The Red Mole*).

PLESSEY, FISHER-BENDIX ETC.

It is at Plessey Alexandria in Scotland, and Fisher-Bendix (Kirby), that occupations of a kind more traditional to the workers movement have taken place. The toughest of the two, lasting five months, was at Plessey. Overshadowed by UCS, this developed as a response to an attempt to close the factory, leaving 700 men unemployed in an area of nearly 15% unemployment. Plessey had bought the factory in May 1970 (it was the Royal Navy Torpedo Works) for the purpose of doing away with a competitor and to make a profit from selling part of the equipment and transferring the rest to the cheap labour zones of South Africa and Portugal. They were given £3 million by the Labour Government to assist the initial takeover. Fisher-Bendix is similar in that it was taken over from Parkinson-Cowan in 1970 by Thorn Electrical Industries, again with the intention of transferring profitable lines abroad - this time to Spain. Unemployment on Merseyside hovers around 10%. The purpose of these occupations was two-fold. First, to prevent these two multi-nationals from taking their machinery out of the plant, and secondly to force the management to bargain jobs in return for the machinery. This is a very different

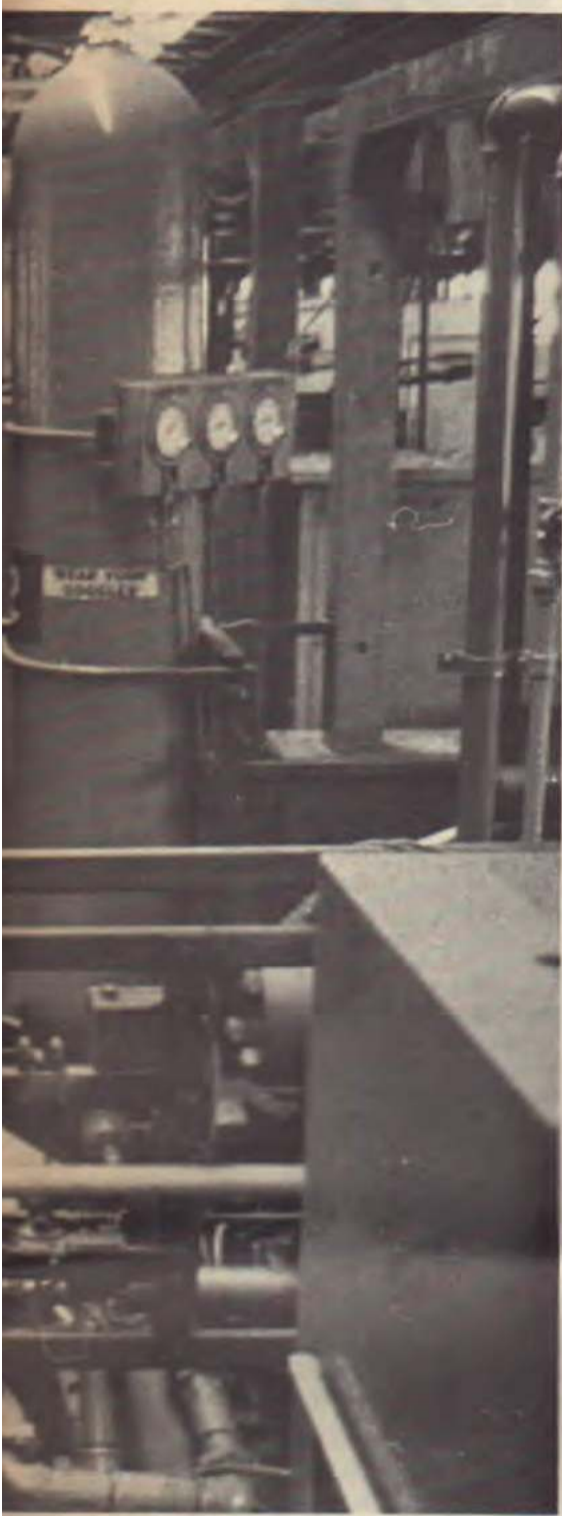
response to that at UCS. As the convenor of Plessey remarked: "We're no employees, we're trespassers".

To carry this out, considerable organisation was required. At Plessey, the workers removed the management, and set up barbed wire around the factory, setting a 24 hour guard on the gate in case of a police attack. When a man from the 600 Metal Group came along to remove plant for the scrap yards, the men refused him entry. They agitated for finance, food, and physical support among the local labour movement. They had decided on a policy of passive resistance should the police launch an attack, but once outside the plant, they had made preparations to carry out mass picketing, and reckoned that they could get 7000 men for this purpose, many from the Labour Exchanges round about. This idea of a mass picket was put forward before the time of the miners strike. At Fisher-Bendix, the Liverpool Trades Council, who saw Fisher-Bendix as a detonator which could launch a general strike to bring down the Tories, had plans to organise mass picketing in the event of a police attack - this time with the purpose of preventing the police from getting anywhere near the plant gates. This was just prior to the Saltley events. Both these occupations also had the support of other workers in the same firm, and agreements were made to black goods etc. Their outcome was successful. The Plessey site is now being developed as a new industrial estate, and Fisher-Bendix gained a reprieve. These two experiences were followed by a rash of smaller, and less publicized, occupations in the North-West, over redundancy. Almost all of these have been successful in gaining reprieves or alternative investment.

ENGINEERING DISPUTE

The present Manchester occupations in support of wage claims (see *The Red Mole*, 39-43, and page 10 of this issue) were perhaps the first of their kind in Britain. They were made absolutely necessary by the fact that the employers

IONS



claim.

had organised more strongly than ever before against the engineers. Individually, most of the occupations occurred in response to lock-outs by the management. These lock-outs followed after the men had applied the rather effective tactic of banning piece-work in pursuit of their claim. Lock-outs have become more common over the last year, particularly among engineering employers who can withstand long stoppages of production because of the very depressed state of the capital goods market. The lock-out gives the employer the upper-hand in negotiations. The lock-out means that he takes the initiative, the men having to approach the employer to end the dispute rather than the other way around. The occupation reverses this. In an occupation, the employer has to approach the men from a position of weakness, since he cannot make threats about transferring production, bringing in non-union labour etc, and has to bargain with the men to retrieve his plant.

In the Manchester occupations the advantages of the occupation over the strike became clear. It is absolutely impossible for the management to shift production, bring in scab labour, carry out maintenance work etc. This in itself gives the men a big psychological advantage, since the anxieties over these matters experienced on the picket-line are removed. But the occupation creates a great deal of solidarity among the men. Rather than being dispersed to their homes as in a strike, with often only the leaders having to operate picket lines under uncomfortable conditions, the men are inside the plant. This creates solidarity among men who have probably exchanged few words with one another throughout their working lives. Greater participation in decision making is possible, and greater tactical flexibility is usually achieved. Furthermore, the mere fact of having occupied the bosses' property itself creates greater confidence in future struggles. These features are common to all occupations.

The Manchester struggle however occurred within

a context which illustrates the lack of leadership within the trade union movement. Occupations took place because the workers were confronted directly with the sort of strength which led their leaders to back down nationally on the engineers pay claim. This has been analysed by us before (see *The Red Mole*, 39). The rank and file of the union were left to fight at plant by plant level, when only the national power of the union would have been adequate to force a major defeat for the employers. Many of the plant actions which have taken place have included occupations. The latest of these has been in London, at Stanmore Engineering Limited in West London, where 130 black workers have occupied their plant on the claim for the last six weeks. The stewards here knew that striking would be ineffective, since in a previous strike, the management had brought in trainees to do their work, and this broke the strike. The occupation has meant that management can't shift the aluminium dies with which the men there produce carburettors. The effectiveness of the sit-in was clear to the stewards, and one of them generalised this by saying, "Forget about striking completely. Strikes are a thing of the past". Occupations in Britain are not yet a habit of mind among trade unionists. Hopefully they will become so. British workers are only beginning to break with legalism. At Stanmore the police broke in to the factory immediately after the workers had barricaded the management out. They did not have a court injunction, the action being designed to intimidate the men into leaving the plant. The only excuse the management could find for this action, was that the men had been damaging machinery. On the contrary, no such thing has occurred, either at Stanmore or in any other of the occupations. The Stanmore workers simply informed the police that they had no intention of leaving.

PHYSICAL FORCE OF THE STATE

The Stanmore example illustrates something about the behaviour of the British bourgeoisie which so far has meant that, from an organisation point of view, the occupations in Britain have remained of a rudimentary kind. This is the lack of direct state intervention in the form of armed forces. It should not be assumed that the British bourgeois state machine is exceptional in this respect. The miners strike has already shown this. And the innovation of the miners strike, the mass flying picket, in which mass pickets of industries not directly involved in the dispute takes place, is perhaps as important an innovation as the occupation. But in general, the bourgeoisie in Europe, the USA or Japan, are more ready to intervene physically when the workers physically seize their property. In France, the riot squad, in Italy the fascist squads, and in Canada the "ton-ton-matrasques", have all recently intervened in such struggles. In the USA during the Thirties, the motor bosses were faced with mass sit-down strikes, the most famous of which is the Flint sit-down. In response to this, the bosses mobilised not only the armed cops, but also organisations like Du Pont's Black Legion which assaulted and often murdered trade unionists, and the National Metal Trades Association which supplied labour 'spies' and armies of strike-breakers.

The British ruling class has not gone to these lengths so far. They are fully aware that, while they may undercut the working class economically with relative safety, any move to bring in the armed forces of the state in a big way would start to shatter the respect for bourgeois democracy and bourgeois law among the British labour movement, and this is a very valuable asset. This became clear during the present dock dispute. That safety valve of the legal system—the Official Solicitor—moved in to reverse Donaldson's decision at the last moment, and averted what would certainly have developed into a mass battle with police if the tipstaff had tried to arrest the three dockers' leaders. On the other hand, such a physical clash is inevitable sooner or later, and this raises the question of occupying places of work for reasons other than preventing scabbing or removal of machinery. If running battles between workers and police take place, it is often necessary to have a physical base from which this can be organised and conducted. In a struggle to either prevent an arrest, or to protest against a trial of trade unionists, the type of agitation and organisation required could well involve occupations of factories or even whole towns. In such a dispute it is the organs of the state with which the workers are negotiating not with employers. In such circumstances, it is often necessary for workers to 'confiscate' the law as it were, as a bargaining counter for the release of leaders. This involves driving the law out of a given area. The most recent example of this was in Sept-Iles in May of this year. Sept-Iles, a steel town in Quebec, was taken over completely by the workers during a general strike in protest against the jailing of union leaders under Bill 19 (see *The Red Mole*, 43). Radio stations were also seized and occupied, control of the media being taken over by the workers. The media

is in fact one of the best organising bases for the workers during a general strike, or any extended action of this kind.

If the British bourgeoisie has not gone to the lengths that those of other capitalist countries have gone in trying to physically repress the actions of the workers, British workers have not yet applied a tactic equally common in other capitalist countries. They have held and seized plant for ransom, but not the managements themselves. Several examples of this occurred at the beginning of May '68. At the Sud-Aviation plant in Nantes, 20 members of management were detained for over a fortnight. At first, the aim was to enforce a quick settlement of the workers' demands, but as the strike movement spread, they held the management as a symbolic action. In any wave of occupations, particularly autocratic managements can expect this kind of thing. Some workers who have worked under exceptionally degrading conditions on the shop floor, take great delight in subjecting their captives to similar punishments. At Sud-Aviation for example, managers had to get permission to go to the toilet, and could do so only under escort. In general, such activities, while very gratifying, can become counter-productive (although they can produce instant results as well!). They can easily get out of control and provoke police assaults before the workers are prepared for them. But their most negative feature is that they reinforce the false idea that the management is individually responsible for the problems of the workers. This responsibility lies with the way in which the whole economy is organised.

RUNNING THE FACTORY

In judging the political significance of the recent occupations, in terms of 'ideas in people's heads', it is often said that the occupation of factories raises the question of the workers managing the factories and running the economy. This may be true in the sense that it provides an opportunity for propaganda about socialism. However, the question arises in a practical and therefore real way, only under conditions very different to anything experienced in Britain so far. Within the general strike situation, the question of the workers running their factories, organising supplies and transport and so on, is posed as a practical necessity (although this is not the same as workers running the economy). In France, during May '68, for example, the Chevire electricity plant continued production under workers management during the strike in order to provide necessary electricity supplies to hospitals but paralysed all local industry. At Nantes, workers took over the organisation of food distribution, established links with the agricultural workers, supervised price control, transport and public services. This isolated example points the way forward to the creation of dual power in society. Production of hospital equipment, walkie-talkies etc, needed in the fight against the armed forces of the state, also point in the direction of the type of organisation needed to carry out armed struggle by the workers against the State. But in France this did not reach even the embryonic stage. Even where workers occupying factories were under attack from the riot squad, the idea of creating armed militias was not taken up, largely because of the reluctance of the Communist Party.

The alternative, socialism or capitalism, does not present itself at the level of whether workers can manage production better than the bosses, but at the level of the organisation of the economy as a whole. Workers management presents itself as a practical task under certain circumstances—general strike, civil war, capitalist sabotage etc. In general, outside a revolutionary situation, revolutionaries should not advocate self-managed enterprises. Again, it is not the individual managements who are responsible for economic failures in enterprises. Replacing the personnel in the manager's office does nothing whatsoever to change that. The problem cannot be solved at the level of one plant. The most to be hoped for here is a temporary reprieve or alternative finance. But the aim of individual occupations carried out against redundancies, should always be presented not as a 'solution' to redundancy but used by the workers as a concrete illustration for agitation for a perspective for fighting the capitalist class as a whole on this and other questions. Until the British trade union movement adopts an offensive national strategy for dealing with this question (although it will not be solved within capitalism), then many more Fakenhams will no doubt take place (where workers set up their own firm, and are raising money to buy the plant). Such a perspective might involve as a minimum, a struggle for a shorter working week with no loss of pay, re-employment of the unemployed, full maintenance for the unemployed, the power of veto over redundancy etc. It is only when the trade unions launch mass struggles to gain objectives such as these on a national basis, that occupations will be placed in

perspective—that is as a *tactic within a struggle* rather than the *only possible means of struggle*.

LESSONS OF THE PRESENT SIT-INS

In a historical sense, this wave of occupations would signify a new phase of class struggle. But their meaning for the working class as a whole, has to be determined within the overall political context in which they occur. It does not at all follow that because workers are exploring a new tactic, that the workers as a whole are conducting a more effective fight against the bourgeoisie. The occupation as a tactic to fight for redundancy, illustrates this. Holding machinery and forcing the management to 'buy' it back in return for promises of jobs, should not be seen as a substitute for a political perspective of struggle by the labour movement. The British trade union movement has avoided this question. Trade union leaders during the Sixties signed one productivity deal after another, contributing directly to the present redundancy and unemployment. As a result, they provide no leadership at all, or else gesture in the direction of say a 35 hour week in one industry. Needless to say, no action is taken in pursuit of this. They refuse to co-ordinate the whole movement to conduct a struggle for the type of measures we suggested above. Consequently, as closures and lay-offs continue, isolated groups of workers are thrown back on tactical refinements. The union leaders look to the bourgeoisie for the solution to the problem—'reflate' the economy etc., while understanding perfectly well that the ruling class will only gain the business confidence to reflate once the trade unions have been defeated. This is what explains the disorientation often experienced by isolated groups of workers occupying over redundancies. On the one hand, they believe that they are taking big steps forward in militant action; on the other, Labour politicians like Wedgewood Benn and Wilson, extend what appears to be a very sympathetic hand to those involved.

Similar points can be made about the struggle over wages. For the last two years, union after union in the public sector has fought big pay battles with the Government. The trade union leaders refused to co-ordinate these claims, even though it was perfectly obvious to everybody, that the Government were using the public sector unions to force down the general level of wage settlements. It took a tactical innovation by the rank and file—the mass flying pickets of the miners—to inflict a defeat on the Government. The miners took the verbal support of the trade union leaders, and posed the need for *actual* support from other trade unionists by picketing industries other than the mines. But quite clearly, what was lacking in the public sector before the miners put an end to the charade of defeats, was co-ordination by the union leaders of their claims. After all, if the Government is using the public sector to drive down wage settlements, the beginnings of a correct response would have been to have formed a common front, and fought collectively for a national minimum wage in the public sector. This is precisely what the unions in Quebec put into practice by forming the Common Front and conducting a national strike for precisely this demand. What has been lacking in the way pay claims are conducted, is not primarily more militant tactics, but a correct perspective.

The job of revolutionaries is not to uncritically cheer the class struggle on from the side lines. To do that is equivalent to saying precisely that it is more militant tactics that the workers need to solve their problems, and not a perspective for smashing the ruling class. In this sense, the Communist Party were correct to use the UCS struggle as a base from which to agitate politically among the labour movement. The only problem was however, that they put across the wrong politics—so wrong in fact that they also adopted completely ineffective tactics in the occupation! But so far, the occupations which have occurred have not led to any degree of *programmatic clarity* among trade unionists, although they are big steps forward in themselves. The significance of the present wave of occupations is that it demonstrates on the one hand, a great willingness among the rank and file workers to conduct a fight; on the other hand, the lack of a programme is only too clear. The creation of rank and file organisations in the trade unions which can thrash out these programmatic questions facing the working class, is of ever increasing urgency.

A.E. Jennings

CHILE CRISIS DEEPENS

The crisis of Allende's Popular Unity government has deepened over the past month, with strong right-ward moves by the CP and other forces. The events of May 12th in Concepcion brought the crisis to a head. A student was killed and others injured in a police charge against a left-wing counter-demonstration to an anti-government Christian Democrat rally. Not only did the CP fail to participate in the counter-demonstration, organised by the MIR, Socialist Party and other left groups, but the police operations were supervised by the city's Communist Party mayor.

The resulting polarisation between the CP and the revolutionary left, together with the developing crisis of the Chilean economy and the attempts of the bourgeois parties to take advantage of the situation, forms the background to the governmental crisis of the past few days. The CP's line is now clearly to "consolidate the gains" made by Popular Unity, and negotiate with the Christian Democrats over the government's composition and programme. The precarious nature of these "gains", however, is more than evident in what the Christian Democrats themselves are engaged in doing at the moment—fighting for a bill in Congress to strengthen the armed forces of the bourgeois State, and subject "armed groups" to military law.

Allende has bent to the bourgeois pressures in the Popular Unity camp. Because of the strong challenge to these manoeuvres from elements in his own Socialist Party—which were accusing him of selling out to the Stalinists—the composition of the new Cabinet announced on Sunday does not reflect very dramatic changes. The independent left-winger Vuskovic, who had drawn up fairly extensive nationalisation and income redistribution plans, is kicked out of the Economics Ministry, and the CP ministers more clearly represent the line of conciliation with the bourgeois parties. The key point, however, is that the way is still very much open to negotiations with the Christian Democrats.

A situation is which Allende is being pulled to the right is obviously increasingly favourable for imperialism. Its strategy will be to work for the further isolation of the revolutionary left. There are undoubted weaknesses among the forces which have been struggling to advance the struggles of the masses, and prepare for the armed confrontation with the forces of the bourgeois State. The MIR made a step forward many months ago when it broke from Popular Unity over the use of the police and army against land occupations etc. But the continuing confusion in its ranks was apparent in the rapprochement of elements in the MIR and the CP, which was broken off

only by the events in Concepcion (even on the day after the murder of the student Caamano, the MIR was engaged in joint operations with the CP in university elections); and despite its wide and growing influence among the masses, it has no programme adequate to the coming struggles. Nonetheless, there is no easy road for the strategy of the bourgeois section of the government: the acuteness of the economic crisis offers even less possibility of making concessions to the masses (Chile is facing its biggest foreign exchange crisis yet), and the militant tendencies in the base of the government parties—the Socialist Party in particular—are increasingly engaging in action with the revolutionary left groups. These latter have made advances both in the trade unions (especially the coal miners' and textile workers' unions) and in the peasant organisations.

Allende's patched up coalition is unhappily balanced between the contending forces. The decisive question now is the ability of the revolutionary forces, and of the MIR as the strongest organisation among them, to give leadership to the masses against the class traitors in Popular Unity, the CP foremost among them, who are attempting to restore bourgeois rule to more "normal" forms. J.W.



Castro during his recent visit to Chile

France PSU members join Fourth International

The general strike of May 1968 in France enormously strengthened the revolutionary left in France. This left has since then succeeded in scoring some notable political victories—the demonstration of 35,000 organised in commemoration of the Paris Commune by the Ligue Communiste and the immense demonstration of 200,000 called to protest the shooting of Maoist worker Pierre Overney by Renault police guards were the most obvious signs of the growth of this left. Nevertheless the French Communist Party still remains by far the strongest force inside the French working class and the revolutionary groups have not succeeded in breaking the support of the Communist Party. In this situation it is inevitable that organisations which wobble between the CP and other reformist parties and the revolutionary left should develop. The most important of these in France was the Unified Socialist Party (PSU). This organisation supported in a confused way the May 1968 strikes and has frequently since then cooperated with the revolutionary left.

The PSU in the June 1968 elections obtained about 4% of the vote and it is the smallest party as opposed simply to a group or sect, of the French working class. Nevertheless despite its small size compared to the CP the existence of the PSU is a complicated problem for the French left. The Ligue Communiste (French Section of the Fourth International) is now able to more or less dominate the French revolutionary left but the PSU creates a bloc preventing it turning itself from 'the largest of the groups to the smallest of the parties'. If it were possible for the Ligue to break the PSU politically or win over a large section of the cadres of the PSU then it would be able to use entirely different tactics with regard to the CP. The tactic of the United Front, joint activity, etc. would begin to be possible as a real argument that could be used with rank and file CP members. This development is clearly a matter of years rather than of weeks but nevertheless any developments in the PSU are of considerable interest to the revolutionary left.

The wobbling of the PSU between the reformist parties of the French working class and the revolutionaries produces almost continual crisis within the party. Many of the PSU's members join believing that the party is actually basically revolutionary and simply makes tactical mistakes. Rapidly however they discover that the leadership of the party is in fact basically reformist and merely makes revolutionary noises. In this situation many different tendencies emerge in the PSU. Some currents tend towards Maoism, some towards spontaneism, some to Trotskyism and some take reformism to its logical conclusion and want to join the Socialist Party. Most of these currents have not clarified their political views. Earlier this year however

30 members of the PSU, quite a few holding positions of responsibility in the organisation, joined the Ligue Communiste. Now another 36, including members of the national student leadership, members of the political leadership in Paris and the organiser in the municipal and nationalised industries in the key region of Normandy, have also left the PSU to join the Fourth International. We print below the letter they sent on joining the Ligue Communiste.

When we examine the state of the French left today we find that spontaneism has shown itself impotent in the face of reformism and that Maoism is in a general state of degeneration and disintegration. Of the vanguards that emerged from the student movement in the late sixties, only the organizations calling for revolutionary Marxism have succeeded in gaining a position inside the working class.

The leading role inside this current has undoubtedly been played by the Ligue Communiste: in struggles against political repression, in the school and student movements, in solidarity actions with the struggles of the Indo-Chinese peoples, in support of strikes and, most recently, in mobilizing thousands after the murder of Pierre Overney.

This somewhat more publicized aspect of its political presence goes hand in hand with its systematic intervention in working-class struggles, which makes it the only organization capable of challenging the PCF¹ and CGT² hold on the French working class. The increasing preoccupation of the Stalinist bureaucrats with the activities of the Ligue Communiste is a further proof of the influence this organization has acquired and continues to acquire in many layers of the working class.

Its success is not accidental. It is closely linked to the fact that the Ligue Communiste is the only organization on the French left that keeps alive the Leninist conception of organization. Furthermore, it is the only organization on the French left that bases its strategy on an analysis of the international balance of forces and, by being a member of an international organization, is capable of putting this strategy into practice.

It is necessary at this stage to reply to those 'internationalists' and 'Trotskyists' inside the PSU who, while complaining of the nationalist orientation of the neo-Stalinist populists and of Rocard's³ followers inside the party, never get around to offering an internationalist alternative. For this purpose it is sufficient to quote a passage from a book recently published by one of their tendency:

"Those spineless critics of Trotsky to be found in the groups situated between Marxism and reformism reproach him with trying to build an international roof before erecting the national walls of the revolution. However, for us the International does not represent a sort of friendly summit of nations who, joined in a happy recognition of their common ideology, send each other congratulations at times of congresses. For us the International means a world party which, united on a Marxist-Leninist programme, discusses and decides strategy on the world scale. This programme is not the roof that one erects at the completion of building but the very foundation upon which one builds the international and national organizations."⁴

We believe that the Fourth International is precisely in this sense a weapon essential to developing an international movement of the proletariat and the only organization capable of responding globally to the new upsurge of the international class struggle.

For us, therefore, the Ligue Communiste is the only organization within which one can confront the problems of the epoch: the present stage of the world revolution, the origin and crisis of Stalinism, the relationship between the vanguard and the masses. The theoretical debate within the Ligue Communiste

is complemented by a consistent organizational practice that tests in everyday intervention the general political line. The existence of the Ligue Communiste proves that the choice is not between the apoliticism of the spontaneist movement and the dogmatism of a 'Trotskyist sect' but that the revolutionary Marxist road is always open. It is therefore by joining this organization that we feel we can contribute best to the building of an authentic communist party.

NOTES:

1. French Communist Party
2. C.P. dominated trade union federation.
3. Michel Rocard, general secretary of the PSU.
4. Yvan Craipeau, *Histoire de Mouvement Trotskyste en France*, Paris 1972, p.30.

Czechoslovakia Campaign against the trials

The appeal below, originally launched in Paris by commissions which are gathering and translating documents, has now been sponsored by an 'International Jury against the new Prague trials', which is working in conjunction with the commissions and will carry out a counter-trial, publicly, through meetings and conferences.

The Jury has been set up in order to give shape to the widespread but so far isolated discontent and protest against the trials. By now commissions exist in many Western European countries. This initiative must be taken up in Britain as well by all those who are engaged in the fight for socialism.

THE DEFENCE OF THE CZECHOSLOVAKIANS IN PRISON IS PART OF THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM!

WE WILL BREACH THE WALL OF SILENCE WHICH SURROUNDS THEM!

At dawn on August 21, 1968, the armies of the Warsaw Pact entered Prague and millions of people were caught between indignation and sheer stupor. Today, more than three years after this show of force, hundreds of people are imprisoned because they do not accept the current situation. Others have lost their jobs and are forced to live by their wits. They have not accepted the situation either. All of them are, or will be, threatened with legal action for their activities during or after the Prague Spring. They have no assurance that Husak will abide by his declarations affirming: "There will be no pre-fabricated trials". The facts themselves have already disproved this affirmation (cf. the trials of Petr Uhl, Prchlik, Skutina, Lederer, etc...). The inner logic of legal intervention can only be more repression. Unable to convince, the present government is obliged to repress: "pre-fabricated" or simply "fabricated", these trials are a necessity.

The present Czech government is presenting them as essential for the defence of socialism. Nothing could be more monstrous or more efficient in discrediting socialism once and for all in the eyes of masses of people in and out-

side Czechoslovakia. Therefore: because we believe that socialism has nothing to do with a police state; because we know that armed intervention—even qualified as "soviet"—against all the people of Czechoslovakia has, in several hours, done more against socialism than years of anti-communist propaganda or the "conspiracies" that supposedly justified such intervention in the first place; because we cannot let the Husaks, Bilaks or Strougals assume the right to distribute either diplomas of socialism or epithets of counter-revolutionary, we say: defending socialism belongs to those who fight for it, not those who cut its throat.

Today this fight involves the defence of Czech prisoners. It is no longer possible to keep to isolated "disapproval", as if the armed intervention itself had been "isolated", and not been followed by "normalization", followed in turn by "consolidation". The same reasons that led us to "disapprove" now compel us to fight against these trials. The defence of socialism cannot admit either compromise or ambiguity.

Consequently:

—conscious that heavy penalties are in the offing for the Czech prisoners and that the present government is once more using the same police proceedings as in the 50's;
—conscious that the repression in Czechoslovakia has created an image of socialism that only inspires disgust;
the under-signed call for the constitution of an International Jury which, by furnishing the maximum proof, will cast light on the methods and objectives of the present repression in Czechoslovakia, will take charge of the prisoners' defence and, by doing so, will thereby indict the accusers.

Claude AVELINE (France), Robin BLACKBURN (G.B.), Marguerite BONNET (Fr.), Clarole BURDET (Fr.), Peter BRUCKNER (W.Germ.), Andreas BURO (W.Germ.), Igor CORNELISSEN (Netherlands), Claude COURTOT (Fr.), Tamara DEUTSCHER (G.B.), Hans-Magnus EIZENBERGER (W.Germ.), Roer GARAUDY (Fr.), C.GAVRAS (Fr.), Wilfried GOTTSCHALCH (W.Germ.), Daniel GUERIN (Fr.), Me Gisele HALIMI (Fr.), Georges HAUPT (Fr.), Edmond JAGUER (Fr.), Simone JAGUER (Fr.), Vladimir JANKELEVITCH (Fr.), Andre JEANSON (Fr.), Serge JONAS (Fr.), Me Yves JOUFFA (Fr.), Alain KRIVINE (Fr.), Henri LEFEBVRE (Fr.), Eric LOSFELD (Fr.), Jacques MADAULE (Fr.), Ernest MANDEL (Belgium), Franz MAREK (Austria), Dionis MASCOLO (Fr.), Me Leo MATARASSO (Fr.), MATTA (Fr.), Daniel MAYER (Fr.), Dr. MINKOWSKI (Fr.), Yves MONTAND (Fr.), Claude MORGAN (Fr.), Maurice NADEAU (Fr.), Pierre NAVILLE (Fr.), Valerio OCHETTO (Italy), Pierre Jean OSWALD (Fr.), Theodoros PANGALOS (Greece), Jiri PELIKAN (Czechoslovakia), Gajo PETROVIC (Zagreb), Jean PICART LE DOUX (Fr.), Michel PICCOLI (Fr.), PETKOFF (Venezuela), Sybille PLOGSTEDT (W.Germ.), Jean PRONTEAU (Fr.), Michel RAPTIS (Fr.), Madeleine REBERIOUX (Fr.), Michel ROCARD (Fr.), Rossana ROSSANDA (It.), Laurent SCHWARTZ (Fr.), Jean SCHUSTER (Fr.), Jorge SEMPRUN (Fr.), Simone SIGNORET (Fr.), Hans-Rudolph SONNTAG (W.Germ.), A.G.van der SPEK (Neths.), Mikis THEODORAKIS (Gr.), Charles TILLON (Fr.), Raymond TILLON (Fr.), Jean-Pierre VERNANT (Fr.), VERCORS (Fr.), Klaus WAGENBACH (W.Germ.), ZAROUBINE (U.S.A.).

Send all mail to: M. Robert SIMON
9, rue de Lagny
Paris XXeme
Funds to be sent by International Money Order to the above address.

VIETNAM OFFENSIVE CONTINUES

The British press has seized with delight on the news that Saigon has 'succeeded' in getting more of its troops into the town of An Loc, besieged for two months. What does this 'symbolic victory' really mean? It means in fact that it is the liberation forces who have 'succeeded' in getting the Thieu regime to pour a large part of its forces in the Saigon area into relieving a target deliberately selected for its strategic irrelevance. In this kind of war the need to achieve 'symbolic victories' is itself a mark of weakness.

It is already becoming clear where those liberation forces withdrawn from An Loc have gone. Reports from around Saigon (e.g. from Peter Arnott of A.P.) tell of the NLF re-occupying the refuges and bases from which they launched the attacks of the 1960's. It was the threat of the success of these attacks that brought about the escalation of U.S. involvement in ground warfare. Here and in the Mekong Delta the withdrawal of Saigon troops to 'defend' places like An Loc has allowed the local NLF very swiftly to undo the results of several years' 'pacification'. The areas 'pacified' by the Australian units are now 50 per cent back in NLF hands. Throughout the Delta Saigon troops have had to retreat from hundreds of small military posts. This is the real war.

Throughout the country the same quiet re-establishment of P.R.G. authority has been

taking place. Apart from the province of Quang Tri, the liberation forces have also gained control of the highland and coastal areas of the Central region. In this way they have become well emplaced around most of the main bases and population centres of Southern Vietnam—Hue, Da Nang, Kontum, Pleiku, Binh Dinh and so on. Pressure can now be built up or released on them in accordance with their fundamental strategy of wearing away the core of the Saigon troops.

The final element in the strategy of the liberation forces is the political front they hope to build up in the cities against the Thieu regime and its puppet status. The recent repression by the Saigon regime of its 'legal' opposition shows how afraid it now is of this. Letters smuggled out of South Vietnam (*Le Monde*, 10 June) speak of students, university staff and religious leaders arrested and their organizations driven underground. But even the regime's own National Assembly had refused Thieu the further emergency powers he had asked for.

U.S. TACTICS

In their bombardment of the DRV², American reactions have now been reduced to the most brutal essentials of class war. Eye-witnesses have confirmed the DRV government claims that the bombing is now being used so indiscriminately as to be simply an instrument of

terror. Pentagon spokesmen now refer to their target as 'the Hanoi-Haiphong military complex', apparently having concluded, quite rightly, that schools, hospitals, flats, textile factories and hydro-electric plants are all 'weapons' in a people's war. At any rate these have been the recent targets.

Even more ominously, Professor Yves Lacoste the French geographer has shown that the dykes and levees built up by generations of Vietnamese peasants to prevent the Red River from inundating vast areas are now threatened. U.S. raids in their vicinity are timed to coincide with the heavy rainfall in the mountains which causes the river to put most strain on them. When the weakened walls collapse, the U.S. will try to put the blame onto the Vietnamese themselves for ignoring water management during their 'invasion' of the South. Needless to say the teams of workers who start repairing the damage immediately, have to contend with bombardment by anti-personnel weapons.

With more than half of America's 390 B-52's now operating over Vietnam, the liberation forces still have few effective weapons against them. Although the Soviet GANEF and GRIFFON missiles could certainly change this, and although the former at least is already being delivered to Egypt, they are still denied to the Vietnamese. So widespread has the bombing become that even China seems suddenly to have remembered that revolution is not a spectator sport. But her protests at the threat to her national security would have carried more weight had they not coincided with news that Henry Kissinger is off to Peking again.

Of course, for political reasons the 'withdrawal' of U.S. forces has to continue but by now this has become pure sham. In order to get the number of men in Vietnam down to 49,000, several air force units are being transferred

from Da Nang to Thailand, from where they will continue to be used exclusively over Vietnam. By 1st July there should be about as many U.S. military in Thailand as there are in Vietnam. With the 42,000 men of the Seventh Fleet there will by then be altogether some 140,000 U.S. forces still involved directly in the Indochina theatre, which must be near the optimum number for the war of aerial and coastal bombardment that this has become.

JUNE 4th DEMO.

The demonstration in London on 4 June against U.S. aggression, and in solidarity with the Vietnamese struggle, marks in some ways a rebirth of the movement in this country. Despite very bad weather, several thousands listened to the speakers, including representatives of the DRV and the PRG, and then marched in a militant mood to the U.S. embassy at Grosvenor Square. The range of organisations that took part was much wider this time than it has been for some years, and marks the beginning of a realisation that the struggle in Vietnam has been continuing, and is as relevant to revolutionaries now as it ever was. Obviously we cannot expect the relationship between the revolutionary left in Britain and the Vietnamese Revolution to be the same in 1972 as it was in 1968. But by becoming involved in a wider range of struggles we have become much stronger than we were then, and that much more able to spread awareness and support for this great revolutionary movement in Indochina throughout all our new areas of work. **Duncan McNiven**

NOTES:

1. Provisional Revolutionary Government (of South Vietnam)
2. Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)

MOSCOW SUMMIT

The following statement was issued by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on May 31.

The attitude assumed by the Kremlin in face of the May escalation of the U.S. imperialist aggression in Vietnam constitutes one of the most brazen and treacherous betrayals of the world revolution in the entire history of Stalinism. The depth of this betrayal must be grasped by the international revolutionary vanguard and all the friends and supporters of the Vietnamese revolution.

Having proved incapable of throwing back the Vietnamese in their heroic advances on the battlefields of South Vietnam, having been forced to withdraw the bulk of the U.S. ground troops because of the stiffening opposition to the war among the American people, having been unable to maintain the pretense of "Vietnamization" of the war because of the spreading disintegration of the armies of the Saigon puppet regime, Nixon decided in cold blood to escalate the war to a qualitatively higher intensity in order to force the Vietnamese people to bow to an unfavourable compromise despite their resounding military victories. On May 8 Nixon announced that he had ordered all the harbors of North Vietnam to be mined and all transportation lines to be bombed up to the border of China.

In the history of imperialist butchery, the destructive power unleashed on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam since May 8 is of unheard-of proportions. The bomb load released by four squadrons of B-52 bombers is equivalent in destructive blast to a Hiroshima type atomic bomb. The number of bomb craters in Vietnam was recently estimated at 26,000,000. The cratering of the land destroys it for agricultural production. This

loss is on top of the loss of vast areas subjected to defoliation and to crop-destroying chemicals.

Imperialism will not stop at anything in its efforts to drive home its message to the people of Vietnam and of the world: better to destroy a country than to see it break out of the "free world" of capitalist exploitation.

While these colossal crimes were being committed, subjecting one of the most courageous peoples in the world to genocide, the Kremlin chieftains clinked champagne glasses with war criminal Nixon, as if they were toasting his deeds in Vietnam. They pictured their summit conference with Nixon as a "great success," a big step toward "world peace," while Nixon, with the callousness of a professional executioner, continued the most ferocious and barbarous acts of aggression and violence ever to be vented on the workers and peasants of a small country.

The Democratic Republic of Vietnam is part of the so-called socialist camp, whose security and inviolability the masters of the Kremlin have so many times guaranteed in the most solemn terms. Claiming the existence of an imperialist threat against the Czechoslovak workers state (which they never bothered to try to prove), they sent 200,000 troops into that country in August 1968. Their real reason for the invasion, of course, was to suppress the efforts that had been begun there to replace Stalinist police rule with socialist democracy, a change that would have strengthened—not weakened—the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia against any threat of capitalist restoration.

But in face of the unprecedented mass of napalm, antipersonnel bombs, and patterned bombing nearing the nuclear level that are being applied day after day on the cities and

towns of North Vietnam, the masters of the Kremlin limited themselves to a few routine press releases—to be used by pro-Moscow Communist parties for face-saving needs—while they publicly toasted the imperialist aggressors!

It must be brought to the attention of the workers and peasants of the world that Nixon is able to use obsolete B-52 bombers only because the Soviet bureaucrats refuse to arm the Democratic Republic of Vietnam with the modern fighter planes that could wipe the B-52s out of the sky. Yet they have sold such fighter planes to several bourgeois governments in Asia, beginning with the Sadat regime in Egypt.

The same goes for various types of sophisticated weapons. The Soviet bureaucrats deny them to the Vietnamese people but freely distribute them to half a dozen bourgeois governments in various parts of the world.

Even the amount of ordinary weapons is kept down to a trickle by the Soviet bureaucrats. The deliveries made by all the governments of the "socialist camp" do not reach 10 percent of what they send annually to Egypt. The cost of the aid is under 1 percent of the total annual military expenditures made by the U.S. in Vietnam.

This provides an indication on a material level of the betrayal committed by the Stalinist bureaucrats against the Vietnamese revolution.

Brezhnev and his cohorts have even hidden from the Soviet people the fact—revealed by the Hanoi press—that Soviet seamen were killed by U.S. bombs in Haiphong even while Nixon, who ordered the bombing, was being wined and dined in Moscow.

Apologists of the Stalinist bureaucracy argue that the Kremlin had to act this way in order to avoid a dangerous escalation of tension and a confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union that could lead to World War III. This argument is completely mendacious.

History has shown again and again that to concede to an aggressor does not lead to easing the situation in the long run; instead, it encourages the aggressor to engage in escalation. In the United States today the mood is such that the vast majority of the American people would never back the White House in gambling on a nuclear showdown. The American people are sick and tired of the war in Indochina. They would never agree to risk a global conflict for the sake of maintaining a military foothold in Indochina.

By standing firmly and telling Nixon that his new escalation of the war constituted an attack against the entire socialist camp and that persistence in that attack would result in the Vietnamese army, navy, and air force being supplied with all the means necessary to turn it back, the Soviet leaders could have stopped Nixon in his tracks. By refusing to take any concrete steps to halt the aggressor, the Kremlin leaders fall into the position of accomplices in the crimes of imperialism against an allied workers state.

They thereby lay the base for a still more explosive situation.

Once again the fatal logic of the policy of "peaceful coexistence", of "socialism in one country" stands out in the clearest way. In order to save the international status quo from unsettling by a victorious revolution, the Kremlin bureaucrats cynically acquiesce in the massive bombing and genocidal destruction of North Vietnam. At bottom they consider that they are acting in their own self-interest, for a successful revolution in Vietnam could encourage the growing political opposition inside the Soviet Union and perhaps detonate a revolutionary process that would sweep them from power and restore the socialist democracy that Lenin and Trotsky stood for.

As for the Maoist bureaucracy, it is unable to do more than issue feeble press releases protesting the bombing of North Vietnam. Having themselves accorded Nixon a royal reception last February, they cannot even take factional advantage of the betrayal committed by the Moscow revisionists. The truth is that by engaging in a "cordial" summit meeting with Nixon they helped make it easier for the Kremlin to abandon all restraint in groveling before the commander in chief of the U.S. war machine.

The complicity of the Chinese and Russian regimes in the Pentagon's crimes in Vietnam can arouse a sharp reaction among the masses of the Soviet Union and China. That would change many things. However, in face of the tight police control over the communications media it is not easy to speak the truth in either land.

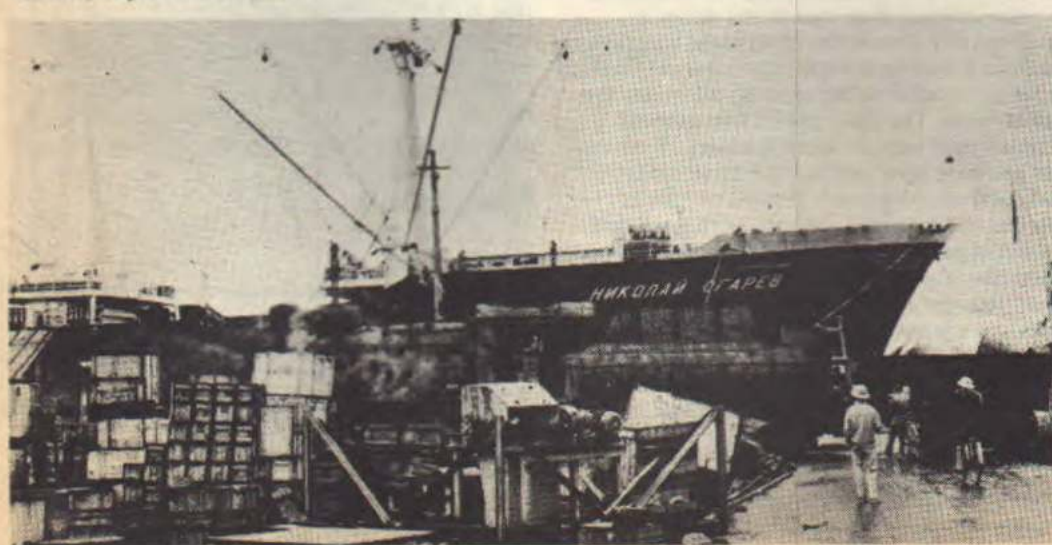
Among the rank and file in the Communist parties in the capitalist countries the situation is different. They are not sealed off from the facts or from the influence of the vanguard that has been staging international demonstrations for withdrawal of the U.S. armed forces and free exercise by the Vietnamese people of the right of self-determination.

The Vietnamese are continuing their struggle with unparalleled courage and determination, and are still scoring successes on the battlefields. With the help of the laboring masses in other countries, they can still win their revolution despite all the fury of the imperialist beast.

The Fourth International calls upon all its members and sympathizers, upon all communists and socialists throughout the world, to devote the utmost energy to helping to organize massive protest demonstrations against the imperialist aggression in Vietnam.

Bring the strongest possible pressure to bear on the Communist parties by spreading the truth about the latest Stalinist betrayals. Help pillory the Moscow and Peking regimes! Compel them to provide adequate material support to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam!

Soviet freighter in Haiphong



EQUAL PAY CAMPAIGN

In the current period of economic crisis and militant workers' struggles there has been a significant upsurge among women workers; a slowly growing awareness among them of their subordination in society. However, the struggles of women have been isolated and fragmented. Some have arisen where the workers' organisations are strong enough to take militant action and draw women into action e.g. in the Manchester engineering occupations. In others women have taken the lead, e.g. at Brannans in Cumberland.

Since the collapse of NJACCWER, which developed as a result of militant action at Fords, there has not been an organisation of women within the trade union which has taken up the political issues of women's rights and demands in a coherent way. The NJACCWER organisation was dominated by the Communist Party, who let the demand for equal pay go out of the 'trade union' struggle into the 'political' arena, i.e. the Labour Party. So we saw the emergence of the Equal Pay Act, put on the statute book and administered by the State machinery totally independently of the struggles of the working class. We shall look at some of the lessons to be learnt from this later, but we should note here that this diffusion of the issue by the Communist Party set the struggle for women's rights back for several years.

So we now have legislation, which of course is full of loop-holes which can be used by employers to their advantage and for which there is no penal clause for non-operation. In this situation the equal pay clause can well become a give-away clause if left to the trade union bureaucrats, and indeed to many of the workers. There are two main reasons for this: (1) That women are trying to get what they have never had - equal treatment across the board, recognition of their particular needs, at a time when the working class as a whole is struggling to maintain what it has already got, to defend its living standards. What is easier for the trade union bureaucrats than to sacrifice the equal pay clause as a first concession in negotiation. (2) That unfortunately women are not fighting in a coordinated and militant way on this kind of issue.

Because the wind has been taken out of the struggle for equal pay, we find progress being made mainly in either well-organised, militant and male-dominated unions such as the AUEW, where there is an agreed policy for equal pay by 1973 (although in many rank-and-file struggles in this Union the equal pay clause has got lost), or well-organised women-dominated unions, such as USDAW (51.8 per cent women) where some sections have achieved it. So, although this bourgeois "right" has in fact been conceded by the ruling class, it is far from being realised in practice. But what does this "right" amount to in a concrete situation? If there are men and women working alongside on a factory bench, men can lift the heavy materials, women can't. I have heard this example cited to me (by a woman worker) as a reason why there should be an 8 per cent difference between men and women's wages where they are working in the same grade. This factory has already "got equal pay". This is because in capitalist society the right of the producers is proportional to the labour they supply, because the measurement criterion is labour. The employees are merely sellers of

labour power, and if the employer can get one kind of labour cheaper than another by taking advantage of differences between them he will. And once we accept this, we have to accept all the divisions, grades etc. within society; we have to accept the employer's right to determine "women's" grades vis-a-vis "men's" grades, to determine that there is a thing called women's work whereas men's work is unskilled semi-skilled or skilled, to determine a grade too low for men to accept, to say that labourers are worth less than craftsmen.

Now to consider how the question of equality affects the life activity of working women - frequently women are not very much in favour of equal pay for reasons such as, men have wives and children to support and should get more money, a woman's income is secondary usually, men do heavier, dirtier work etc. In themselves these justifications for the status quo show precisely that the issue of equality is not an economic issue. They beg all the questions about who should be responsible for children, what is a man's role, what is a woman's role, what is women's work etc. If a woman works, how can she get to a trade union meeting if she has total responsibility for the children? Clearly much wider issues are involved, but central are the demands for equal opportunity and nursery facilities, which raise these issues. Precisely this marks the difference between doing work with women and with men workers, and here, from an understanding of the oppression of women flows an understanding of the organisational forms necessary for fighting this oppression in class struggle.

Let us take for an example a militant struggle, a factory occupation of men and women workers, which is fighting amongst other things for equal pay. Women will be involved in the struggle initially in relation to men in the same way as they are in relation to men in other situations in society, e.g. they look after the canteen and take a minimal role in the organisation/decision making (this happened in the Fisher-Bendix occupation where one of the leading shop stewards was quite proud to say that the women did well to get a certain percentage of men's rates). This is because the subordination of women cuts right through all aspects of society and is so much part of bourgeois ideology that our brothers are sometimes barely aware of it. Here, if the issue is limited to the economic - equal pay - which many of the male trade unionists will support, the women's consciousness of their oppression within the oppression of all workers in such a situation will not be changed. Since their consciousness as workers is inseparably tied to their consciousness as women (take a look at the life-activity of women) in the situation cited above they will inevitably constitute a more reactionary (relative to men involved) section of workers.

Women workers cannot become fully involved if they have to go on looking after the children, cooking all the meals etc. It's no good male workers carrying out a struggle "for" women. Conversely the more that women do get involved in the determination of events the more their consciousness as women workers grows because they have that much more than men both ideologically and practically to fight against. Unless women take upon themselves their own organisation and decision-making within the struggle their relationship to the struggle will tend to reflect that of women in society generally (with the possible exception of one

or two militants - usually the wives of leading militants). The political understanding and question of organisation are absolutely inseparable. The argument is the same in all working-class activity; in Union branch meetings, in shop stewards committees etc; men will do "for" women (if they are feeling nice and class-conscious). We are of course absolutely in favour of them taking up every demand that women make, but since the male supremacy cannot be changed overnight it is absolutely necessary for women to organise themselves across the factory to intervene in shop steward's committees, across areas to intervene in branch meetings, on the political issues that particularly affect them.

Not understanding women's oppression in all aspects of society can lead to disastrous results. Thus not only have the trade unions themselves, because of the particular function that they perform in capitalist society in relation to the ruling class, become bureaucratic and undemocratic, but it is no accident that in a society geared to the advantage and domination of men, the majority of trade union officials are men. Class-conscious working women will find, just as male workers do, great difficulty in getting these officials into action on their behalf, but at the same time they also realise that they are mostly men who have these well-paid comfortable jobs. A combination of these two factors, bureaucracy and male-domination, can tempt women to opt out of trade union activity. Usually this is passive, women just pay their dues and participate very little, but in the case of the 200 women in the Lucas factory in Burnley it led them to leave their Union (the GMWU) altogether and form their own. Subsequently they appealed to women in other areas to join their Union and received a lot of publicity, much of it adverse. Women organisers in the GMWU encouraged them to campaign within it, but the undemocratic character of the Union outweighed, it seemed, to them at the time, the advantages of being in the general organisation. The new Women's Industrial Union had a little success at the beginning: a few women in different parts of the country showed interest, many were sympathetic, but few joined. Of course they hoped to become part of the trade union movement, but the main blow they received was the refusal of the TUC to recognise them. In desperation they registered on the new Industrial Register of Trade Unions, but not for long.

The women's liberation groups rallied round; this was just their cup of tea - working-class women workers doing their own thing. Since we first met Mrs Sturdy (President of the new Union), we in Socialist Woman have encouraged her to take her strength into the trade union movement and retain her organisation within the Union. Probably the main practical thing that has determined the women's proposal to now join the A.U.E.W. is the lack of concrete support they received from women outside Lucas; but they have of course also come to understand much more about the class nature of society and the political nature of what they are doing.

The way in which the Lucas women hope to develop is through getting a women's industrial section in the A.U.E.W. This will offer perspectives for the organisation of industrial groups like that at Lucas in other A.U.E.W. factories. Mrs Sturdy and her fellow-members

will not only set an example of what can be done (and many improvements have been made at Lucas since the women began to organise themselves); they will be able to speak to other women and help to organise women in other places. She is currently preparing a manifesto stating the aims of the industrial group, which include the demands for equal pay, against low pay, equal opportunity, nursery facilities, etc.

I think that while this kind of organisation is still in embryonic form it is the key to the development of the struggle against the oppression of working-class women. If it should develop along the lines now proposed it will have a definite effect on many people who are trying to see how the question of woman's oppression relates to working-class women, and also on working-class men. The main factor that leads working-class men to chauvinist attitudes is that women are apathetic, not militant and "lag" behind etc; as women become better organised they will stand alongside their brothers (and probably often take the lead).

The key here is the Socialist Woman Groups which have the analysis and programme for developing this work. The national structure will enable close coordination between different developing areas, their political analysis which understands the class nature of woman's oppression will relate to leading women militants. We in Socialist Woman Groups have already begun to develop committees of women in factories across union boundaries, around the issues of women's oppression. Where these are formed, the idea of the industrial group can spread across unions in a locality. The main political opposition, as we grow and the industrial groups spread, will be the Communist Party. It has the organisation and much more influence already than we do in the trade union movement. However, it will be more difficult for them to sell out this idea than NJACCWER. For NJACCWER existed without involving women enough in their place of work, i.e. without really strong rank-and-file support. It was thus possible for the committees to degenerate and disappear, before the demands of most of its Charter had been achieved. A grass-roots organisation will be more difficult to destroy. Of course the main problem is that it may not grow, and that is why it is vitally important to understand why it should. Although our numbers are small, we in Socialist Woman must give political leadership where we can gain influence, and organisational assistance.

In short, there is a possibility of important advances being made in the politicisation of women workers as well as men at the present time; but not if they are thought of as just another group of workers. Only when the revolutionary left recognises that the problems of women workers are related to the total oppression of women, deriving not merely from their position as sellers of labour power, but also from the capitalist ideology of the family and women's subordinate role, can it begin to make these advances; and only the Socialist Woman Groups are in a position to do this. Lenin's comments are still appropriate; "Our national sections still lack a correct understanding of this matter..... Their occasional recognition of the necessity and value of a powerful, clear-headed communist women's movement is a platonic verbal recognition, not the constant care and obligation of the Party".
Nina Thomas
Lancaster IMG

MANCHESTER Occupations fizzle out

At the time of writing there are only three occupations (Hawker Siddeley, Woodford; Metal Box, Altrincham; Ruston Paxman, Newton-le-Willows) and two strikes (C.B. Johnsons and Fletcher Bros.) left in the Manchester engineering dispute. The factories that have gone back to work have, for the most part, not settled on hours and so are banning overtime, following the new Manchester CSEU line (see *The Red Mole*, 43).

As we explained before, this backdown on the hours substantially reduced the bargaining power on money, equal pay, and holidays, as well as on hours. Nearly all the new settlements have been for between £2 and £2.50 new money plus one day's holiday this year and one next year. This is at least £1 - £1.50 new money less than the stewards were settling for previously.

The two main setbacks in recent weeks have been the settlements at Ferrantis and at H/O

Sercks. All six of the Ferranti plants in dispute went back after the factory at Hollinwood voted to return on a slightly increased offer with hardly a move towards equal pay, which is so crucial in Ferrantis. This defeat was particularly important as there were very strong signs of the dispute spreading to Ferranti plants on a national scale. Both Dundee and Barrow plants looked certain to follow suit.

At Sercks, a small plant of just over 100 in Gorton, a "settlement" was reached after an eight week strike, following the timely intervention of Bro. Rigby (the local full time official of the Sheet Metal Workers - the majority union at the plant) which involved the management taking the men back in stages because of lost orders. In practice the militants were left outside the gates and 26 redundancies were announced. In spite of efforts by two of the three stewards and by representatives of the Gorton and Openshaw Joint Shop Stewards Liaison Comm-

ittee, the section back in work refused to come back out in dispute. Meanwhile Rigby was at his union's National Conference, out of harm's way.

The factories still either striking or occupying are more isolated than ever as the struggle has effectively been reduced to plant bargaining and mass action to prevent victimisation becomes harder to organise as the majority of plants are back at work. The three plants that are still occupied have been so since the start of the dispute and have now reached the three month mark, and are very much in need of 'moral', practical and financial support. If these plants succeed in gaining substantially better settlements than the more recent ones, they will have shown that the decision to back down on the hours was a grave mistake and that the Manchester Division could have gone it alone if necessary. The outcome at Hawker Siddeley, Woodford, and at Ruston Paxman is particularly important.

Woodford is the only Hawker Siddeley plant to go all out in this dispute and they need a substantially better settlement than that at Chadderton (the other Manchester plant) to avoid demoralisation.

Ruston Paxman is part of the GEC empire. The best settlement so far at GEC plants in the area has been at Openshaw, which was occupied for seven weeks and was a marked improvement on that at the 'Big House' in Trafford Park which was barely in the dispute and whose settlement was a major setback and a prime cause in the backdown on hours (as reported in *The Red Mole*, 43). A victory at Ruston Paxman would put pressure on the right wing in the union at Trafford Park.

Manchester IMG

STOP PRESS: A settlement has been reached at Hawker Siddeley, Woodford, and the men have gone back to work, though operating an overtime ban in lieu of an agreement on hours. The settlement consisted of £2.50 new money plus extra holidays; better than at Chadderton but similar to the other recent settlements.

There is another occupation, however, which we omitted to mention above and which is still going on, at the small Stockport factory of Basin and Son.

REVIEW

Permanent Revolution

Queimada, Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo

Queimada is about the problems of the colonial revolution and is without doubt the most effective film to appear on this subject over the last decade. Using a Portuguese-dominated sugar island in the Antilles in the middle of the 19th Century as his backdrop, Pontecorvo brilliantly demonstrates the rise of inter-imperialist contradictions (British v Portuguese imperialism) and how they interact both with the needs of a developing comprador bourgeoisie tied to sugar companies owned by British capital and the aspirations of black plantation workers, heirs of numerous slave revolts in the recent past.

Pontecorvo's first film, *The Battle of Algiers* (reviewed in *The Red Mole*, Vol.2, no.7) was not distributed for general release in this country, presumably because the parallel with Ireland was both too immediate and too near for comfort. *Queimada* was initially released and shown over a year ago, but its impact was, unfortunately, not very great because the bourgeois press did not like it and also because the underground/cultural media gave it bad reviews in *Ink*, *Time Out*, *Frenz*, *Oz*, etc. The bourgeoisie dislike it for its message, the underground because they don't understand what the film is trying to say; and these two facts taken together reveal the enormous political importance of this film. Politically it is far more advanced than *The Battle of Algiers*, though as in the latter, Pontecorvo portrays the enemy in a masterly fashion. It is not a crude agitprop division into "we are all clever and will win and they are all stupid and will lose". Like French imperialism in *The Battle of Algiers*, British imperialism in *Queimada* (represented in the person of Sir William Walker played by Marlon Brando) is extremely clever, aware of contradictions which exist within the mass movement and its vanguard and completely capable of exploiting them with the aid

of the national/comprador bourgeoisie. The plantation workers led by a people's army under the command of Jose Dolores (played by Evaristo Marquez) discover that: (a) compromises with the national bourgeoisie lead to defeats, particularly if you surrender your weapons; (b) a revolution must destroy all the apparatus of the bourgeois state to be successful; and (c) the reality of the capitalist world market means that all the tasks of the social revolution cannot be successfully completed in one country.

In that sense, therefore, Pontecorvo's film is not only a film about a sugar-island in the Antilles, it is about Indonesia, Algeria, Bangladesh, Guatemala, the Sudan, Santa Domingo, etc. While Jose Dolores is hanged in the end and his guerrillas defeated, there is a way of transforming this defeat into a victory if and only if the lessons of the defeat are recognised. The faces at the end of the film tell us that they have understood and that the next time the result will be different.

The manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie and their ability to exploit the weaknesses of their opponents makes this film remarkably universal. In the different phases of the class struggle in this country, for instance, we see the bosses engaging in similar kinds of tactical manoeuvres—the recent docks crisis being only one example—and there is a certain parallel in the way in which the trade-union bureaucracy here and the national bourgeoisie in *Queimada* use imperialism's tactical manoeuvres to deflect the mass movement.

To conclude: *Queimada* is a revolutionary film which must not only be seen by militants, but used as a background for providing political education. It should be shown by university Soc Socs, by Red Circles, by ISC branches, it should be taken by Black Panther and other black comrades to the black ghettos and it should be shown in occupied factories. This is how films of this sort can and should be used.

Clarissa Howard

The film *Queimada* can be hired in 16mm for £9 per evening from the Film Bookings Dept, United Artists, 37 Mortimer St., London W.1 (Tel: 01-636 1655).

Marlon Brando as Sir William Walker and Evaristo Marquez as Jose Dolores in *Queimada*.



LETTER Soldiers' Rights

To The Editor,

The Soldiers' Trade Union Rights Movement, as readers may know, has always projected its publications and ideas through the Chartist. In recent weeks there has been some speculation about a split between these two organizations on their Northern Ireland policy. As a result of this, a Conference between STURM delegates and the National Committee of the Chartists was convened. At this, the very real differences were discussed and as a result, in order to clarify the position, it was decided to write a joint letter to *The Red Mole* stating the disagreements and defining the common ground.

Chartist Position: Whereas it would appear that the Chartists are in a contradiction to be defending both the Republican movement (against the Army) and the soldiers, this is not the case. In the military conflict between the Republican workers and the Army, our support goes to the Republicans. However,

although we condemn Her Majesty's Army as an institution, we give unconditional support to our brother "trade unionists" in the army in their struggle for the right to organize themselves. We also deeply sympathise with the position and dilemmas of soldiers in Northern Ireland and call for the immediate withdrawal of all British troops.

S.T.U.R.M. Position. The Soldiers' Trade Union Rights Movement feels that as its responsibility is to represent the best interests of its membership, it condemns the I.R.A. for failing to recognize the working class background of the soldiers and for its murderous attacks on them. However, STURM does feel support for the position of both the Protestant and Catholic working class and sees the role of the soldiers to be that of preventing clashes between rival nationalistic and religious groups. While all STURM members see this as their role, opinions are divided as to whether the Army should pull out immediately or remain until the two working class communities have overcome their sectarian division. Whereas STURM is prepared to accept support from any quarter, it wishes to make clear that as a movement it takes no responsibility for the Chartists' political positions.

Yours fraternally,
Graham Bash (Chartists National Secretary).
"T. Atkins" (for STURM).

IMG National Committee meeting

The IMG National Committee held its first meeting after the recent conference on the week-end of 17-18 June. The main discussions were on the situation in Ireland and the re-organisation of the organisation in the light of the decisions of the conference.

In the discussion on organisation the proposals adopted were aimed at increasing the political centralisation of the organisation. Additional full-time workers were taken on to be in charge of the newspaper and the intervention of the organisation in the trade unions. In the case of the latter field of intervention, it was noted that the main qualitative area of growth in the last year had been in our intervention in the trade-unions and this had been reflected in the greatly increased number of delegates we had had at the recent LCDTU conference.

In the discussion on Ireland it was noted that the change in political line by the Anti-Internment League towards a defeatist position had not been reversed and the AIL was taking up the campaign in defence of Free Derry which the ISC had suggested. Although certain forces within the AIL were clearly not happy about the move of the AIL towards a clearcut position nevertheless it still appeared clear that it was possible for the IMG to continue to continue supporting the process of merging the ISC and the AIL while simultane-

ously arguing for the AIL to take its new positions to their logical conclusion by clarifying their slogans.

There was also a discussion on the slogans of the IMG in the light of the discussion which had taken place at conference. It was noted that most sections of the solidarity movement had now accepted either explicitly or implicitly the line of the IMG as regards the building of a solidarity movement. Attempts, such as the Labour Committee Against Internment, which had refused to take up a position on the military struggle in Ireland had collapsed and the AIL, after refusing to take up a defeatist position for nine months, had also changed its line. Nevertheless some forces, notably the International Socialists, in order to avoid in practice taking up a clear cut defeatist position, continued to distort the position of the IMG with regard to its position of supporting the military victory of the IRA, regardless of its political programme, against the armed forces of the British State and to claim this represented the view that the IRA could destroy capitalism in Ireland. For this reason the IMG's slogan with regard to the IRA should be changed to *Solidarity with the IRA*. This would be used in conjunction with our other slogans of *Self Determination for Ireland*, for the *Release of all Political Prisoners* and the *Withdrawal of all British Troops*.

BIG FLAME: Revolutionary Paper on Merseyside. Out now; 5p a copy from: Big Flame, 78 Clarendon Road, Wallasey, Cheshire.

E MARK GOLD

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Women's Liberation Disco, 30th June, 7.30pm, extension, Sols Arms, 65 Hampstead Road, London N.W.1 (Warren Street Tube). 25p entrance, proceeds for Fakenham Film Fund. Organised by Socialist Woman.

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North London meets every Tuesday at 8.30 p.m. in the General Picton Pub, Caledonian Road, (near Kings Cross Station), N.1

Notting Hill meets every Monday at 7.45 p.m. in the Britannia Pub meeting room, Clarendon Road (near Ladbroke Grove Tube). Buses 52, 7, 15.

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Age:



INDIAN OPPRESSION IN BANGLADESH

Despite the recent boasts of Bangladesh Prime-Minister, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to a correspondent of *The Sunday Times*, that he did not allow an Indonesian-style massacre of the left to happen in Bangladesh, reports received in London from different parts of the country indicate that large-scale attacks spear-headed by the combined forces of Indian army and Bangladesh troops on the peasant-guerrillas and industrial workers are under way.

The myth that the Indian army has altogether withdrawn from Bangladesh has been exploded; Indian troops are conducting regular campaigns of murder, arson and loot covering a wide area of Rajshahi district, 200 miles north-west of Dacca. *The Daily Telegraph* (June 6, 1972) reported, "Bloody clashes occurred recently at Atrai in Rajshahi district when combined forces of the Indian and Bangladesh army using helicopters tried to dislodge a Naxalite (a popular terminology used by the government

Mujib's return after 'liberation' of Bangladesh

for any peasant-guerrilla) group from their stronghold. A village was burnt to the ground and scores of people killed on both sides." And Dacca's daily, *Dainik Bangla*, reported on June 6 that the 45-year-old peasant leader and a top-ranking Communist leader of Bangladesh, Abdul Matin, was seriously wounded in a recent gun-battle and taken prisoner in Rajshahi.

The Indian Government, throwing all 'legalities' to the wind, has been blatantly interfering in Bangladesh affairs from the beginning in a desperate bid to keep Sheikh Mujib's regime from disintegrating. As one Communist spokesman claims, "the comprador character of Sheikh Mujib's government is laid open to the people of East Bengal".

Dacca's press has further reported that a large contingent of Indian troops is permanently billeted in Chittagong Hill Tracts, eastern most region of Bangladesh bordering on Burma. Observers confirm activities of Indian army

officers and personnel at Chittagong, the country's only major seaport.

The militant Bengali weekly *Gonoshokti*, edited by a prominent underground Maoist leader, Mohammad Toaha, recently carried a full front-page news report that Indian planes, using a Bangladesh base had heavily bombarded the rebel Mizo-held territory astride the Indo-Bangladesh frontier. The Chakmas, another tribal people of the area, have also become the target of constant Indian army attacks. Indians are carrying out these operations with the military objectives of sealing off the country's eastern border with Burma and also of making the Indian might felt across the Burmese side of the frontier.

While the Indian army is operating openly inside Bangladesh, New Delhi's special division in charge of espionage and counter-insurgency - the notorious Research and Analytical Division (RAD) - has heavily infiltrated Bangladesh society. RAD has set up a wide network of 'messengers' and 'friends' in Bangladesh who maintain a direct link with New Delhi. Under RAD's guidance armed gangs of Bengali youth, who received full military training in Indian army camps near Delhi last year, are roaming the countryside killing non-Awami League freedom-fighters and left-wing workers.

The most prominent peasant-guerrilla commander of the north, Tipu Biswas, who earned popular esteem by his heroic stand against the Pakistan army in defence of Pabna town and whose daring exploits are part of the folklore of the entire country (see *The Red Mole* vol 2, no.11) was foully murdered by the Indian-inspired thugs recently.

The weekly *Haq-Katha* (Truth), published by Bangladesh's well known peasant leader, 95 year-old Maulana Bhashani, exposing RAD's murderous plot said recently, "Its target is to kill well over 125,000 leftist workers in the country, without doing which the tool of oppression cannot be left intact. By leftist, it means those who believe in Marxism-Maoism, are against US imperialism and its agents, against Soviet revisionism and its influence, against the oppression of the Indian bourgeois class and rulers, and also those true nationalists who want to see an oppression-free worker-peasant state in Bangladesh."

Having pacified West Bengal, the Indian rulers now occupy themselves with aiding Mujib to do the same in the East. However, all this is not happening in Bangladesh without the people noticing. Recently, Durga Prasad Dhar, the agile Indian diplomat who heads the Bangladesh desk in New Delhi and is a director of RAD's operations,

was greeted on one of his far-too-many visits to Dacca by violent student demonstrators who used such slogans as 'Go Home, Dhar' and 'Bangladesh is no Place for You'.

While the Indians are trying to discipline Bangladesh, their protege, Sheikh Mujib, is finding it difficult to control his avaricious cohorts, guilty of widespread corruption. Foreign relief goods, foodstuff and essentials intended for the poor and hungry are finding their way on to a brisk black market operated by local Awami League leaders. In Mymensingh, Faridpur and Khulna, incidents involving angry mobs trying to raid foodsheds belonging to the government partymen were reported. Hungry peasants and unemployed workers are pouring into the towns and cities of Bangladesh everyday in their thousands.

To complete this grim scenario, the government has recently promulgated an emergency ordinance banning all strike actions, gheraos (encirclements) and sit-ins by the industrial workers now engaged in various government-controlled industries for a period of six months. As a result, the country's 750,000-strong organised labour force is seething with anger. Abul Bashar and Kazi Zafar, the two labour leaders holding the key-centres of Chittagong and Tongi respectively, denounced the government ordinance as a blow to the basic rights of the working class people and blamed the regime for provoking the workers.

Sensing the militancy of the workers, Sheikh Mujib himself has ordered the formation of a fascist-style labour brigade, deceptively known as "Lal Bahini" or "Red Brigade", in order to create confusion in the labour ranks. At the head of this armed force is Mujib's own bullyboy, Abdul Mannan, who previously made quite a name for himself by organising attacks on the workers of Dacca, Narayanganj and Tongi (see *The Red Mole*, 27).

To prevent any real criticism from being voiced the government has promulgated measures to silence the opposition press completely. Most of Dacca's newspapers are now fully controlled by government-appointed agents. Whatever is left of the opposition press is now under a shadow of grave danger. Mohammad Toaha's *Gonoshokti* office was raided early this month by the police. His paper was finally banned and a warrant of arrest issued against Toaha. His young daughters were also manhandled by the police in Dacca. This is merely a glimpse of Sheikh Mujib's 'democracy'..... Khaled Yousuf.



MOLEHILLS

SCOTTISH MAOISTS APPEAL

The 81 Years Appeal Committee has been set up to further the appeals of William McPherson, John Doran, Matt Lygate and Colin Lawson, who between them received a total of 81 years imprisonment on charges involving bank robbery. These sentences were the highest ever meted out in a Scottish courtroom, and there seems little doubt that the savagery of the sentences was not unconnected with the fact that three of them were members of the Workers Party of Scotland. Lawson and Lygate were finally associated with the robberies only on the evidence of a single witness.

Money is urgently needed for the appeal, and all donations should be sent to: Bank of Scotland, 464 Victoria Road, Glasgow S.2. The Appeal Committee can be contacted through the Secretary, John Carlyle, 36 Albert Road, Glasgow S.2.

'PABLOISM' AND THE SLL

The SLL has always been rather endearing both for the amount of time it spends exposing the evils of the "Pabloite liquidationist Centre" of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, with its supposed theories of "mass pressure" and reformist organisations leading revolutions, and for the way in which it tries to wrap up its own complete reformism in the most extreme ultra-left phraseology.

In the recent period it has, through these manoeuvres, succeeded in making two great 'contributions' to Marxist theory. The first is the 'discovery' of the category of apparently classless 'basic' rights. The second is the raising of the completely revisionist slogan of "Labour to power - on a socialist programme". This demand has no precedent anywhere in Marxism and is a classic example of the SLL's reformism. After tying itself in knots for months by trying to explain that this demand was impossible to achieve but nevertheless the working class should struggle for it, the SLL leadership now appears to have given up the ghost and is actually

saying that the Labour Party can destroy capitalism. In its May 1st statement we were informed that the Labour Party could carry out a series of transitional demands. Now in the June 19th issue of *Workers Press* we see they have gone the whole hog. We now find that "the central task is to mobilise the industrial strength of the working class to make this government resign and replace it with a Labour government which will be forced by the strength of the working class to nationalise all major industries without compensation under workers control".

Apparently the SLL now believes that the Labour Party, a party which is not even centrist but was defined by Lenin as a *bourgeois* party, can be forced to destroy capitalism. Indeed the pursuit of anti-'pabloism' takes one in strange directions.

ACTIVIST FACES DEPORTATION

Mike 'Sirros' - Turkish and a revolutionary community activist - is now awaiting deportation in Pentonville prison. The Home Office order - allegedly for overstaying his permit (by five months only) - means that he faces two years imprisonment in Turkey for avoiding military service there.

This is the third time Mike has been inside in six months - each time the charges have been dropped. The Special Branch say he is connected with the Angry Brigade but "haven't got enough evidence". What is true is that while over here he has been involved in many community struggles. Mail etc. for Mike should be sent to: Mike Topuzoglu, 208424, Pentonville Prison, Caledonian Road, London N.7.

RENAULT MURDERERS

Pierre Overney, a young Maoist worker at the Renault car plant in Paris, was shot dead by a Renault security guard on 25 February (see *The Red Mole*, 38, for a full report). His murder was not forgotten when M. Georges Basiliou, the managing director of Renault, paid a visit to Leeds on 16 June to open a new garage and showrooms of Galway Smith Ltd., Leeds Renault distributors, in the presence of 500 cocktail-sipping guests. Members of Leeds IMG, together with other comrades, prevented

Basiliou from speaking as they distributed leaflets expressing their solidarity with those French workers continuing the struggle against the bourgeoisie. Blood thrown over the show-room window symbolised the murder of Pierre Overney. Three comrades were arrested in the course of the action.

BUILDING WORKERS STRIKE

The employers, having made their best ever national offer to workers in the building trade in terms of percentages, must be feeling surprised at their consistent rejection, particularly by the UCATT bureaucrats. However UCATT know that what is on is a fight for the leading positions, in which they are being strongly challenged by the leadership of the militant *Building Workers Charter* group.

On 26 June the struggle moves a stage further with the implementation of selective strikes on key sites. The IMG is holding a national building workers caucus in Birmingham on 24 June to prepare its programme of intervention in the strikes. A full report will appear in the next issue of *The Red Mole*.

ACTION IN EQUITY

For the first time in a decade Equity, the actors' union, is on the verge of industrial action. If West End managements do not meet the demand for £30 per week basic minimum there will be considerable pressure on the Equity leadership to call an official stoppage. And it seems unlikely that the latest offer of £25 (and £1 more per year for five years!) will be much increased.

The resolution calling for strike action and the establishment of a Fighting Fund if the demand is not fully met was carried overwhelmingly at Equity's Annual General Meeting on Sunday, 11 June. But it is not clear at this stage if any strike action would be carried beyond the domain of Shaftesbury Avenue.

Much of the AGM was spent in utter confusion over the issue of whether Equity should be 'political' or 'non-political' - an issue posed in this way by the right wing led by Marius Goring with the aim of preserving the status quo and isolating the left. What is clear however is that

with 93 per cent unemployment actors simply cannot afford to be 'non-political'. And as a first step it is essential to ensure that the fragmentation and isolation which results from this is broken down, and that knowledge about all issues affecting Equity (particularly on the hotly debated question of registration under the IRA) is transmitted to the whole membership rather than just between the Council and the lucky working 7 per cent. *The issues presently facing Equity will be covered in greater detail in future issues of The Red Mole.*

IRISH CITIZEN FORUM: *History of the Irish Working Class* - Peter Beresford Ellis speaks on the subject of his recent book on Friday, 7 July at 8 p.m. in the General Picton, Caledonian Rd. (Kings Cross tube)

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