

workers' ACTION

No. 108

June 17-24, 1978

10p

Socialist Campaign denounces Labour's grim record

THIS WEEK the 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory' is sending out an appeal to Constituency Labour Parties across the country.

"The record of this Labour government is a grim one... In March 1974 the Labour Go-

vernment was elected on a promise in its Manifesto of a major 'shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families'.

"In the last four years it has presided over a 10% cut in workers' real wages; it has used troops to break strikes; it continues to implement racist immigration legislation; it continues a bloody war of aggression in Ireland to sustain the sectarian Six County state; and it presides with astonishing complacency over a 1½ million unemployment queue...

"Tory victory in the General Election will undoubtedly be a defeat for the working class movement. But every uncritical working class vote for Labour on the basis of support for its record and its election programme will be an ideological and political defeat for the working class and for socialism...

Appeal

"We must combine political preparation for a fight-back against right wing Labour leaders with a drive to keep the Tories out".

The appeal sets out a political platform including:

- No wage curbs;
- End unemployment. Cut hours not jobs — share the work with no loss of pay.

- Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem; racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets.

- British troops out of Ireland now.

The initial signatories and 70 Labour Party and trade union activists, including two secretaries of Trades Councils, a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate [Ken Livingstone, Hampstead], four Labour councillors, and numerous trade union branch secretaries [all in their personal capacity]. They call for a conference on 15th July in London open to all those who broadly support the aims and platform of the Campaign, to work out the details of Campaign activity.

★ Contact: Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, Box 127, 182 Upper St, London N1.

Brick Lane rampage shows need to

Build defence squads

150 WHITE YOUTHS went on a racist rampage through the Asian community in Brick Lane, East London, on Sunday 11th June. They charged down the lane throwing bricks, bottles, tin cans and anything else they could lay their hands on.

An eye-witness told Workers' Action that "there had been a steady build-up of white youths that morning. They were gathering outside the Blade Bone [a well-known stomping ground of Mosley's Blackshirts in the 1930s: WA] from 11 in the morning. There were some attacks on Asians earlier in the morning".

All morning there were groups of white youths down the lane hurling racist abuse at passers-by. Then at about 2.15pm they charged down the lane shouting 'Black bastards out'. They nearly all wore NF badges and skinhead haircuts".

ATTACK

As they charged down the lane some of them dispersed into the many side streets; but many who didn't know the area ran into Chick-sand Buildings and got themselves trapped on the second floor surrounded by Asian youths who had come out en masse to defend the area.

The eye witness said: "If it hadn't been for the young Asians they would have all got away. It was the Asians who defended the area against their attack, not the police."

"Somebody had phoned the police and it took them at least 30 minutes to answer the call. Seeing that the police station is only three minutes walk away, it says a lot about their attitude".

When the police did arrive, another eye-witness said, they did "deal roughly with the racists, simply because they had an audience of hundreds of black and white onlookers".

The police arrested 20 youths. Yet only three were actually charged, despite the fact that onlookers could see that all those arrested had been involved.

POLICE

The police in the past have put forward the line that there's not much they can do because people don't report racist violence. On Sunday it was open day for racist violence. It was a deliberate racist attack against the Asian community with



Broken glass in Brick Lane after the racist rampage.

the intention of trying to terrify them into quitting the area. And the police only charged three people.

The police and the courts cannot be relied on to defend the Asian community in Brick Lane, or black communities under attack anywhere in Britain. The Asian youths of Brick Lane showed that the defence of their area was up to them. It must be up to us to organise in the labour movement to give effective aid to their self-defence.



Inside

East London Bengalis: ghettos no, defence squads yes! page 3

How Britain is torturing Ireland page 2

Socialist women's rally page 3

French car workers face up to bosses and police pages 4 and 5

Rudolf Bahro on organising against the bureaucracy in East Germany page 6

ANL demonstration: DEFEND BRICK LANE! 11am, Naz Cinema, Brick Lane Sun. 18th

'SIGN HERE AND YOU CAN GO BACK TO YOUR CELL'

Interrogation at the RUC's Castlereagh centre is brutal and systematic. The recently published **Castlereagh File** by Fr. Denis Faul and Fr. Raymond Murray gives many examples of interrogation over the last three years, using both first hand accounts from the victims and doctors' and relatives' reports on those released.

The Amnesty International report confirms and strengthens their evidence.

The **Castlereagh File** draws out of the many accounts a list of some 20 methods of interrogation regularly used by the RUC. The techniques are varied but they have one common feature: they don't leave too many marks.

There are simple physical attacks such as hair-pulling, punches to the back of the neck, stomach, kidneys and buttocks. Then there are more elaborate methods, such as lifting naked prisoners by placing a stick between their legs, pouring liquid into their ears, placing plastic

bags over their heads, and forcing prisoners to stand in 'stress' positions for long periods or do press-ups to the point of exhaustion.

The more ghoulish approaches include simulated executions by clicking off a gun safety-catch behind prisoners' heads; making them lick up vomit off the floor; and threatening to hand them over to the UVF or threatening their families.

Many prisoners are subjected to the whole variety of these methods.

Sean O'Neill of Kilrea was arrested in October 1976 and interrogated six times in three days. After the second time, "they brought me to the doctor's room... I showed the way they pressurised my fingers. I put my hand to my hair and showed him the handfuls of hair that had been pulled out". At his fifth interrogation, O'Neill said "One pulled out his revolver and pointed it at me — 'I'd love to blow your f...ing head

off'. He kept slapping my face with my hands."

18 year old August Devine, arrested in April 1977, also underwent six interrogation sessions. In one of these an RUC man "got on my back and started riding me like a horse shouting 'gi-di-up' and slapping me. Then they pulled me straight up and made me stand looking at the wall to start counting a row of holes in it.

"I couldn't count them as my eyes started going blurry and watery. They kept screaming into my ears to sign a statement and I could go back to my cell".

The effects of the violence in interrogation can be startling and severe. Liam McColgan from Derry, arrested in February 1977, "was subjected to physical violence, namely hair-pulling, being held violently by the wrists by two officers and the wrists being bent to such an extent that the blood leaked through the pores of my skin."

Another man arrested in the same week and suffering from

heart disease was forced "to do press-ups stretched out on my stomach, and during the press-ups they put their feet on each side of my shoulders so that I couldn't move my head. I felt... an awful sensation going through my body. I went blank. They gave me a heart tablet at this stage. There was a doctor from Bangor there, he gave me a shot in the hand, of morphine."

The mass of documented evidence produced in the **Castlereagh File** and the Amnesty report shows that the use of torture in 'interrogations' is neither accidental nor incidental to the whole set-up of repression in the North East of Ireland.

The beatings inflicted in the Castlereagh barracks are just another one of the blows the Northern Ireland state and its British protectors strike at the nationalist population, in their attempt to defeat its struggle for national self-determination for the whole of Ireland.



TV screens went blank last Thursday as technicians refused to broadcast any alternative programme in place of the scheduled This Week programme suppressed by the Independent Broadcasting Authority. The IBA banned the programme, under pressure from Northern Ireland Secretary Roy Mason, because it dealt with the findings of an Amnesty International report on Ireland [to be published this week] and gave details of individual complaints against the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mason, who has frequently leaned on the IBA and BBC over programmes on Ireland, denied that the government was censoring the TV and said "We did in fact assist the producers of the programme by providing material for it".

Amnesty's 70-page report into 78 cases of suspects 'maltreated' at the Castlereagh RUC interrogation centre in Belfast, and at a number of other centres, certainly shows the British government 'providing material' for an investigation into torture. The report's evidence of individual cases is backed up by medical evidence from no less than 40 doctors, leading the report's authors to demand a public inquiry into Castlereagh.

Many investigations and exposures of torture have already been made, though not as well documented by such a

CASTLEREAGH: THE EVIDENCE IS MOUNTING

'respectable' body as Amnesty. They all show the same thing. For instance, an inquiry in May under French judge E. Bloch concluded that 'About 1,000 people are screened daily in West Belfast and an average 250 interrogated each month. The evidence presented to this tribunal led us to believe that this form of oppression was directed against those politically active in the ghettos' (rather than the "suspected IRA terrorists" spoken of by the BBC news when referring to the **ITV This Week** incident).

A massively documented 200-page report, "The Castlereagh File", has been compiled by Fr. Denis Faul and Fr. Raymond Murray. It contains an enormous number of first hand descriptions of the process by which the police obtain 'confessions'. Such as the evidence of Sean Macken, who was questioned at Castlereagh in May 1977: "All the time they were shouting 'sign a statement you bastard!'... I told them I would sign nothing that wasn't true. My

arm was twisted further. I started to scream I had done nothing. I was pulled to the floor. One held my arms and the other my feet. One produced a small strap 12" long. He began to beat the soles of my feet with it... They kept

shouting 'admit something you bastard'".

Even the Northern Ireland branch of the **Police Surgeons Association** has been worried.



The legal Provisions for torture

TORTURE is just one part of an overall denial of democratic rights in the north of Ireland. That much is made clear in the report by Amnesty International.

What isn't spelt out clearly in the report is that there is a legal framework that builds repression of the nationalist community into the 'Northern Ireland' state. It is a framework that dates back to the passing of the Special Powers Act by the Stormont government in 1922.

That Act gave the police unlimited rights of arrest, allowed for no-jury trials and detention without trial and contained a dragnet clause that made an offence out of "any act of such a nature as to be calculated to be prejudicial to the preservation of the peace" even if it was "not specially provided for in the regulations".

That Act remained in force till 1973, by which time the claim that it was a temporary measure had worn a bit thin. It was replaced by the Emergency Provisions Act.

But the Emergency Provisions Act only altered a few things, abolishing the death sentence for the possession of explosives and extending the right of jury trial to a few minor offences under the Act.

It continued internment without trial, introduced in 1971, giving the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland the power to impose indefinite 'Interim Custody Orders' which under the early workings of the Act could be made into a permanent 'Detention Order' by a government Commissioner sitting in a secret session with no right of appeal.

These powers were used to step up internment in 1973-74 so that by late 1974 there were over 400 internees. In 1975 the Act was slightly amended to aid the running down of internment before its scrapping in December of that year.

Merlyn Rees, the then Secretary of State, was given powers to impose and revoke detention orders which he used to carefully

plan the reduction of internment while stepping up the use of other sections of the Act against Republican activists.

The Act has made that job a simple one. Section 6, widely used by the RUC at Castlereagh, replaces part of the old Special Powers Act that made involuntary confessions inadmissible as evidence in court. The use of such evidence is now permitted in a number of trials.

Together with that, the British government, through the Compton Report, defined its attitude to torture. Though torture or inhuman and degrading treatment cannot be used to extract confessions, the use of 'physical ill-treatment' is apparently something entirely different. The methods exposed by Amnesty are thus a 'legal' and even approved way of ensuring that 80% of all those charged under sections of the Emergency Provisions Act 'confess'.

The RUC at Castlereagh also make use of their powers to arrest

without warrant and detain for up to 72 hours to get 'confessions' before a solicitor can be called. The range of offences they have to choose from is extremely wide, ranging from membership of a "proscribed organisation" (principally the IRA) to simply possessing newspapers or leaflets 'relating to the affairs of or purporting to emanate from a proscribed organisation'.

The ending of internment in fact simply meant covering up internment. Special no-jury courts guarantee that the people who were previously called internees are now labelled as convicted criminals. Political status ('special category') was abolished from March 1st 1976.

Torture in the north of Ireland is just one part of the legal system that acts to prop up the statelet against, and at the expense of, the nationalist community and the Irish working class as a whole.

They held a special meeting last October to discuss RUC interrogation methods, after which one police doctor said: "there is now quite serious concern about some of the things they have been doing recently."

The Amnesty report will be useful in lending added credibility to these reports, and in adding weight to demands for open inquiries. But its approach and conclusions are likely to be of little use in ending the brutalisation of Republican prisoners. The main conclusion is that there should be 'more satisfactory' procedures for complaints against the police, and that solicitors should have better access to clients when they are being questioned.

What Amnesty ignores is that the torture at Castlereagh is part of a whole arsenal of measures under the Emergency Provisions Act, including no-jury trials and exceptionally severe sentences. 80% of all convictions in these courts are obtained by 'confessions' and 94% of cases lead to conviction. (Compared with less than 70% in British criminal courts.)

The inquiry in May showed one of the links between the treatment of 'suspects' and of convicted prisoners, stating that "Confessions extracted in Castlereagh lead to long terms of imprisonment in H-block (at Long Kesh). Many of the men 'on the blanket' (refusing to wear prison uniform to show that they are political prisoners) may be innocent of any crimes. They were convicted on the basis of statements signed under duress."

Amnesty's view that the ill treatment of suspects by the RUC is some kind of unfortunate side effect to an otherwise legitimate judicial and police system is very wide of the mark. The Castlereagh torture and the maltreatment of the 2,000 republican prisoners, denied recognition as political prisoners, is part of a concerted and deliberate attack on the republican population. As is very common when torture is practised systematically, the major aims are to get people locked up without the trouble of a proper trial, and to intimidate a resisting community and deter political activity.

Our stand must be with those fighting to remove the RUC, the British Army, the prison camps and the sectarian state they prop up.

NIK BARSTOW

East End Bengalis say: NO GHETTOS!

WE'LL STAY AND FIGHT

THE FURORE over whether or not Asian families should be housed in separate estates by the Greater London Council raises important questions. Do Asians want to be concentrated into one area or would they prefer to be 'integrated' at least to the extent of living in mixed areas?

The question must be seen as one of what the Asian community wants and needs, not what would best suit the GLC under pressure from and unable to do anything about racist violence.

The 'choice' offered the Asian community is a very limited one. The area proposed as a 'ghetto' is one of the most run-down, miserable districts in London. They are hedged in by the kind of racist attacks seen at Brick Lane, by being forced into low paid jobs, and by the racism of many whites.

But it is the Asians who know better than anybody the reality of these restrictions — what choice there is must be theirs.

The view of a mass meeting of Spitalfields residents, black and white, on June 13th, was overwhelmingly against the GLC plan. The meeting, called by Spitalfields Bengali Action Group, Chicksand Community Action Group, the Bengali Youth Movement and others, was packed out, with 400 inside and another 200 who couldn't get in.

The meeting's mood was summed up by the badges worn by the Bengali youth: "We want to live in a multi-racial society, not a ghetto". A call to the GLC to withdraw its report was carried by the meeting.

The Bengali youth tied the issue to that of self-defence, declaring: "We're going to stay here and fight the NF". The meeting also made calls demanding the press report the racist attacks they have ignored until now, and for the Home Secretary to start an investigation into the attitude of the police in failing to defend the Asian community of the Spitalfields area.

If Asians were to decide

they want 'ghetto' estates as a way of getting 'security in numbers' against racist attacks, then we should support them. But the real defence such a move could provide would still be very limited.

The original Jewish ghettos of nineteenth-century Russia were areas tightly sealed off to the extent that a pass was needed to go in and out, but they were frequently the targets of murderous pogroms encouraged by the state that had sealed off the ghetto areas in the first place. The ghetto, in history, has never been a safe enclave, but a sitting target.

And then what about Asians who would want to or have to move outside the 'ghetto'?

SQUALID

'Ghettos' of a sort exist in Britain already. The Spitalfields area of East London is an example. Here the word 'ghetto' describes the squalid conditions, the appalling houses, the squalid and unswept streets of an area that Asians have been forced into in large numbers by low wages and racist discrimination.

Decent housing and security are paramount for the Asian community. If we lived in a society based on human solidarity, there would be no racist attacks, and adequate housing for all. People could live in decent conditions wherever they chose, and choice would exist in a real sense.

We all know too well that situation doesn't exist. We have to fight to bring it about, and that involves fighting racism wherever it raises its monstrous head. Fighting racism is part of fighting the divisions and backwardness in the working class that have acted to hold it back from reshaping society.

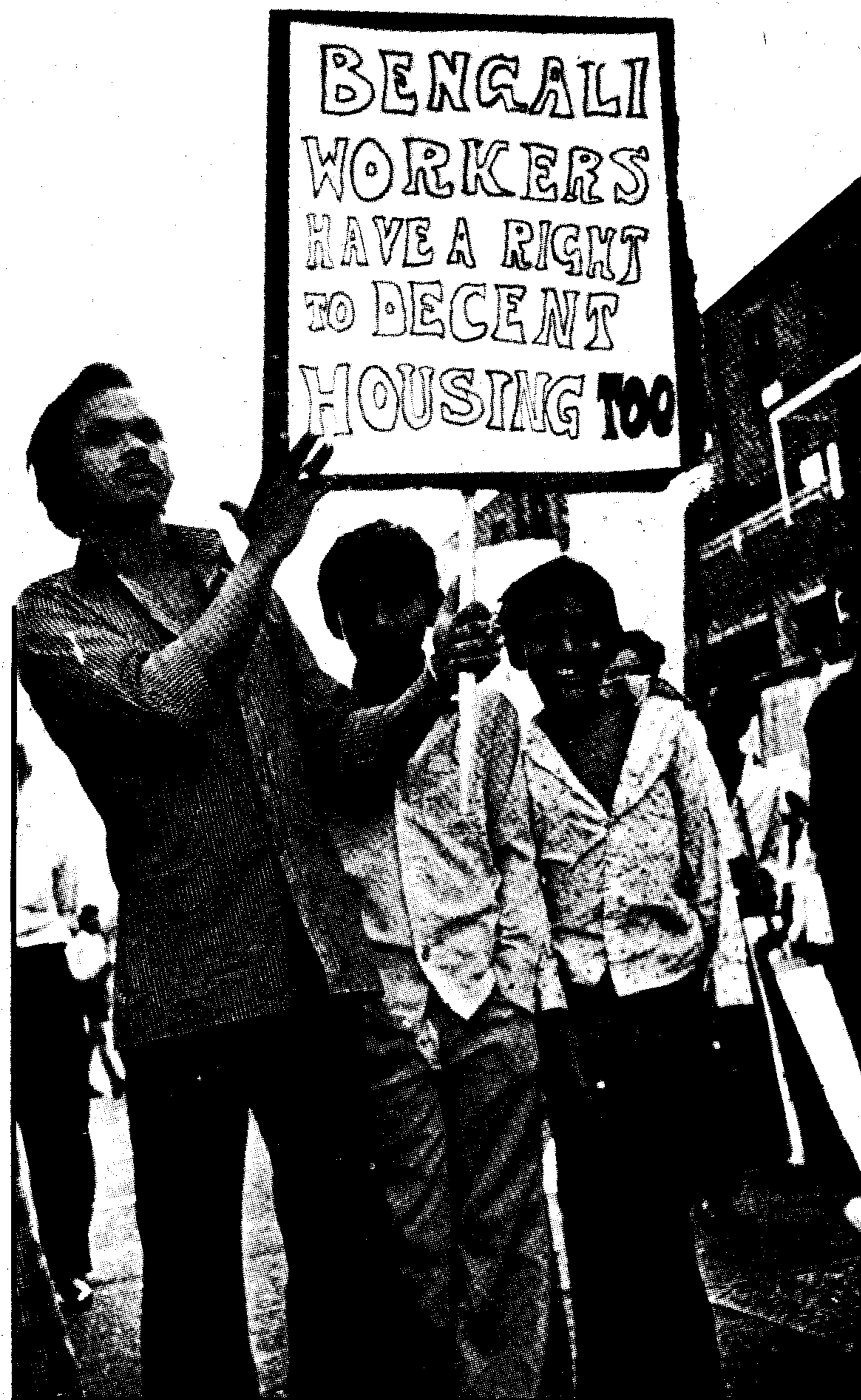
Right now, whether Asians gain the elementary right to live securely in multi-racial conditions depends on the strength of the working class.

The fact that tens of thousands of mostly white working class youth took part in the Anti-Nazi League Carnival does show a potentially strong and lively current opposed to racialism. Whether or not that current is coherent, active, and organised depends on the labour movement. It depends on us.

The GLC's proposal to create separate estates for Asian families is no answer to racist violence. While racialism exists on the present scale no area is 'safe'.

Though racist agitation and violence has increased in this country, it would be pure defeatism to believe it will inevitably continue to do so. Whether it does or not depends on the labour movement: **whether it is prepared to take on the task of building workers' defence squads out of trade union branches and other bodies, to go to the aid of the Asian community's self-defence.** That is the choice that the mainly white labour movement has to make.

FRAN BRODIE



Above, and bottom left: East End Bengalis demonstrating during a housing struggle in 1976.

Women's Voice speaks louder — but only on the day to day issues

A year and a half ago the Socialist Workers' Party's paper, **WOMEN'S VOICE**, went over to magazine format and started concerning itself not only with trade union issues but with the whole range of everyday issues facing women: 'their marriages, their housing problems, their children's education, their orgasms, their rights to maternity leave or lack of it, their unemployment...'

Its circulation has risen from a couple of thousand to 12,000. With the decline of the Working Women's Charter and the inward-looking self-absorption of the socialist-feminist current, **Women's Voice** has become a pole of attraction for many militant socialist women.

Sensing this, **Women's Voice** has declared: "You don't have to be a member of the SWP to join. So long as you agree: we need to fight for women's liberation and we need to fight for socialism. That's all we ask."

Last weekend in Sheffield, **WV** held a rally to try to organise its new support. Over 1,000 women were there. But the rally confirmed that **WV's** approach is still just to report and encourage women's everyday struggles and to rely on its organisational link with the SWP to take the place of broader political perspectives.

There were reports from struggles — the campaigns against closure at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital and the South Oxford Nursery; the strikes at the Bank of England printworks and the Charing Cross hotel — and from local **Women's Voice** groups. The importance of rank and file self-reliance, the limits of the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimin-

ation Act, and the need to fight for better maternity leave, for a 35-hour week, for abortion facilities, and against all job cuts, were discussed.

But **Women's Voice** remains without a political programme. The connection between the day-to-day problems and socialism was neatly solved by reference to the SWP. **Women's Voice** is to deal with women's 'problems' and **Socialist Worker** is for those who really want to fight for socialism.

Is **WV** in favour of fighting unemployment with the demand of work-sharing under workers' control with no loss of pay? Is it for 'positive discrimination'? What does it mean by a socialist women's movement, and is it going to carry out a fight against the feminists in the existing women's movement? There are no answers to any of these questions.

FIGURES

The SWP's interest in women arose only when the circulation figures of **WV** went up and showed that **WV** could pull women into the orbit of the SWP.

The SWP consistently ignored the Working Women's Charter Campaign even in its healthiest days, and voted against the Charter and other motions on women's rights at the Rank and File conferences it sponsored.

A healthy movement can't be built by just focusing on day-to-day issues in the hope that this will attract the maximum number of women. It can only be built by providing political

answers to the oppression that working class women face. And to restrict the political horizons of this women's movement is to downgrade women and their struggles just as capitalism does — though to be fair, the SWP is just as un-political in its other spheres of activity!

DEBATE

A socialist women's movement does need to be built. It could attract the most serious women in the Women's Liberation Movement. However, the organisational control of the SWP over **Women's Voice** will be a political straitjacket on its future development of the movement.

If **Women's Voice** is to be a movement broader than just the SWP's women members, then it should have the right to control its own magazine and decide its own political programme. But it hasn't. The word 'socialist' is used as a synonym for the SWP, and no structure yet exists where political discussion and debate can take place.

PROGRAMME

Where revolutionary socialists can work inside **WV** groups, they will have to argue for a change in the structure of **WV**, and for **WV** to adopt a clear political programme. The obstacle to this is the fact that the SWP does not have a sufficiently stable programme, nor enough education and discipline in its own ranks, for them to allow **Women's Voice** to think for itself.

PAT LONGMAN



THE STRUGGLE at the Renault car plants has been going on now for nearly three weeks. Centred on the plants at Flins, near Paris, and Cléon, near Rouen, it has now spread to affect all Renault's plants to one extent or another.

It is vitally important as the first widespread attempt by the French working class to beat back the newly re-launched offensive by the right wing Giscard-Barre government and the bosses.

The 'social contract' presented by Prime Minister Barre represents a real attack on workers' living standards. It aims to impose severe wage restraint while allowing prices to rise (in France, price controls have long been an integral part of economic policy).

The Renault demands — spearheaded, particularly at Flins, by young immigrant workers — are far in excess of what the bourgeoisie can concede at this moment. They include a 300 francs (about £33) immediate increase for everyone, a 3000 francs minimum monthly wage, a 35 hour week, and improvements in working conditions.

Hostile

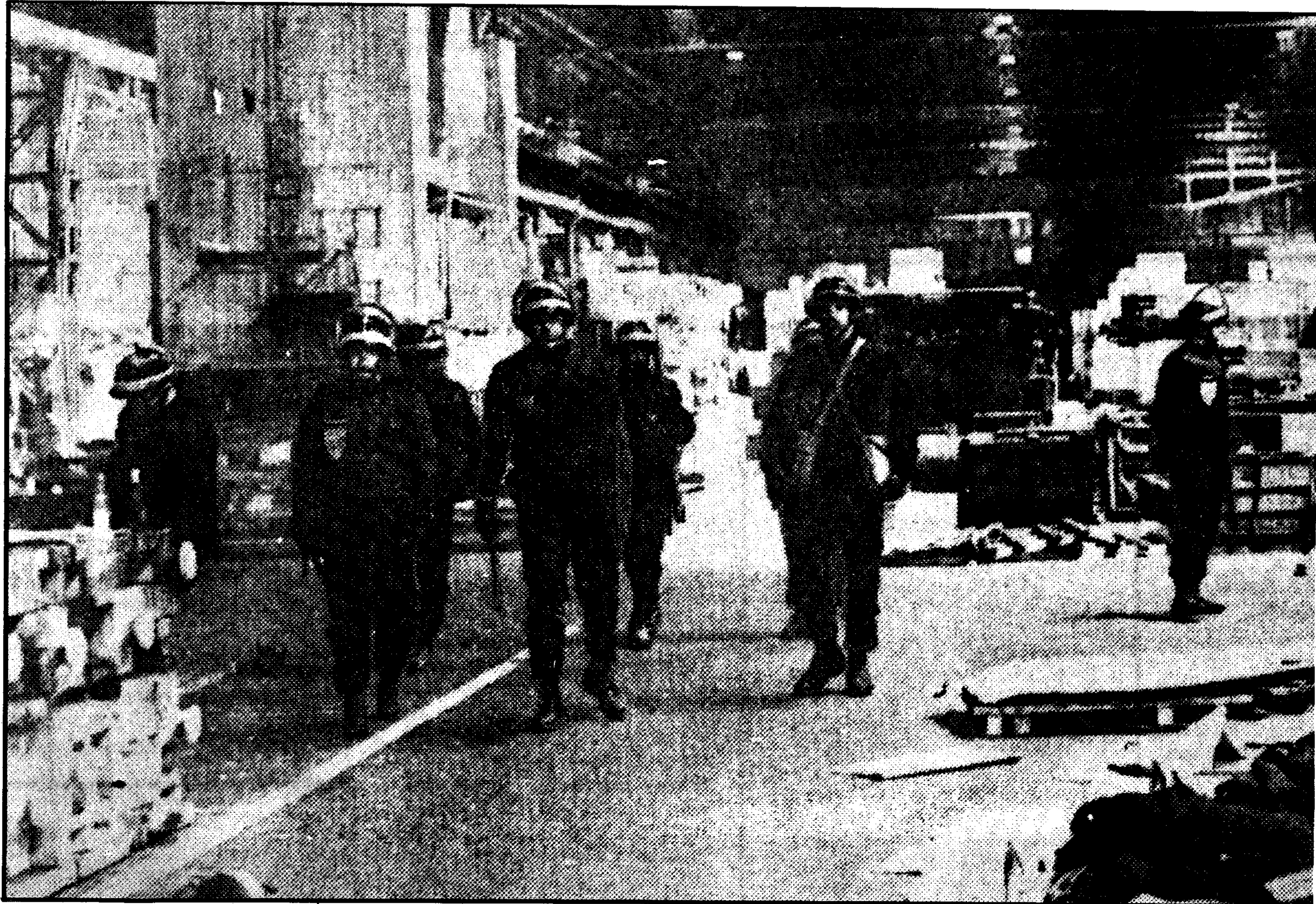
They could set a pattern for other workers. This has been shown by strike movements which have already begun at the Berliet and Saviem truck factories for similar demands, including the 3000 francs minimum. The Renault bosses and the government have relied on the tried and tested tactic of... **repression.**

Police, including armed CRS riot squads, have encircled the plants at Cléon and Flins and 'evacuated' the workers. But they have not managed to cow the workers. The struggle has been extended to other Renault plants, previously unaffected, and there has also been increasingly determined resistance from the Cléon and Flins workers.

At Flins the press shop workers reoccupied as soon as the factory was reopened after their eviction. At Cléon, after the CRS had come in, about one quarter of the workers refused to come in to work, and there was a 2,000 strong demonstration inside the factory of workers shouting slogans like 'CRS out of the factory'. Production was cut to about half its normal level.

The struggle has been mainly a rank and file initiative. The Socialist-aligned

REVOLT AT RENAULT



CFDT has generally been hostile. The Communist Party controlled CGT has vacillated. While making some militant general declarations, it has limited itself in practice to calling two-hour or four-hour stoppages and demonstrations, and putting emphasis on the re-opening of negotiations with management.

Neither union federation has supported the demand which the situation calls for: **an all-out strike of all Renault workers for the demands put forward at Cléon and Flins.**

THEY WENT OUT SINGING THE INTERNATIONALE

THE MOVEMENT at Renault has taken the form of a scattering of relatively small partial strikes. For France, that is not abnormal.

The French unions are much weaker industrially than the British. The rate of unionisation is only about 20% (as against over 40% in Britain) and in the big Renault factories it is only about 15%.

The labour law introduced after World War 2 means the union bureaucrats can 'represent' the workers without needing to recruit many members. The law lays down procedures for electing 'delegates' (roughly like shop stewards) in each workplace. The 'delegates' are elected by all the workers, but only the unions can nominate candidates.

A further weakness is introduced by the fact that the trade

union movement is split on political lines: there are four major union federations (the CGT, led by the CP; the CFDT, which is close to the Socialist Party; FO, the most right wing of the federations; and the FEN, for the teachers).

The result is that the French trade unions rarely give strike pay, and rarely call all-out strikes. Their normal method of action is protest strikes of one day or a few hours.

On the other hand, there is generally a higher level of political awareness in the French working class than in the British. Both at Flins and at Cléon, when the strikers were evacuated by the police, they went out singing the revolutionary song, the **Internationale!** That is something which would be unlikely to happen even in a much bigger and longer strike in Britain!

Riot police against car workers

Friday 26th May. Majority vote, at Cléon, against union recommendations, for indefinite strike to back up wage negotiations.

Monday 29th May. Work resumes normally at Cléon.

Tuesday 30th May. Although the Cléon unions call for a two hour stoppage only, the morning and afternoon shifts remain on strike and the decision is taken to occupy the plant and shut the gates.

Wednesday 31st May. Disturbances begin at the Renault Flins factory, and the production of the R18 model is severely hit. Management threaten a lock-out.

Friday 2nd June. 200 press shop workers at the Douai plant begin strike action over their claim to be classified in the P1 category of skilled worker. This continues throughout the next week.

Saturday-Sunday 3rd-4th June. Immigrant press shop workers occupy Flins plant all weekend. Management declares a lock-out until the following Thursday.

Monday 5th June. Mass meeting at Cléon votes to continue the strike and occupation. The same morning the court in Rouen orders the strikers to quit the works within 48 hours. Failing this the 'forces of order' will be able to enter freely to protect the

'freedom to work'. The news of the court order is greeted with hostility by the Cléon strikers, and they continue the occupation. At Versailles, a similar request for an injunction by Renault management against Flins workers fails. The court refuses to order the immediate evacuation of the plant, but states that in case of disturbance in the factory the CRS will have the right to enter. At Sandouville there are four hour work stoppages in solidarity with the Cléon and Flins workers, called by the CGT and CFDT.

VOTE

Tuesday 6th June. Despite the Versailles court ruling, the management does not wait for an excuse, and calls the CRS into Flins immediately. The plant is evacuated peacefully. But the workers insist on leaving singing the 'Internationale' and carrying their banners. They tell the CRS they can only stop them doing this by opening fire! At Sandouville the unions call an eight hour strike. Over 6,000 workers take part.

Wednesday 7th June. 1200 workers from the morning shift at Sandouville vote to continue the strike for another eight hours. Mass meeting

in the afternoon in the factory car park expresses its solidarity with Cléon and Flins workers and also demands a basic 3000 francs weekly wage and reduction of the working week to 35 hours. A demonstration throughout the plant then takes place, in an attempt to persuade non-striking workers to join the movement. At Billancourt, there is a two-hour work stoppage in the morning and a mass meeting of 3000 workers.

At the Le Mans plant, a four hour strike is held at the call of the CGT and CFDT. At Douai the 200 striking press shop workers stage a demonstration in the town against the police invasion of Flins. The slogan is: 'No CRS at Renault'.

At Cléon that evening, there is a setback for the occupation movement. Three women whose husbands are taking part in the occupation are 'violently dissuaded' from joining the struggle by certain strikers shouting 'A woman's place is in the home', and 'I don't want women to work in my shop!'. This backward attitude to women's involvement reflects in part the fact that at Cléon, out of a workforce of 8,000, only very few are women, and all of these are on the staff side.

FLINS PAS FLICS



Cops in the press shop at Flins after they came in to evict strikers

Workers

Friday 8th June. With the end of the lock-out at Flins, the press shop is reoccupied. Saturday 10th June. The press shop at Flins is still occupied. Cléon is 'evacuated' by the CRS and management announce the normal continuation of work on Sunday. Several hundred armed CRS take part in the operation, and in the face of this massed strength the workers guarding the factory decide to leave. But they do so singing the 'Internationale' and with banners displaying their demands.

SACK

Monday 12th June. Over a quarter of the workforce do not turn up for work at Cléon and the shopfloor functions are only 60% of normal production levels. Demonstration through the plant by two thousand workers demanding withdrawal of the CRS. The slogan was 'We won't work with a gun in our back'. At Flins, the management begins a 'tribunal' to try the workers involved in the struggle, at which union representatives have to be present. The bosses threaten to sack immigrant workers after looking at the files they have compiled on them.

THE RENAULT combine is one of the most important units of the French capitalist economy, directly employing over 100,000 workers. 20,000 are employed at Flins and 8,000 at Cléon. The Flins works and the even bigger Renault plant at Billancourt, near Paris, are among the biggest factories in France.

Renault is also traditionally a stronghold of French working class militancy. It was the focal point of the two major mass strike movements in France since World War Two.

In April 1947 a strike at the Billancourt factory, originally led by Trotskyists, eventually forced

the Communist Party to vote against the coalition government and have its ministers ejected from office. In November 1947 there was another strike wave, involving four million workers.

In May 1968, the Cléon factory was the second plant in the country to occupy spontaneously. It was quickly followed by Flins and Billancourt. Thus the Renault workers played a large role in unleashing the largest general strike in history, in which ten million workers took part.

Renault is still a 'model' in many ways for both the bourgeoisie and the French Communist Party.

It was nationalised after the war, without compensation. Its previous owner, Louis Renault, had been a notorious collaborator during the German occupation. Since then Renault has achieved a spectacular growth in size and efficiency, representing for many the symbol of France's post-war 'economic miracle'.

For the French CP and the trade union federation which it controls, the CGT, Renault is one of its foremost industrial strongholds. In the recent elections for trade union delegates at Billancourt, the CGT gained over 67% of the workers' votes.

AFRICAN WORKERS LEAD THE FIGHT AT FLINS

THE WORKERS leading the struggle in Renault [especially at Flins] have mainly been African immigrants.

Their militancy is a response not only to the government's austerity plans, but also the racist discrimination they face as immigrant workers.

According to an African worker interviewed in the Paris daily *Le Monde*:

"They treat us like labourers. We don't want to remain unskilled workers all our life. We want a chance to advance, to achieve a better job status".

On top of discrimination by the bosses, immigrant workers have to contend with the state's policy towards them. Last year Secretary of State Stolérú announced a new offensive against immigrant workers, by which:

■ The granting of new work permits would be suspended after 1st October, 1977;

■ Immigrant workers no longer had any right to bring their families with them;

Permit

■ Any unemployed immigrant workers would be given two choices: to leave France voluntarily with a grant of 1 million old francs [about £1200], or to be forcibly expelled if they no longer possessed a work permit.

Thus one of the major demands put forward by the Flins workers has been: 'Job security for immigrant workers'.

Many of the young militants have had files compiled on their trade union and political activity by the Renault bosses. And they are mostly confined to the most unhygienic and exhausting work in the plant.

Dramatic speed-ups have occurred since 1968, with the work rate demanded by management increasing from 60 to 180 pieces an hour!

In 1973, when 20 press shop workers struck for demands similar to the ones now being sought, they were sacked on the spot. As one Flins worker put: "Like the French workers, we want security of employment. The Barre plan gives us nothing".

INTERVIEW WITH A CLEON WORKER

'YOU HAVE TO FIGHT, YOU HAVE TO STRIKE'

SPEAKING TO the revolutionary weekly *LUTTE OUVRIÈRE*, a Cléon worker described the beginnings of the movement there.

■ ■ What happened on Friday 26th May?

□ □ More of us than normally turned up for a meeting called by the unions at 8.30 that morning, in front of the restaurant. The meeting was held to back up the negotiations. There was a little speech by the union representatives and then we went on a demonstration through the workshops, for about an hour and a half. At the end of the action, about 1500 of us were gathered outside the management offices.

Go back

The unions told us how good it was that so many had turned up, how they were going to put the demands to management, thanked us, and told us to go back to work.

Everyone began to shout, 'To the offices, everyone to the offices', but the secretary of the CGT tried to tell us we could not all fit inside!

This objection did not seem to worry the blokes much. They were protesting more about being told to return to work than about going into the offices. The point was that they refused to stay out for only the planned two hours. 'It's the same as usual. Going to the offices, negotiating, it's no use. You have to fight, you have to strike'.

Sell out

A vote was taken to continue the stoppage until the next shift change at 2pm, but a guy from the CFDT tried to tell us that the vote did not preclude a delegation from the union and perhaps a few shop floor workers going and putting our demands.

Again, protests from the blokes. 'They're messing us about again. They say they agree to strike action, but then they're back at it with their negotiations'. Even the CGT delegate, who had always toed the line, shouted, 'Sell-out!'

■ ■ And what do you think of all this?

□ □ Throughout the week there had been meetings on the shop floor and the CGT and CFDT kept telling us that we were going to have a two hour stoppage and then a demo-

cratic discussion to see whether the lads were willing to continue the fight. If so, they would be for it.

So when the blokes arrived at the management offices after the march, they were expecting a discussion on prolonging the strike.

Also there were a lot of CGT delegates who were on the side of those who were protesting.

■ ■ And then?

□ □ While we continued to discuss all this, the delegates were telling the lads to return to work. A few left but the others refused.

At 11 o'clock there were about 150 left, but what was missing in the last analysis was an alternative leadership to the unions. At Cléon it is not the first time that there has been an outcry against the unions, but it was the first time there has been such a big and clear opposition to their negotiations and their useless token actions.

Credit

Also, what was interesting was that many of the lads began to talk of what they did in 1968 and what they would have to do in a long strike. They talked about how they could manage it with the credit companies, and how they wouldn't say that they were on strike, but that they were out of work because the factory had closed down and thus could not pay the bills.

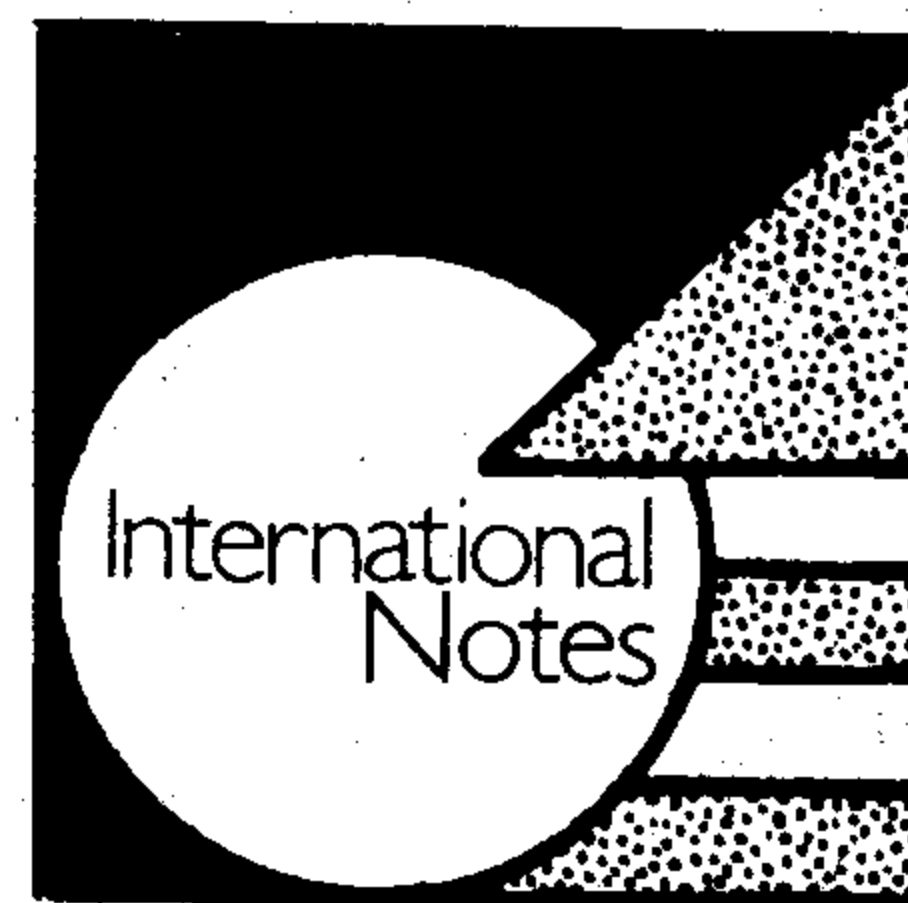
On Tuesday 30th the unions called a new two hour stoppage. Most of the morning shift continued until two o'clock, and when the afternoon shift arrived the strike continued and the lads voted that the factory gates be shut.

On Wednesday the strike movement carried on.

EARLY THIS month, two representatives of the Communist Party-dominated CGT union federation, concerned specifically with Renault trade union matters, visited Argentina.

Roger Sylvain and Alain Stern reported that 23 Argentine Renault workers have been jailed or have 'disappeared' from the Cordoba factory since the March 1976 military coup. After the strike in October 1977, 140 workers were sacked and are still out of work or have been killed by the junta.

For the nine thousand Renault workers in Argentina, wages are on average one third of the French rates, and there are no trade union rights.



PERU

June 18th is election day in Peru. But the 'constituent Assembly' being elected will have no power. Its function is to discuss possible constitution for when (and if) Peru returns to civilian rule in 1980.

The military regime has taken other steps to make sure it is not upset by the election result. There were a series of emergency measures in the second half of May.

All colleges and universities were ordered to close (though 21 universities defied this order). Martial law was decreed, 2,000 people were arrested, and at least 24 were killed in police attacks on protests.

A curfew was imposed, public meetings were banned, and all non-governmental weekly publications were closed down. The election date was postponed from June 4th to June 18th and several left wing candidates were jailed or deported.

On May 30th, Peru's three million strong peasants' organisation, the National Agrarian Federation, was dissolved.

These emergency measures were a response to mass protests against the government's abolition of price subsidies on many basic goods, on May 14th. This led to immediate price rises of 120% for cooking oil, 100% for bread, 40% for milk, and 60% for public transport fares.

The repression did not stop the fightback. The country was paralysed by a general strike on May 22nd-23rd. In Arequipa, Peru's second largest city, the strike lasted had begun on May 16th and went on until the 27th. In Cuzco, too, the strike had begun on the 16th.

In Huancavelica on May 22nd, 4,000 shanty town dwellers overwhelmed a police force of 200 and sacked the public market and stores at the railway station. The town jail and a power station were dynamited. The crowd also destroyed the local headquarters of Sinamos, the government's defunct organ of 'mass mobilisation'.

When it first came to power in October 1968, the Peruvian military regime was considered to be a radical nationalist reforming government. Over recent years, however, its policy has collapsed into economic chaos and any popularity it had with the mass of the Peruvian people has vanished.

Real wages have fallen over 50% since 1975. Only about half the working population are fully employed. Inflation is running at 100% a year and a 5% drop in gross national product is predicted for 1978.

On top of this the government and Peruvian capitalists have an enormous problem of foreign indebtedness.

Jails and bullets will not be able to prop up the military rulers for much longer.

IRAN

THE HEAD of the notorious Iranian secret police force, SAVAK, was sacked on June 6th.

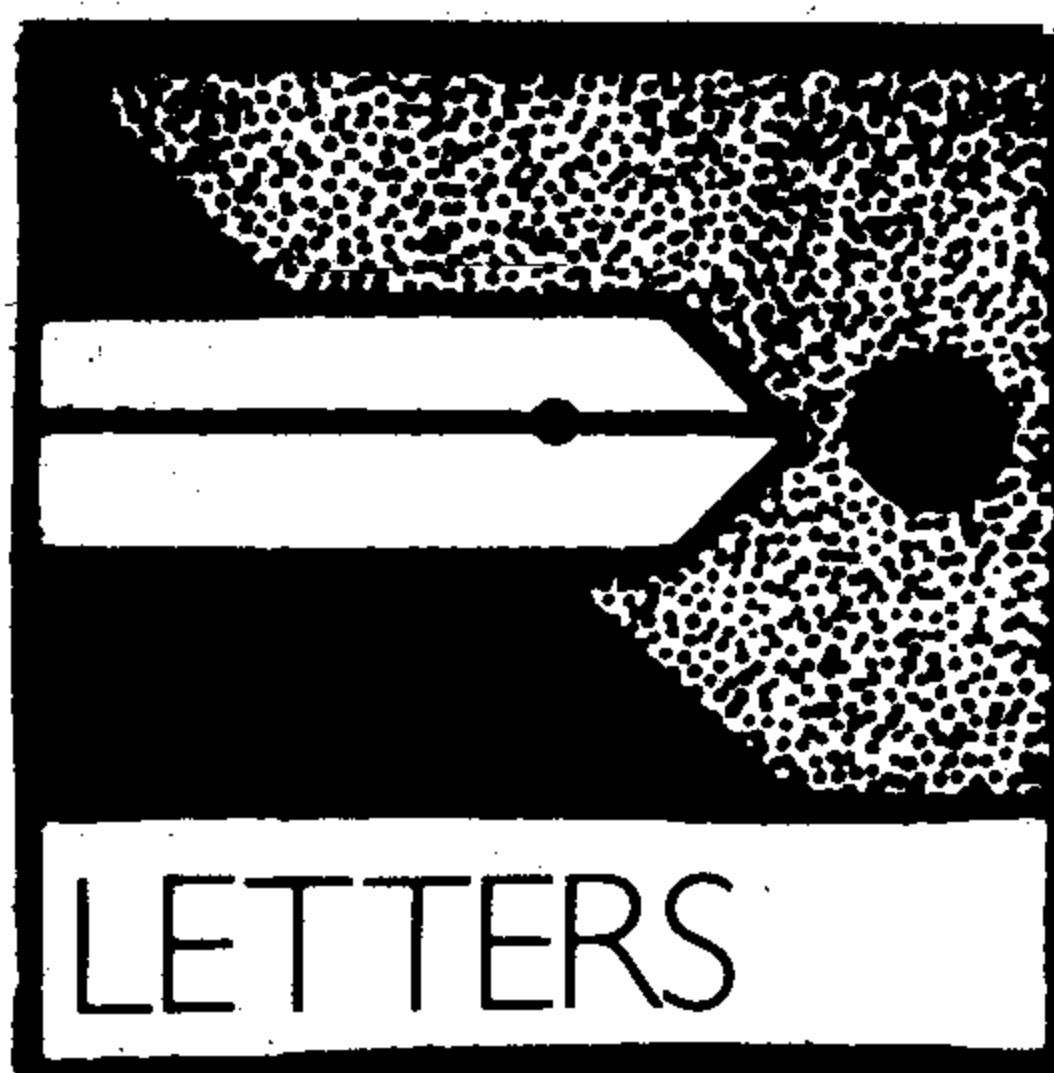
General Nasiri had been head of SAVAK for 15 years, and before then was a leader in the coup which overthrew the previous radical regime and installed the present dictatorship, in 1953. Under pressure from the mounting mass protests against the Shah's regime over the last eight months, he has had to make way for a man with a less evil reputation.

Having failed to stop the protests by its usual method of slaughtering hundreds of demonstrators in the streets, the Shah's dictatorship now seems to be trying the path of concessions.

The protests continue. There was a general strike on 5th June and there have been several clashes between students and police. Action is due to reach a new pitch on Saturday 17th, at the end of the traditional Muslim 40-day mourning period for those killed in the last big round of protests, at the beginning of May.

Iran is one of the world's most brutal dictatorships. It is reckoned to have between 25,000 and 100,000 political prisoners. Half the population subsists on just 17.5% of the country's total consumption of goods and services. The best paid workers earn about £16 a week, with prices at least as high as in Britain, while lower paid workers may get only a quarter as much.

So far the movement against the Shah has been led in large part by the Muslim clergy, and this could limit its scope at a time when the dictatorship is weakening. But if the bitter discontent of the Iranian workers finds an expression in the political demands of the movement, then it can throw out the Shah — and go much further.



Lesser evil or workers' power

Comrades,
In the light of the opportunism of the IMG, SWP et al towards the Anti Nazi League, your articles *The Big Lie of World War Two* will be welcomed by socialists who see the danger of the attitudes that flow from acceptance of the old bourgeois myths.

Quite rightly, attention was given to the argument of the "lesser evil" that always crops up in discussing World War 2 in the labour movement. As opposed to capitulation, the policy of British Trotskyists was described, with approval, thus "willingness to join any real fight against reaction, but complete political independence of the working class, and resolute insistence on workers' power as the only way out from the crises of capitalism. It is the same policy as we need against fascism and racism today."

This is fine as far as it goes, but unfortunately it avoids mention of the thorniest problem of countering the "lesser evil" argument. This concerns the classic Leninist position of 'Revolutionary defeatism'. Could *Workers' Action* clarify its position on this?

Yours in comradeship,
Bruce Groves
Warley, W. Midlands

REPLY: During World War 2, the Trotskyists argued that workers had no interest in the victory of any of the imperialist powers. They should pursue the class struggle without regard to its effect on the fortunes of war.

To British and American workers who wanted to fight Hitler's fascism, the Trotskyists replied: we, too, want to fight fascism. But the best way to do that is to oppose Churchill and Roosevelt and to fraternise with German workers and rank and file soldiers. [French Trotskyists actually produced a clandestine paper for the German occupation forces in France, and encouraged French workers conscripted for the German munitions factories to fraternise with German workers].

The British and American bosses — so the Trotskyists argued — were not fighting against fascism, but to secure their imperialist plunder. As soon as they found it necessary, they too would do what the French bosses did [come to an agreement with the Nazis] or resort to fascism on their own account.

In World War 1, Lenin gave a slightly different meaning to 'revolutionary defeatism'. He argued that the defeat of Russia was a 'lesser evil' than its victory, and that Russian revolutionaries should positively favour Russia's defeat.

Trotsky and others opposed Lenin's view, evidently considering that it was a polemical over-reaction to the nationalist treason of the majority of Socialists. It would seem that Lenin eventually accepted this; in any case, after 1916 his position on the war came much closer to Trotsky's.

The Trotskyist position in Britain and the USA during World War 2 obviously was not the same as Lenin's 1914-16 position: they did not argue that the defeat of Churchill and Roosevelt by Germany would be a lesser evil than their victory. It was nevertheless in line with the position of Trotsky, Lenin and the Bolsheviks after 1916.

NEUROSES?

Comrades,
In the article in last week's *Workers Action* reporting the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism conference, James Ryan clearly and correctly criticised the conduct and politics of the feminists, gay activists and their supporters there.

Such criticism, however, can and

BAHRO—THE OPPOSITION MUST ORGANISE NOW!

BAHRO falls into contradictions on how the demands he outlines should be carried out. On the one hand he says that the carrying through of his proposed initial measures "is only possible after the bureaucracy has been overthrown"; on the other hand he speaks of a step-by-step forcing back of the bureaucracy.

His lack of clarity on the political revolution is connected to the fact that he doesn't precisely define the main agent of the revolution (the working class) and its institutional framework (soviets); concretely, it is connected to the fact that he does not recognise the role of the working class. [...]

With the "falling away" of the bourgeoisie in the non-capitalist countries the category of the working class has lost its sense for Bahro. Instead of this he introduces the concept of the "social aggregate worker" (*1), differentiated by stratification of the work function and levels of consciousness (hierarchy of knowledge)

A two-fold error

In our opinion Bahro commits a two-fold error here. Just as he hasn't correctly recognised the international aspect of the formation of the non-capitalist countries (which he calls "real existing socialism"), he now overlooks the fact that the contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are finally determined on an international level.

The proletariat, the first really international class in world history, does not abolish itself [i.e. class society — WA] 'piecemeal', according to where it has conquered state power against the bourgeoisie. Only to the extent that it defeats the bourgeoisie world-wide and completely destroys the imperialist world system does the proletariat abolish itself as a class. (*2)

Furthermore, Bahro commits the error here of passing directly from the level of categories (i.e. the pair of concepts bourgeoisie-proletariat) to the political level. "In the categories of class structure our non-capitalist order is best interpreted according to its past... After capitalism the concept of the working class loses its operational sense. The proletariat as well as the bourgeoisie loses its specific social-economic identity, so that completely different internal structural criteria must become relevant in the post-revolutionary situation."

But the self-abolition of the proletariat is not determined on the level of categories but by the real social process — under the dictatorship of the proletariat! And this is why, in his

should have been made without using the phrase "preferring endless contemplation of their own neuroses" that appeared in the first part of the article. In the context of what was written, such a phrase could only refer to the petty bourgeois feminists and gay activists criticised later on.

It is not part of *Workers Action's* politics to say that the reaction of women and gays against different forms of sexist oppression represents 'neuroses'. In fact, such an argument most commonly comes from backward elements of the bourgeoisie, who put down the struggle of women and gays in any form as being 'neurotic'.

Presumably comrade Ryan would not label the reaction of women to their treatment at El Vino's wine bar, reported in WA 105, as a product of 'neurosis'?

RUDOLF BAHRO, a member since 1952 of the ruling 'Socialist Unity Party' in East Germany, was imprisoned after his book *Die Alternative* was published in West Germany last year.

The book denounces the bureaucratic, oppressive character of so-called 'real existing socialism' in East Germany and attempts to outline a new Marxist analysis of the Stalinist system. Here we publish the second part of a critical analysis of *Die Alternative* from the West German Trotskyist paper *Spartacus*, translated by Pete Firmin. After dealing with Bahro's view that the

Stalinist structures are determined by the leftovers of the old 'asiatic mode of production', the first part of the review outlined his demands for the ending of bureaucratic privileges, the democratisation of society, the widening of educational opportunities, the reorganisation of work so as to begin to undermine the division of labour, and greater economic equality.

Bahro, however, is sceptical about the central role of the working class and ambiguous on whether a political revolution is necessary to overthrow the bureaucracy. This second part deals with these points.

analysis of "real existing socialism", Bahro has to "re-admit" the working class through the back door, with the concept of the "direct producer".

Bahro's "hierarchy of knowledge" gives forewarning of which forces he primarily sees as the revolutionary subject of his cultural revolution. The intelligentsia in particular is the carrier of that "surplus consciousness", embodiment of the "dammed up forces" from whom the initiative for change will come. "The intellectualised layers of the social aggregate worker will inevitably give the lead for the time being".

However, Bahro himself poses the question "whether with such a pattern of activation anything else can emerge but a new distribution of power in favour of the intellectuals, the scientists and the leaders of the economy."

Decisive

In our opinion the social isolation of the oppositional intellectuals in the GDR is reflected in Bahro's position. A Polish intellectual and oppositional communist would hardly come up with the idea that anyone other than the working class could be the subject of a revolutionary transformation.

True, the intellectuals are at present the driving force in the opposition (probably even in Poland, our 'great hope'); but the decisive battles — 1953 in the GDR, 1956 in Hungary,

1968 in Czechoslovakia, and 1970 in Poland — have shown that at the moment when the working class enters into the struggle, it and nobody else carries the main burden of the struggle. [...]

Workers

However, Bahro's approach is far too honest for the vacillating role of the intelligentsia not to 'show through'. He shows that the intelligentsia is not only the carrier of "surplus consciousness", but is also the base from which the bureaucracy is recruited: "The objective tendency of the state organisation and management of labour is the bureaucratisation of the whole intelligentsia."

Whilst the lower cadres of the (technical) intelligentsia flow over directly into layers of the "direct producers" (ie workers), at the same time there exists the "tendency to the bureaucratisation of the intelligentsia, that is to the incorporation of precisely the same forces into the apparatus from which reforming potential is mainly recruited."

The political split of the intelligentsia in the revolutionary process is founded in this intermediate position: its transition upwards into the ruling bureaucracy and downwards into the working class. [...]

Finally, it should be noted that in strict terms Bahro has no clear political conception of the destruction of the bureaucracy and the carrying out of his

cultural revolution. He hasn't clearly worked out the necessity of an uprising.

On the one hand he says that the creation of definite political conditions is part of the precondition of his cultural revolution, namely "The political bureaucracy must be removed from power, the rule of the apparatus over society eliminated..." On the other hand he believes that the "...continuity of the revolution and the stability of European peace demand that the communists adjust themselves in time to giving it a constructive and gradual form"

A new league of communists

These unclaritys should not be over-stressed. Crucially, Bahro does not hope for self-reform of the bureaucracy, but wants to organise the opposition now in a new league of communists and start the struggle immediately. In that, he goes a decisive step beyond most of the beginnings made by the opposition so far. [...]

NOTES

1) "Social aggregate worker" or "social Worker" (gesellschaftlicher Gesamtarbeiter) is a neo-Marxist term of Bahro's to describe the total of human productive forces, including both mental and manual labour.

The term appears to be borrowed from 'Capital' (Volume 1, Penguin Edition page 1040):

"An ever increasing number of types of labour (Marx explicitly cites engineers, managers, overseers, technologists) are included in the immediate concept of productive labour, and those who perform it are classed as productive workers, workers directly exploited by capital and subordinated to its process of production and expansion. If we consider the aggregate worker, i.e. if we take all the members comprising the workshop together, then we see that their combined activity results materially in an aggregate product which is at the same time a quantity of goods. And here it is quite immaterial whether the job of a particular worker, who is merely a limb of this aggregate worker, is at a greater or smaller distance from the actual manual labour."

However, Bahro seems to use the term differently from Marx. Marx's definition applies specifically to capitalist society. And Marx does not counterpose the concept of 'aggregate worker' to that of working class, or even of 'direct producers', whereas Bahro evidently does.

2) In the Marxist conception, communist society will be classless. In the process of transition from capitalism to communism, therefore, the working class 'abolishes itself' as a class; i.e. as communism develops, everyone comes to engage in productive work, but no-one is a 'worker' as the main content of his or her existence.

Even if only in one phrase in a long article, talk of 'neuroses' is not only reactionary, but can only serve to obscure and divert attention from the correct points made in the main part of the article.

Comradely,
John Bloxam

Public inquiry on death of Brian Maguire

Comrades,
The following resolution was passed at the Annual General Meeting of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions on

Thursday 26th May: "This council calls on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, through its Northern Committee, to hold a public inquiry into the death by hanging of Brian Maguire, AUEW/TASS branch secretary, in Castlereagh interrogation centre. This council also calls on the British TUC to prevail on Mr. Mason to authorise all the relevant duty officers to give evidence at this inquiry without restriction or claim to privilege, and to produce all the relevant documentation for the inquiry."

Pressure

A similar resolution was passed by the Dublin Regional Council of the Labour Party, and a resolution calling for an independent public inquiry was

passed unanimously at the Annual Conference of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union which took place from 30th May to 2nd June.

A petition on the same subject has been signed by several representatives of the labour movement, and was the basis of a delegation to Leinster House (the Irish Parliament building) on Tuesday 24th May.

I would appeal to socialists in Britain to take up the latter part of the above resolution in trade union and Labour Party branches, in order to bring pressure to bear on Mr. Mason from the British labour movement.

Yours fraternally,
Paddy Healy,
Trade Union Campaign against
Repression
46 Bayside Boulevard North,
Dublin 13.

A VOTE TO FIGHT INSIDE THE ANL

OVER the last 12 months the North Staffs Campaign Against Racism and Fascism has organised a number of coaches to national demonstrations, and its mass leafletting has helped to reduce the National Front's vote in a local by-election from 220 two years ago to a derisory 20.

On Saturday 20th May the NORSCARF held its first annual conference. The aim was to adopt a political platform for the Campaign.

The conference passed a resolution presented by Jim Barrow (Chartists) calling for:

- opposition to immigration controls;
- No state bans;
- Mass actions to oppose the fascists;
- Support for black self defence;
- Fascists out of the trade unions;

■ No platform for fascists.

Of the Communist Party members at the conference, half voted for the resolution and half against.

NORSCARF is affiliated to the Anti Nazi League, and the conference resolved that the setting up of a local ANL in competition with NORSCARF would be divisive and harmful.

Workers' Action supporter Paul Cooper praised the positive aspects of the ANL, for example the Carnival, but pointed to the fact that the ANL is dominated by liberals, has no policy on immigration controls, and has shown its unwillingness to oppose the fascists physically.

He called for NORSCARF to fight inside the ANL for a more democratic structure, and for the policies earlier adopted by Conference. This was agreed.

ARTHUR BOUGH

PRINT AGAINST THE NAZIS

PRINTERS and media workers against the Nazis held its inaugural meeting last week [June 7th]. Over 100 people attended to hear leading officials from the National Union of Journalists, the National Graphical Association, and the other print unions, SOGAT AND NATSOPA.

The speakers included SOGAT general secretary Bill Keys, NUJ President Denis McShane, and George Jerrom, a National Executive Committee member of the NGA.

Of all the unions represented the NUJ is the only one where the question of racism and fascism has been taken at all seriously. The NUJ and the NGA now have a joint programme for fighting racism and fascism, which was applauded by all the speakers at the meeting.

An instance was cited of NF print members still freely propagating their views within a chapel in Fleet Street and putting out NF literature. There is a NF committee in Fleet Street which includes a member of every print union.

It was generally agreed that union rules should be used to expel members of the NF and that printworkers should be supported by their unions in refusing to handle racist and fascist material.

A steering committee was elected, but no real action was planned — let alone action sufficient to end the sort of racist press coverage which flourished in 1976 round the 'Malawi Asians' case and laid the basis for the NF's spurt of growth.

CLARE RUSSELL

UCATT CONFERENCE CP SELLS OUT BUILDING WORKERS

The conference of the builders' union UCATT voted last Tuesday, 6th June, to accept the employers' pay offer, as recommended by the Executive.

The large majority on this vote is mainly due to the efforts of the Communist Party, which has held back its own militants in UCATT from taking up a joint fight with those in the T&GWU who are opposed to accepting the pay offer.

In moving the Executive Committee report recommending acceptance, CP member Hugh D'Arcy repeatedly attacked the T&G. "It is opportunist and adventurist to kid our members that they can defeat the Government" he said, and asked "Which union was mainly responsible for the imposition of the Phase One £6 and the Phase Two 5%?" — trying to blacken T&G militants with the record of Jack Jones and the T&G leadership. He ended up with the paranoid complaint: "All the talk of industrial action was an attempt to denigrate UCATT".

The T&G lay delegates for the building section will almost certainly be recalled to reconsider plans for industrial action starting on June 25th. It is likely that the narrow 13-11 majority which rejected their own negotiators' recommendation will be reversed then, as a result of the CP's no-flight advice to its UCATT delegates, and of the UCATT conference vote last week.



THE UNIONS



Meanwhile, however, the real possibilities of rank and file unity between UCATT and T&G militants are well illustrated by the strike against sackings and the lump at Fairweathers, where T&G and UCATT members are together on the picket line.

The picket lines are at East Hill, Wandsworth; Endell Street, Covent Garden, and Queen's Road, Richmond. Messages of support and donations to: D. Williams, 36 St. Alphonsus Road, London SW4. CHEUNG SIU MING

Basnett plans a new social contract

AT THE General and Municipal Workers' Union conference which ended last Thursday (8th), general secretary David Basnett staked his claim to succeed Jack Jones as the chief trade union architect of class compromise.

The union backed Basnett's scheme for an 'economic contract' between the unions and the Labour Government. The idea is the same as the old 'social contract'. The Government is supposed to grant social improvements — or, at least, vague promises of social improvements. In return the unions guarantee to keep down wages.

Top of Basnett's priority list of social reforms is the 35 hour week. As he was explaining how important the 35 hour week is, laggards from the Isle of Grain building site burst into the hall,

displaying posters demanding, "Less of the patter, get on with the matter".

The laggards were sacked recently for imposing a 35 hour week on their job. GMWU officials told them to go back to work pending arbitration. These militants know from their own experience how much trust to place in Basnett's talk!

The gist of Basnett's message was that the unions should at all costs cooperate closely with the Labour Government — and get what crumbs they can out of that. Basnett declared that the GMWU was not a moderate but a "radical left-wing" union. He called for an end to public spending cuts. But beneath every demand there was the condition — 'as long as it causes no trouble to the Labour Government'.

However big a figure Basnett manages to cut in the corridors of the TUC and Whitehall, he will still have to reckon with a growing militant opposition within the GMWU. A motion "opposing all wage restraint in a free market economy" was defeated only by the narrow margin of 204 to 199.



MARCHING FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK

ABOVE: Right to Work marchers with Birmingham trade unionists on the picket line at A.J. Lees, where the National Society of Metal Mechanics are on strike for union recognition.

50 unemployed youth from among the many thousands on Merseyside were marching from Liverpool to London. They got a good reception from trade unionists on the way, particularly at the Shelton Bar steelworks in Stoke on Trent, where they have been fighting redundancies for seven years.

The marchers also joined the picket lines at Windsor Safari Park, and on Monday 12th they staged an all-night vigil outside 10 Downing Street.

There has, however, been little arranged to follow up the march, except visits to Liverpool union branches. The main political group behind the march — the Socialist Workers' Party — sees it more as a twice-yearly event to win recruits than as the start of a serious continuing campaign on unemployment.

FUND DRIVE

for

WORKERS' ACTION

We received £11 for the fund this week, so the total now stands at £1186.80.

Leicester Workers' Action supporters' group has told us they have set themselves the target of collecting £150 by Christmas: so far they have sent in £5 towards that. We hope to be hearing from other local groups in the next few weeks about the targets they have decided on.

A new film on the role of the British Army was introduced at a conference last weekend [10th June] organised by the United Troops Out Movement, and attended by more than 200 people.

The film, Home, Soldier, Home, is based on interviews with ex-soldiers, mostly on experiences in Ireland but also in Aden. The troops' activity against the Glasgow dustmen's strike and the firemen's strike is covered too.

A pamphlet to appear at the end of June — British Soldiers Speak Out on Ireland — was also announced.

**The film 'Home, Soldier, Home' can be booked by writing to: 'Home, Soldier, Home', c/o Information on Ireland, 1 North End Road, London W14. It is a 40-minute black and white 16mm documentary; standard hire charge is £10 plus postage and return.

The pamphlet is available from the same address, price 30p plus 15p p&p, or ten copies for £2.50 plus 50p p&p.

SUNDAY 9 JULY. Demonstration to demand Political Status and Amnesty for Irish Political Prisoners, organised by the Prisoners' Aid Committee. 2.30pm from Speakers' Corner.

WORKERS' ACTION supporters' groups

exist in most major towns. For more information, or to subscribe to Workers' Action, complete this form and send to the address below:

NAME

ADDRESS

- I want more information
- I want to subscribe for 25 issues/50 issues.

Subscription rates: Britain and Ireland, 25 issues £4, 50 issues £7.50. Rest of the world: Surface mail, 25 issues £4.50, 50 issues £8.50; Air mail, 25 issues £6, 50 issues £11. Cheques etc payable to 'Workers Action'.

SEND TO WA, Box 1960, 182 Upper St, London N1.

WORKERS IN ACTION

Leyland toolmakers to stop AUEW dues

LEYLAND toolmakers' one-day unofficial strike last Monday, 12th, brought out over 2,000 toolmakers against a direct appeal by Terry Duffy, AUEW President and executive member for the Midlands, to stay at work.

The strike was over exactly the same issue as the toolmakers' month-long action in February-March last year: the right to separate negotiations for the toolmakers by their own committee, for the restoration of differentials and parity with the highest paid Leyland toolmakers and those in other firms. This means the toolroom workers are asking for a £20 increase from their present average of £73 to the rates paid to Leyland demonstrators.

Despite the toolroom committee's success in getting the majority of toolmakers out, the toolroom committee have been very hesitant in planning further action.

A mass meeting of toolmakers in Birmingham on Monday gave the committee authority to take any action including strike action, but made no preparations for actually calling a strike. Committee leaders have been reported as saying that a strike is unlikely given the changed position in British Leyland.

The meeting's main decision was to call on toolmakers to refuse to pay their dues to the AUEW. Roy Fraser, leader of the unofficial committee, estimated this would cost the union £70,000 in a year. Another 'solution' pushed by the committee was for British Leyland to stop contracting toolroom work abroad. Both policies are divisive and no alternative to real action being organised. Though anger at the union leadership which has sold the toolmakers short is understandable, to turn that anger against foreign engineering workers too is nonsensical.

To stop paying union dues not only cuts off the toolmakers from being able to win support for their fight within the AUEW, it raises the prospect of a disastrous split-off.

The toolmakers' demands for better pay should be supported, and a fight waged to convince the toolmakers that their best chance of success lies in linking their fight to that of other workers in Leyland, and pushing for a claim at least as large and effective in maintaining living standards as the Ford workers' 25%.

NIK BARSTOW

LAST WEEK the press suddenly discovered violence at Ford car factories. It took a foremen's strike, demanding complete management protection in their role as bosses' policemen on the shop floor, for this discovery to be made.

Violence, of course, is not new to Ford or to the motor industry in general. Every day, 65 car workers die at their jobs in the USA, and a large number of workers are maimed, crippled and killed through the industrial diseases, injuries and stresses that are an everyday part of work in a car factory.

From their violent attempts to keep the unions out of their factories and their open support for the fascists in the 1930s, to the continued production of a car they know is a death trap (the Pinto), Ford's massive profit figures have been stained with blood.

Ford's Dagenham plant is no different. Dangerous and noisy working conditions. Repetitive and ever-quickening assembly line work. Continual pressure, and often open intimidation, from foremen and supervisors. According to official figures, Ford UK had 228 accidents for every 10,000 workers in 1974 — nearly double the figure for other car firms.



Ford's profit drive results in a continual battle to screw the maximum out of the workers for the minimum cost in wages and conditions. Last year management wanted to increase the speed of the Cortina line at Dagenham from 45 to 55 cars an hour in one go, with no extra manning! Another 86 spot welds an hour for a typical line worker.

THE PRESS DISCOVER VIOLENCE AT FORDS

Crucial in this battle are the foremen and supervisors. There is one for every 12 workers in Ford UK, certainly more than in the factories of their competitors.

Given that the fundamentally opposed interests of capital and labour are usually directly expressed inside Ford in the conflict between foremen and line workers, it's surprising that there aren't more 'violent incidents' between them than management admit. Their figures show four or five in the whole of 1977.

More significant are the figures indicating the level of workers' collective action against management-imposed discipline. As a 'Sunday Times' article put it, "... discipline was the most emotive issue in Ford [in 1977]... with 2,508,786 man hours and 61,254 vehicles being lost in 208 separate disputes".

Last week's foremen's strike has been coming for a long time. At Easter this year the foremen threatened a strike at Dagenham if management didn't sack a steward, Stan Squires, in the Paint, Trim, and Assembly plant. The steward had been found guilty of a 'technical' assault on a foreman who, according to witnesses, was drunk! He had let go of a form the foreman had tried to grab from him, and the foreman fell down!

After a long and solid strike, management were forced to reinstate Squires. The foremen did not strike.



After that, the foremen were looking for another chance to demand unconditional backing from management. Though the case last week was not particularly clear-cut from their own point of view — management 'completely exonerated' the worker involved — there was an immediate walk-out by foremen in the Body Plant, quickly followed by those in the PTA.

Given that the strike was against them — it was demanding sackings — the shop floor workers were right to keep working. During the week, production was reported at 50% of normal, showing how insane the 'normal' line speed is, and how necessary for the bosses it is to have foremen and supervisors to enforce it.

Although they got support from ASTMS members in some other Ford plants and offices — Daventry, Thurrock, and Warley — the foremen were clearly demoralised by the fact that Dagenham continued to run. Also Bob McCusker, ASTMS assistant general secretary, argued against industrial action. They returned to work last Friday after an agreement between all Dagenham's unions and management to set up plant 'anti-violence committees' to 'find out why the violence occurs' and suggest remedies.

According to reports, the committees will be made up of full time officials from the shop floor unions and the foremen's union, and management.

As the Ford Dagenham Workers' Action bulletin said: "Why do we need these committees? We already know that we work too fast, often in unsafe con-

ditions, for too little pay, with too many supervisors and too much stress. These are the points our full-timers should be making to the company, along with aiding the fight to win improvements. They should get out of committees that will block such a fight, and which show all the signs of becoming company courts very quickly".

JOHN BLOXAM

This claim must be taken to the shop floor

Details now available about the Ford's shop stewards conference on June 4th underline the need to see that the pay claim decided at the conference is discussed and organised for at shop floor level, instead of just being left in the hands of the stewards.

The stewards decided on a claim including a minimum weekly increase of £20, a 35-hour week, and 100% lay-off pay. But they have done nothing to consult or involve the shop floor.

As in 1977, the convenors refused to allow amendments to their resolution at the conference, or even to allow discussion on action for the claim.

They were opposed by some militants who argued for a simpler claim: just £20 rise and a 35-hour week.

This simpler claim would give workers a clear idea of what they will be fighting for, and minimise the dangers of a sell-out engineered by trading off one element of the claim for another.

But the demand for 100% lay-off pay is a vital one, around which Ford workers have shown time and again a willingness to fight. It cannot be dumped just for the sake of simplicity.

In fact last year the sell-out did not come through trading off different elements on the claim. Almost everything but the wage demand was dropped early on. Then the workers were almost forced to accept the deal because they knew that the convenors and officials had done nothing to prepare the struggle that would be necessary in order to improve on it.

The key problem is not the form of the claim but organisation on the shop-floor: shop meetings and plant meetings to discuss the claim and how to fight for it; full accountability to the rank and file at every stage in negotiations.

JOHN BLOXAM

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to *Events*, Box 1960, 182 Upper Street, London N1, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

FRIDAY 16 JUNE. Anti-Apartheid rally on the 2nd anniversary of the Soweto events. 7.30pm at Westminster Central Hall. Adm. 20p.

FRIDAY 16 JUNE. 'Ireland: the tasks of revolutionaries'. Debate between the Spartacist League and Workers' Power. 7.30pm at the Australia Bar, corner of Hurst and Bromsgrove Streets, Birmingham.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 17-18 JUNE. National conference of the Working Women's Charter campaign, at Manchester Poly, Cavendish House, All Saints.

MONDAY 19 JUNE. 'Rail against the Nazis' meeting for all British Rail and Underground workers. 8pm at the 'Roebuck', 108a Tottenham Court Rd (tube: Warren St).

THURSDAY 22 JUNE. Public Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee to Defend Republican News. 7.30pm at the Small Hall, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.

THURSDAY 22 JUNE. Garners support conference. 7.30pm at Transport House, Smith Square. Delegates' credentials from the Strike Committee, c/o TGWU, room 84, 12-13 Henrietta St, London WC2.

FRIDAY 23 JUNE. Spartacist public meeting: the Leninist position on immigration and the national question. Trotskyism against liberal guilt. 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

SATURDAY 24 JUNE. Redbridge Campaign against Racism and Fascism and Newham Anti-Nazi League: March and Rock Concert. Assemble 1pm at Valentine's Park, Ilford, and march to Plashet Park, East Ham.

SATURDAY 8 JULY. Anti-Nazi League conference, at the Porchester Hall, Queensway, London W2. Delegates' credentials £3 from ANL, 12 Little Newport St, London WC2 (01-734 5456).

SATURDAY 15 JULY. Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory conference. 1pm, Essex Road Library, London. Write for details to SCLV, Box 127, 182 Upper St, London N1.

PUBLISHED by Workers' Action, Box 1960, 182 Upper St, London N1, and printed by ANVIL PRESS (T.U.)

BRITISH STEEL SAYS SHELTON MUST CLOSE

ON JUNE 23rd, according to the latest announcement from the British Steel Corporation, steel making will cease at Shelton Bar works, in Stoke on Trent.

The fightback against the closure of Shelton Bar has been going on now for over seven years. The age of the plant marked it out as a victim of rationalisation in BSC's attempt to match up to international competition.

For the workers at Shelton, however, the main issue had to be, not the needs of capitalist competition, but their need to defend their livelihoods.

The Shelton Works Action Committee has been in existence for several years, and has done a lot of work to popularise the workers' opposition to the closure, including helping to produce a film. Unfortunately its arguments were marked by the most craven parochialism. It refused to support the struggle against redundancies at Ebbw Vale, for example,

and when BSC complained that Shelton was losing £12 million a year the committee's only reply was to insist blindly that the works was profitable.

The campaign came to centre not so much on saving jobs as on saving Shelton Bar works itself. So the Committee has called for the present furnaces to be replaced by electric arc furnaces to make the plant more productive, even if that means the workforce will be cut from 1500 to 800!

The methods of struggle have focused on lobbying MPs and other influential and highly placed persons. In the last few months the committee has resorted to negotiating with private companies and individuals to buy the plant from BSC!

This approach is one with a very high regard for production and profits — but hardly any for the jobs that will be lost unless the resistance to closure rapidly takes a different course. C.G.

Drowned because of the cuts

AS WE KNOW, cutbacks in social expenditure under the Labour Government have affected housing, education and health. They have also, according to a report in the *Observer*, increased the number of deaths of young children through drowning.

With the cuts, many schools have been forced to limit the facilities and opportunities for children to learn how to swim. There has been an increase of over 13% in deaths of children through drowning.

In 1976 537 people drowned, mostly not on the coast but in inland waterways. But already thousands of children have missed their chance to learn how to swim.



'Workers Action' sticker: 'No Platform for Fascists; No to immigration controls'. Order from Merseyside Workers' Action supporters' group, c/o 11 Buchanan Rd, Wallasey, Merseyside. 10p per sheet; all proceeds to the Workers' Action fund drive.