

# workers' ACTION

No.87

Jan.21-28, 1978

10p

## VICTIM OF RACISM, BY LAW

AFTER living in Britain for seven years, 22 year old restaurant worker Rupa Ali was arrested when his home was raided by police early one Sunday morning six weeks ago. He was accused of being an illegal immigrant and jailed at Durham.

Six weeks later he is still there. On January 17 the High Court once again adjourned a hearing at which friends of Rupa Ali tried to get him released. Just as on the Friday before, the judge went along with the Home Office's request for yet more time to prove that Mr Ali is here illegally. Apparently 40 days is not enough!

The raid which led to Rupa Ali's arrest also hit another 70 Bangladeshi families in Newcastle. Charging in through front and back doors simultaneously, police seized 24 people and took them off to local police stations. Most were detained right through the day and over the night before being released.

Six were jailed at Durham, all accused of being illegal immigrants. Since then one has been released. The others are still there although there seems to be no proof relating to any of them.

Newcastle Trades Council Secretary Colin Randle, who has been one of the organisers of a campaign to free Rupa Ali, told WA that

### Police terrorise Bangladeshi families in Newcastle

Mr Ali had arrived in Britain seven years ago as a dependent along with four brothers and his mother. They came to join his father who had lived here for 15 years. After living in London Rupa Ali moved to Newcastle.

The Trades Council has already organised a picket outside Durham gaol, and last Thursday its Executive decided to circulate a petition demanding the release of Rupa Ali and an inquiry into the circumstances of the raid.

It is supposed to be a basic civil right in Britain that you can't be imprisoned or punished without a fair hearing. But under the present law there is no such right for many immigrants. 'Illegal immigrants' or even many 'legal' immigrants can be bundled into jail and out of the country without any rights to a proper hearing.

Philip Agee, white, well-off, and well-connected, managed to get major pro-

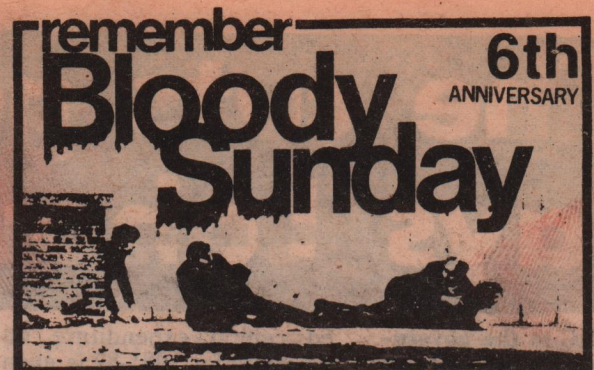
tests against his deportation — but it still went ahead. Without actions like the Trades Council's, Rupa Ali would be almost defenceless.

For what crime do these people forfeit basic civil rights? Just having been born in a different part of the world and perhaps with a different coloured skin.

If legal rights are worth having, they should be rights for everyone. But immigration controls deny that principle. Immigration controls inevitably and inescapably mean discrimination, racism, and democratic rights cut to ribbons. The Immigration Acts are a legal cover for racists — especially police racists — to pursue their hate campaigns against black people.

**End all immigration controls now!**

*Tory spokesman Keith Speed was using the 'blame the immigrants' catch-cry last week. See Editorial, page 3.*



**DEMONSTRATION**  
1.30.p.m. SUNDAY JANUARY 29  
Assemble SHEPHERDS BUSH GREEN. W.12.  
**PUBLIC RALLY**

Bernadette McAliskey Eamonn McCann  
Tony Cliff Tariq Ali

BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND!  
SELF DETERMINATION FOR IRELAND

As steel bosses demand 25,000 sackings

## OPEN THE BOOKS!

MPs are furious about being misled over the steel crisis. 90 of them have signed a Commons motion to force the Industry Minister to hand over 'secret' correspondence to a back-bench committee.

But the cover-ups and deceptions about the British Steel Corporation's losses don't threaten the jobs of MPs. The real victims of business secrecy are the workers. In the steel industry they have alternately been fed with scare stories to try to spur on voluntary redundancies, and optimistic pie-in-the-sky stories whenever it was thought that the truth might produce a militant response.

For example, the 'Sunday Times' admits that the figure of an £8.4 million weekly loss two years ago — even more than the present figure! — "may have been designed to persuade unions to accept job cuts". And BSC chief Sir Charles Villiers, in reply to criticism from the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries, has pointed out that figures have been concealed when it was thought they might spark off a strike.

### PLANS

Yet the Steel Industry is said to be 'publicly owned'. With its select committee and its system of worker-directors, it is held up by some as a model of 'industrial democracy'. But neither parliamentary democracy nor so-called industrial democracy serve the workers' needs.

The workers need an end to business secrecy. Of course, from time to time, workers are told how a company stands... if the boss wants them to accept redundancies, go easy on a wage claim, or increase productivity. But workers need to find out how the industry works, what are the connections between the state and the industry, how are the private sector and former shareholders screwing nationalised industry, what are the bosses' plans...

### ACTION

Knowing these things puts the rank and file in a better position to fight. They need to get the facts themselves, not relying on MPs or even on union leaders, because the people who need the facts are the people whose jobs are at stake and on whom the struggle depends.

Some years ago, in response to the threat to shut down Shelton Bar, Shotton, East Moors, and other steel works, the National Action Committee talked of the possibility of resisting shut-downs through work-ins. All this was idle talk when focused on letters and petitions to MPs.

But it could have been the beginning of a powerful fight-back against closure if it had been accompanied by the struggle to open the books, if each works had set up committees of inspection to gather information and if the different works had pooled their knowledge and coordinated their action.

# The cuts go on, says Labour

ACCORDING to the government's annual expenditure White Paper, published on January 12th, public expenditure should start expanding again in the financial year beginning this April.

Sir Geoffrey Howe and the CBI immediately complained that the projected 2.2% increase was 'overspending'; but what the White Paper really says is that the existing level of cuts in social services will be frozen — at best.

The 2.2% increase planned for 1978-79 is to be followed by even smaller increases in 1979-80 (2%) and 1981-82 (less than 1%). The White Paper expects a 3½% increase in Gross Domestic Product in 1978-79, so the public expenditure share of the GDP will fall still further.

And what happens in the far from unlikely event that GDP doesn't rise 3½%? Then there'll probably be new cuts! So all the White Paper says is that social services won't get much worse — as long as the economy gets much better.

Not enough increase is planned in health expenditure to end NHS queues and rebuild decaying Victorian hospitals; in fact the project-

ed capital expenditure on hospitals for 1981-82 is even less in real terms than in 1976-77. Even if there is economic growth, the cuts in the NHS over the last two years will not be restored.

According to the 'Times', "Public spending on education over the next five years is expected to be sufficient to maintain existing standards but provide little room for improvement". In fact spending on schools will fall in real terms, 'due to decreasing numbers', though there may be some increase in the number of teachers employed.

Spending on Social Security is expected to increase by 6.3% in the next year. However, there will be no real increase in benefits. The increase in spending will be swallowed up by 'demographic factors'.

## NATO

The Labour Government has surrendered to the pressures of the military commanders and NATO by increasing defence expenditure by 3%. "The increase has been greeted with quiet satisfaction at the Ministry of Defence and among the arm-

ed forces", according to the 'Times'; and Dr Luns, Secretary General of NATO, has also welcomed the increase. The White Paper also proposes a further 3% increase in defence spending for 1980-81, which could mean that expenditure on defence will be greater than either education or housing by 1981.

The White Paper shows that public expenditure for the financial year 1977-78 was £2.4 billion (4.2%) below planned levels. Thus in real terms government spending has dropped by 4.75% in 1976-77 and by about 7½% since the peak year of 1975-76.

Even with all the planned increases in this White Paper public spending in real terms will still be below 1975-76 levels in 1980 and "only modest growth is planned for 1980 onwards", as the 'Financial Times' put it. Even if there is 3½% growth in GDP and 2.2% increase in public spending, it will have little effect on unemployment.

The White Paper continues the policy of long-term paring-down of social services.

JOHN COSBY

## Labour MP whitewashes racist judge

"Judge McKinnon isn't a racist... he's been misinterpreted"... a comment not from the Daily Telegraph but from Alex Lyon MP chairman of the 'Labour Party Race Relations Action Group'.

Lyon's comments caused an uproar at the end of the group's AGM on Jan 14th, ending an otherwise low key meeting of only 40 Labour Party members discussing how to campaign on racism in the Labour Party. Given the big impact of the recent Labour broadcast on the NF and the fact that the Labour Party is launching a new anti-racist campaign the meeting was extremely small.

The reason for LPRRAG's small size was obvious from the approach that Lyon, who has dominated the group, put forward. He wanted a quiet, respectable, pressure group

that would advise the Labour government on race and race relations laws instead of campaigning.

This sort of 'Race Relations Industry' approach was challenged at the AGM by Carlton LPYS who proposed a resolution calling for the LPRRAG to campaign actively in the LP and with other campaigns. The YS pushed for a clear campaign policy: no platform for fascists, no to all immigration laws, support black self defence groups and kick open racists out of Labour Party posts.

Eventually the 'Race Relations merchants' responded with an ambiguous half-way house resolution between Lyon's reactionary views that "you can't call for no immigration laws at a time when there are 1½ million unemploy-



McKinnon

ed and falling living standards" and the YS's call for real anti-racist activity.

This resolution calling for an active but un-spelt out anti-racist campaign was carried against the YS resolution by 2-1. All the arguments at the LPRRAG AGM against 'dividing' by being 'too hard on policies' were completely shown up by the way Lyon was elected as chairman and could then stand up and argue against the AGM's unanimous call for throwing out McKinnon and outline his plans for a public whitewash job.

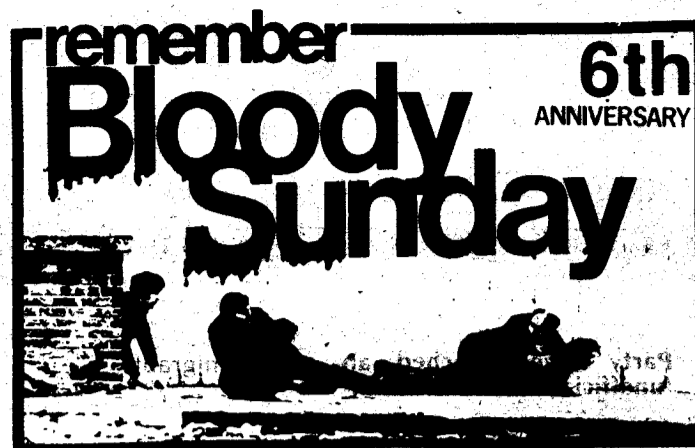
Maureen Colquhoun has been rerieved. Northampton North Labour Party's decision to replace her with a new Labour candidate at the next election has been found invalid by the Organisation Committee of the Labour Party NEC. The full NEC, on 25th January, is almost certain to confirm this ruling.

Despite the fact that the whole six-month battle in Northampton about sacking Colquhoun was closely supervised by Labour regional organiser Les Bridges, the Organisation Committee said that there had been wrong proced-

ure right at the beginning. The original resolution to replace Colquhoun, from Park Ward, had been taken at a ward meeting (on 7th March 1977) without prior notice being given.

Colquhoun as yet has made no comment. But Park Ward, meeting on 9th January, voted 26-0 to restart the procedure with a new motion at the next ward meeting on 6th February.

Some sections of the women's and gay rights movements have campaigned against Colquhoun's sacking,



"I SAW a man and his son crossing the street, trying to get to safety, with their hands on their heads. They were shot dead. The son I think was dying.

"I saw a young fellow who had been wounded, crouching against the wall. He was shouting, 'Don't shoot, don't shoot'. A paratrooper approached and shot him from about one yard. I saw a young boy of 15 protecting his girl friend against the wall and then proceeding to try and rescue her by going out with a handkerchief and with the other hand on his hat. A paratrooper approached, shot him from about one yard into the stomach, and then shot the girl in the arm".

That is a description by an Italian journalist of the events of January 30th, 1972, in Derry, when 13 people were shot down in cold blood by the British Army. They were taking part in a protest organised by the Civil Rights Association against internment, which had been introduced by the Unionist regime at Stormont the previous August.

Right at the end of the demonstration in the Bogside, soldiers of the Parachute Regiment opened fire on the crowd. It was later claimed that they had been fired on first, but even the white-wash Widgery tribunal, set up by the British government, could find no direct evidence of this.

On the contrary, there is evidence that the massacre had been planned some time in advance, in the hope that such direct repression would drive the Nationalist population of the North off the streets.

There they made a complete miscalculation. The reaction to the murders was so intense that within a couple of months the sectarian Stormont regime fell and was replaced by Direct Rule from London. The British Embassy in Dublin was burnt down during a protest demonstration.

Direct Rule did not mean

an end to repression. The British Army and the RUC continue their efforts to cow the minority in the Six Counties. Here are some examples:

■ **Torture.** The British Army was found guilty by the European Court of Human Rights of using torture during the initial phases of internment. There is increasing evidence that similar techniques are still being used in RUC interrogation of suspects at Holyrood Barracks in Belfast.

■ **Murder.** Leo Norney was shot dead on 13th September 1975 while visiting his girlfriend. Although the Ministry of Defence admitted that he was "a totally innocent party", no action was taken against the soldiers responsible.

13-year old Brian Stewart was standing on a street corner in Belfast when soldiers fired on him with rubber bullets, one of which smashed his skull. He died a week later. The Army claimed he had been involved in a riot, but TV crews investigating could find no evidence of a riot.

■ **Undercover work.** The Special Air Services, introduced officially into the Six Counties in January 1976, are believed to have been responsible for a number of assassinations. For example, in April 1976 the SAS took IRA officer Peter Cleary from a house in South Armagh and shot him in cold blood.

Bloody Sunday was not an isolated incident, but one which followed logically from the British presence in Ireland. The artificial Northern Ireland state can only be maintained by constant overt use of force against the Catholic nationalist minority.

We shall be commemorating Bloody Sunday by marching on 29th January.

□ **Self-determination for Ireland as a whole.**

□ **Solidarity with the Republicans and Socialists fighting to drive the British Army out and end partition.**

□ **British troops out of Ireland now!**

saying that it was discrimination against her because she is a lesbian. The Organisation Committee, however, made no comment on this campaign, and many Labour activists in Northampton think the reason for the Committee picking up the technicality about the Park Ward meeting must lie elsewhere.

The original move to sack Colquhoun — before Park Ward's motion — came from Northampton North LPYS. The YS based their case on several statements by Colquhoun, in January last year, which gave open support to

Enoch Powell's racism; and the YS had, and has, always defended Colquhoun against prejudiced attacks on her lesbianism and her stand for women's rights. The YS's original motion was ruled out of order by Bridges.

Last week YS members were saying that when the issue is re-raised they will vote for resolutions to sack Colquhoun only if her support for Powell is explicitly stated as the motive and victimisation of her for her lesbianism is explicitly ruled out.

ROSS CATLIN

## Colquhoun: set for a re-run

# TORIES MAKE A NEW BID FOR RACIST VOTES

IN PREPARATION for elections this year, the Tory Party has launched an unofficial attack on immigrants.

Keith Speed, junior spokesman on Home Affairs, who had been commissioned by William Whitelaw to dig around in the gutters for anti-black ammunition, was due to present his report to the Shadow Cabinet just before Easter. But he has jumped the gun and is already warning that there must be 'an immediate and significant cut in the rate of immigrant entry' to be followed by the end-

ing of any automatic right of entry for 'any category of immigrants'.

No doubt Speed meant 'any category of black immigrants'. He said on TV that white immigrants are a very small proportion — though the facts are the contrary, and Speed must know it.

The Tories' attack is entirely demagogic — but still dangerous. Based on nothing further than a 'sounding of public opinion', it is an attempt to win for the Tories some of the votes that will other-

wise go to the National Front in the May council elections and the next general elections.

In fact, if Speed's proposals were acted on, they could hardly make matters worse for black immigrants than they already are.

Last week the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants revealed that since the leaking by Enoch Powell of the 'Hawley Report' in May 1976, the rate at which applications from Bangladeshi wives and children to join their relatives in Britain have been

refused has risen dramatically — from 10% in the second quarter of 1976 to 39% in the same period of 1977. And the waiting period for first interviews at British consulates has also been rising rapidly.

An all-party Select Committee on Immigration is due to report soon, and they too are going to say that immigration controls should be tightened up.

When Tories, Labour and Liberals all have a go at the blacks, this is called 'taking race out of the political arena' (they play the

same game over Ireland). But this particular game doesn't suit some Tory 'thinkers' who want to take the pickings of racist votes all to themselves.

Labour MP Arthur Latham has denounced the Tories' shoddy piece of electioneering. But the denunciation is worth nothing as long as Labour also carries out a racist policy, different only in minor details.

**Only the scrapping of all immigration controls, and all the discrimination associated with them, would provide a real answer to the Tories' racism.**

THE YEAR began with a flurry of steel protectionism and price rises. In the USA a 'trigger price' mechanism was introduced. The EEC geared up for the introduction of a 'base price' mechanism and cutting steel trade with the Soviet Union.

All these measures were designed to give preference to domestic steel production and cut imports.

From January 1st, British steel prices went up, and it was reported that by the end of the month bilateral agreements would be completed with Japan and the EFTA countries which would severely reduce steel imports from those countries. The US, in its turn, raised the price of domestic steel while at the same time introducing a system to stop steel imports being sold below the cost of Japanese steel, reckoned to be the most efficiently produced steel of the major producing nations.

## Basic

These moves are only the latest in the attempts by the major capitalist countries to deal with the international crisis in the steel industry. The basic problem in the industry has been that the rate of recovery of world trade from the 1975 recession has been very slow, and this has only increased the considerable spare capacity existing in the major countries' steel industries.

Six months ago the New York Times was lamenting, "From Lancashire in Britain through Belgium and the French Lorraine to the German industrial heartland of the Ruhr, Europe's steel makers are now experiencing their worst crisis in living memory". (In fact, by the time that article was written, steel making in Lancashire was only a memory).

Looking ahead, it predicted, "Even if the world economy revives, prospects for the European steel industry may not improve much. There are signs that world demand for steel is no longer growing as fast as it used to. By 1970, per capita steel consumption in the

# Behind the steel crisis

PAUL ADAMS analyses the crisis behind the British Steel furore



Top: BSC chief Charles Villiers; Above: Industry Minister Varley.



industrial countries had climbed to 1,400 pounds a year from only 200 pounds in 1910. But since then it has levelled off, even when economic times were good...

## Japan

"Japan", the article continued, "now has idle plants capable of turning out 30 million tons of steel a year, or nearly a quarter of annual Common Market production. In Europe, the OECD calculates, steel demand would need to grow by 10% for five years to

get the steel industry working at 80% capacity".

In his reply to the accusations being made against him now, the head of the British Steel Corporation, Sir Charles Villiers, gives a good example of how this has worked out in Britain. Repudiating the suggestion that the Corporation had merely followed Treasury figures for industrial growth, he points out that while the Government was predicting an economic growth of 3% the BSC took 2% as a more reasonable figure, but unfortunately actual growth

was less than 1%.

The predicted rise in demand — which, according to previous BSC chief Monty Finniston, would take BSC right back into the black by 1978 — barely took place.

## Trend

On top of the problems arising from the unusually sluggish rate of recovery are other factors. Many third world countries are now producing their own steel and even exporting some. India, South Africa, Brazil, South Korea, and Mexico are

the most notable examples of a growing trend.

And technological changes have forced some countries, including Britain, into building new plant, often on so-called 'greenfield' sites where previously there was no steel plant, without being able to run down or rationalise the older plants.

Thirdly, improvements in aluminium and plastics production have meant that these have displaced steel in some areas.

In addition, the steel industry in Britain is constantly forced to keep operating so as to be able to meet the potential needs of private industry. In part the miscalculations in steel result from misfired predictions elsewhere. But this is a less important problem than the overall world situation.

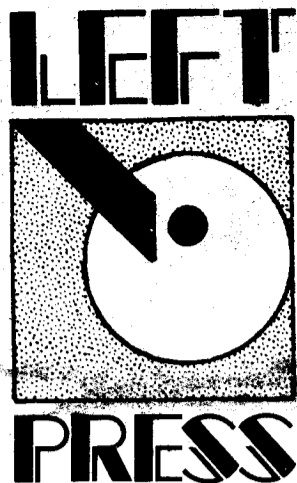
## Drive

So the problems afflicting the British Steel Corporation are not peculiarly 'British'. Those who claim that efficiency needs to be brought into line with that of Japan silently pass over Japan's present record. Most importantly, those who advocate protection as a solution forget that the US, for example, accuses Britain of 'dumping'.

The problem the British and the international steel industry face is of a characteristically capitalist kind. It arises out of the contradiction between the drive to develop production further and further in an unplanned way, and the limitations of the market.

Clearly the current financial position of BSC will mean that the axe will be resharpener and jobs, indeed whole plants, will be hacked away. In addition to the pressure for this from within the Steel Corporation and the Government, there is the pressure from the EEC. Its Industry Commissioner, Vicomte Davignon, and its Commissioner for Competition, M. Vouël, have devised a plan which will probably be finalised soon, to prevent governments paying subsidies unless large-scale rationalisations are agreed to.

# FRENCH LEFT FACES THE POLLS



IN THE municipal elections in France last March, revolutionary candidates gained 5.5% of the votes in 30 cities, and up to 8% or 12% in some of them. The revolutionary left is hoping to make a major impact again in the legislative elections in March this year.

A joint slate — "For Socialism, For Workers' Power" — organised by the LCR, the OCT, and the CCA, will be standing 250 candidates. Lutte Ouvrière will also be standing a large number of candidates.

In the municipal elections LO joined with the LCR and OCT in a joint slate; and its decision to 'go it alone' this time has led to a vigorous debate between LO and the LCR. The debate — in healthy contrast to debates on the revolutionary left in Britain — has been carried out with each group opening the columns of its press and the platforms of its meetings to the other. This week we print extracts from LO's most recent contribution:

IN CONTRAST to the municipal elections of 1977, when LO, LCR and the OCT had a common slate, the "possible coming to power of the Left has become the main thing at stake in the legislative elections of March 1978. Consequently the attitude which we each take on this question has become an essential and decisive political problem.

And on this problem our organisation have a completely different policy...

To dissect this or that pamphlet to prove the opposite is ridiculous. The sentence which you quote is ambiguous, since it seems to say the same thing as you. [The LCR had quoted the following passages from a recently-published LO pamphlet: "We fight for the electoral victory of the Left to take place without illusions... We fight for the working class to send its representatives to government without giving them a blank cheque and for the class to mobilise itself to exercise a necessary control and supervision"]. We freely acknowledge that. Our thinking would be better expressed in the following way: "We fight so that, if the working class sends its representatives to government, this should be without giving them a blank cheque..."

True, in the political platform which you have signed with the OCT and the CCA, the Union of the Left government is described as a bourgeois government. But let us see what the OCT says about it: "We can be pleased", writes L'Étincelle [the OCT's paper] "that the LCR uses the term, bourgeois government of class collaboration, which previously it reserved for publications of limited circulation". But this agreement is itself also for limited circulation, and we shall see what you make of its content in the electoral campaign.

Let us not play with words: you say to the workers today, in substance: certainly their programme is bad and we do not trust these Left politicians of the SP and the CP — but their coming to power will nevertheless be a good thing and an important step forward for the workers. In your comm-

on platform you write, for example, "But for all that this will not be a bourgeois government like any other, for the CP and the SP in power will be obliged, both of them (though in different ways) to take account of the demands of their 'proletarian mandatories'".

For our part, we repeat: the Left government will be a government like any other; as with the Right, the workers will have to fight to gain satisfaction; let us not have any illusion on the Left in power, which will only defend the interests of the bourgeoisie. It is a government which not only will not take account of the demands of the workers, but which will be able to carry out policies which the Right does not even dare, or is not able to, carry out.

In these conditions, in March 1978, voting for your candidates will have a very different meaning from voting for ours... the logical development of these two different policies, under a Left government, could lead to widening the gulf between our two organisations: critical support in your case, resolute opposition in ours...

THE LEFT has not won a general election in France for 20 years. But current opinion polls show that the combined vote of the Communist Party and the Socialist Party is a little over 50%, while the ruling right-wing coalition collects about 45%.

Last March, in the municipal elections, the Left got 52%.

Since then, however, the Union of the Left — an alliance of the CP, the SP, and the small Left Radical Movement — has split apart after arguments about updating their Common Programme. It is still not certain whether they will patch together some unity again for the elections this March. And the Right, too, is in disarray, split between the Gaullists and non-Gaullists.

It is the French electoral system that makes alliances essential: there is a second round unless one candidate gets more than 50% of the votes in the constituency, and parties have to rely on having allies who will transfer votes in their favour on the second round.

The LCR, which claims 7,000 members and organised sympathisers, is the French sister group of the IMG in Britain. The OCT claims about 2,000 members; it is an "unorthodox" Maoist group, whose closest British equivalent is Big Flame. The CCA is a smaller group, whose ideas are those associated with Michel Pablo: close to Trotskyism on some questions, it puts its central emphasis on "workers' self-management" and rejects Bolshevik concepts of organisation.

Lutte Ouvrière is a Trotskyist organisation which sees its major difference with other Trotskyist currents as lying in its tenacious and disciplined concentration on industrial work. It produces over 250 regular fortnightly or weekly factory bulletins.

The other major group on the French revolutionary left, the OCI, also considers itself Trotskyist. Before 1972 it had links with the Socialist Labour League-Workers' Revolutionary Party in Britain. It has announced no plans to stand candidates in the elections, and is campaigning for a CP-SP government.

NEXT WEEK: the LCR's position, and our comments.

THIS LETTER from "a group of workers of a large industrial city in Poland" is translated from the French revolutionary daily 'Rouge', where it appeared on 11th January. The note accompanying the letter in 'Rouge' tells us that it was inspired by reading a letter addressed to the Western revolutionary left by Petr Uhl, an oppositionist in Czechoslovakia who has been hounded by the Czech bureaucracy for forming 'a Trotskyist group' and for supporting Charter 77.

MANY militants and sympathisers of the [Polish] Workers' Defence Committee have explained their position on the question of the social relations and the living conditions of the working class in the countries of the socialist bloc, exposing the contradiction which exists between the socialist ideals and the dismal reality.

Without going into the problems of the history of the workers' movement, without getting involved in high politics, we would like to base our remarks on examples taken from life, examples showing that social justice is a theoretical notion not borne out in the facts.

## PSEUDO

The high functionaries of the party, the pseudo trade union activists, the functionaries of the militia and of the army, the scientists and artists, who benefit to an unlimited extent from material, cultural and social wealth, can speak from experience about social justice, about equal sharing of the national income, and about equal rights. In fact this small minority of society has no idea of the reality of a worker's life, and they just base themselves on supporting the policy of the party and of the State; for they have access to everything.

They have luxury villas, fine cars, holiday houses and comfortable, well-furnished accommodation. They can afford expensive trips abroad, they can afford to buy jewellery and have all the technical aids. For one part of society — only a very small part — price rises and other market regulations have no importance, since their income exceeds their real needs.

We have no daily contact with the members of the State bureaucracy, and so our re-

# A LETTER FROM A WORKER

marks on their way of life are limited to some general observations which are shared by the great majority of workers. We would like, on the other hand, to dwell further on the description of the dismal daily reality for an average citizen (a worker), for we are part of this group.

Imagine the existence of a working-class family of five, in which the father earns 3,000 zlotys a month in a factory and the mother, also a worker, gets 1,600 zlotys.

What can you buy for 4,600 zlotys, when a suit (coat and trousers) for a man costs 2,000 on average, shoes 800, and a shirt 300 zlotys. How can you clothe and feed three children when you know that a kilo of meat costs 70 zlotys?

A lot of workers who keep strict accounts of their spending come to the conclusion that to feed a family of five as economically as is possible costs 100 zlotys a day minimum. If you then deduct rent, gas and electricity bills, hire charges for radio or TV, and fares to work, you have at best 500 zlotys a month left, which is not even enough to buy a pair of shoes. How can you talk about a worker's well-being in these conditions, where 75% of family income, in most cases, is used to buy food, and when industrial goods, 99% of them produced by State enterprises, are incredibly expensive?

For example, you can say that the price of the cheapest television set is equal to two months' income of a working-

class family, and that the smallest car costs 80,000 zlotys, which is equivalent to one and a half years' income of such a family. Is there any sense in any discussion on this subject, if you have to wait eight years to buy a car, putting aside a quarter of your income?

It is often said that food in Poland is very cheap in comparison with prices in Western Europe. That is certainly true, but it seems to us that you cannot measure the standard of living of a working class family by the quantity of food that it buys, given that the Polish worker spends 75% of his income on food, and that he has scarcely enough left to buy a pair of shoes. In general, you can say that the Polish worker works mainly to feed his family. That is the truth for at least 70% of the families in Poland. The situation is better if everyone — children and parents — are working, in that case their monthly income can be more than 10,000 or 12,000 zlotys.

## PROOFS

The most difficult situation is the pensioners', who after years and years of labour get 1,800 to 2,000 zlotys a month. Existence on such an income is difficult to imagine, and shocking when they are taking a well-deserved retirement. We personally know several retired people who vegetate on 1,800 zlotys a month. There is no other word for the life of

# WOMEN

The Nazis raised to the highest pitch the logical trend of every capitalist society which imprisons every man, woman and child within the family. Because of lack of economic independence, every woman and child is enslaved to the man in the family. Until communism creates the conditions for the economic and personal independence of women and children, the family and marriage will continue to inhibit and pervert the natural capacities of humanity.

The Nazi Women's League leader, Scholtz Klink, explained to a Party rally that the woman's role was a supportive one. "Even though our weapon is only the soup ladle, its impact should be as great as that of other weapons". And Hitler explained:

"If we say the world of the man is the state, the world of man is his commitment, his struggle on behalf of the community, we could then perhaps say that the world of the woman is a smaller world. For her world is her husband, her family, her children, and her home.

"But where would the big world be if no-one wanted to look after the smaller world? How could the big world continue to exist if there was no-one to make the task of looking after the small world the centre of their lives?"

"No, the big world rests upon this small world! The big world cannot survive if this small world is not secure".

The usual bourgeois double standard morality applied. German women

should have "athletic grace and cultured intelligence, delicacy of feeling and subtlety of expression". And the women with supposedly delicate feeling also had to be beasts of burden for the war machine, in the home... and in the factory.

Female labour was essential to the fascist economy. In 1933 one third of the working population were women. Women were allowed to work in "feminine" occupations: domestic service, the retail trade, farming, nursing, social welfare and the education of the young.

But the fact that the Nazis claimed a woman's place was in the home made it easier to exploit them at work. Women became more and more vital to the German economy as cheap labour. Although women's wages rose, they earned only two

# R POLISH RS



a pensioner whose total income is 1800 zlotys a month and who spends 40 zlotys a day to feed himself and 500 a month for rent and services.

There is a lot of talk about help for pensioners, backed up by extraordinary examples. That certainly does not affect the great majority of pensioners. It is true that old functionaries of the party or the militia generally get a medal which is worth a 20% supplement to their pension [besides, their pension is equivalent to 100% of their final salary — note by Rouge], so that they get their full salary plus 20%. So the "people's power" [that is what the bureaucracy calls itself — note by Rouge] can say that it guarantees a tranquil retirement for all the workers, but the reality is quite different.

Coming across proofs of terrible social injustice every

day, we ask ourselves, what is the cause? Do the top leaders of the party and the State know the truth, do they have access to accurate information?

## HIDE

It seems to us that the intermediate authorities hide the reality, and only show the positive achievements which tend to show the loyalty of the workers and their consciousness of really being the representatives of the ruling class. We base this remark on the case of commercial, construction, and industrial enterprises, where there is a monstrous organisational confusion and everything is done for show. The representatives of authority are only shown things which tend to show that



the work is well done, and they only get to talk to members of the party who are lined up for it and whose speeches are orchestrated in the smallest details. On the other hand, everything that could testify to the discontent of the workers, their passive and often oppositional attitude, is hidden.

Unfortunately, the truth cannot be told, for those who, in June 1976 at Radom and Ursus, dared say what they thought about the rise in prices, met a speedy and resolute response, as we have learnt from the activity of the Workers' Defence Committee.

People are afraid to tell the truth, they fear for their existence and for those close to them, they prefer to be "living cowards rather than dead heroes". In the present atmosphere in the workplaces,

you say what you think only to friends you can count on, officially you say things which you do not believe at all, things which have nothing to do with the truth.

We do not wish to speak of the trade unions in our country, whose main duty is the defence of the interests of the working class. What can the trade unions do, if their full-time officials are party members and represent in reality the interests of the State apparatus and not those of the workers. The trade

IN 1977 a workers' opposition paper, **ROBOTNIK** ['The Worker'] began to appear in Poland. It was associated with the Workers' Defence Committee, now called Committee for Social Self-Defence.

The first issue reported strikes and struggles to reinstate victimised workers, and attacked government anti-strike laws. The editors say they want it to be a journal in which workers can publish their own independent opinions, exchange experiences, and establish contact with workers from other workplaces.

union activists have made themselves cosy nests and they are getting on fine. They live well off the members' dues, not giving anything in return to the workers. Besides what can they do, if any activity is on orders from the party apparatus, and the party full-time officials also have families and use their position for their own interests.

Thinking about the present social situation, and discussing this question with friends that we can trust, we have come to the conclusion that the present system has not changed at all. Only the privileged people have changed. The place of the old capitalists and big landed proprietors has been taken by high-ranking party members, and on the other hand the worker has remained what he was, with the consciousness that before, he was exploited by capitalists, and now, he is exploited by former comrades who by various paths have risen to occupy high-ranking posts in the leadership of the party and the State.

The examples which we have presented illustrate the reality described in broad terms in Petr Uhl's letter, which bases itself on the social problematic to analyse the situation which exists in Czechoslovakia. In the light of the social conditions which exist in all the Eastern European countries, we completely share Petr Uhl's position.

**Workers' Action does not share the view implied in the letter, that the present system in Poland is simply a new version of capitalism. The economic system of the USSR and the East European states is not based on the private ownership of the means of production, and profit as the driving force of production. Nevertheless, the personal privileges assumed by the bureaucrats in those states are pretty much comparable to those of the capitalist class in the West; and it is those privileges which the Polish workers' letter denounces with justified anger.**

# nder the JACKBOOT

**CONCLUDING her two-part article, Linda Collins shows how the Nazis combined brutal exploitation of women with glorifying the role of women in the family and in the home.**

thirds of men's wages.

Between 1933 and 1938 the proportion of female labour rose from 35% to more than 37%.

Women were supposed to be forbidden to work in certain trades, but the rules were bent more and more as men went off to the war. By 1940 women were "allowed" to drive trams and omnibuses in an emergency. The propaganda of the Nazi machine began to talk of the "beauty of labour", tram-

cleaners were glorified as performing "a physically demanding job". Girls of 18 had to work 12 months as domestic servants for farmers or large families, without pay.

The shortage of labour compelled the Nazis to appeal to women not to take the six weeks off work allowed for new mothers, or the half-hour nursing breaks allowed every day for six months after giving birth. If women would stay in work for the last six weeks of their pregnancy they would be given 100% pay plus 50% 50% sickness benefit, as opposed to 75% pay they would receive if they took the six weeks off.

By January 1939 all women under 25 had to work 12 months' national labour service. Those thought fit only for the church, kitchen

and nursery ("Kinder, Küche, Kirche"), eventually became three-fifths of Germany's war-time labour force. The claim that woman's place was in the home, and at the same time her extreme exploitation, was very similar to the glorification of women and simultaneously their brutal exploitation in Victorian Britain.

Today the National Front preach the same policies as the fascists did in the '30s and '40s. John Tyndall, one of the NF leaders, has said that his doctrine is "Mein Kampf", Hitler's autobiography and political testament.

Tyndall told a Daily Telegraph reporter that women were valuable to the NF because of their "intuitive abilities", but they were not, as a sex, really equipped to lead in politics.

"You might say that it is a reflection upon the abilities of the men in the Conservative Party that their present leader is a woman. I don't see that happening in the National Front for a considerable period of time. My private view, and I would hasten to add that this is not the party line, is that women are of supreme value in the home. As a supportive factor".

Martin Webster, the NF's national activities organiser, has said, "We will put an end to attempts to undermine the family and morality". The National Front, too, would reduce women to breeding machines and rob them of the small gains they have made in the battle for equality.

In Germany, when the workers' movement went down under fascism, the

women's movement went down with it. We should not make the same mistakes as the German Communist Party and Social Democracy did then.

The German CP accused the Social Democrats of being "social fascists", instead of uniting with them to beat the fascists to a pulp. The Social Democrats — in Germany as in other countries — relied on the bourgeois state to deal with the fascists.

The NF are on the offensive, marching through the streets to intimidate black communities, petrol bomb black shops and houses, and insult women. They can be stopped, not by relying on the State, but by mobilising the working class. It is in the interest of all women, and of the working class, to crush the National Front.

# BLACK ISRAEL IN A WHITE BABYLON

REVIEW BY COLIN WAUGH



Leonard E. Barrett, "The Rastafarians: The Dreadlocks of Jamaica". Sangster's Book Stores Ltd in association with Heinemann, 1977. £2.90.  
Joseph Owens, "Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica". Sangster, 1976. £4.00.

RAS is the Amharic word for head, both in the literal sense and in the sense of leader.

Tafari is the family name of Haile Selassie.

In the late 1920s the Jamaican-born black leader Marcus Garvey is said to have told his followers to look to Africa, where a black king would shortly be crowned. Within three years of Selassie's ascent to the Ethiopian throne in 1930, a movement named after him was making headlines in Jamaica.

Most of its members lived in great poverty in shanty towns around Kingston. The central beliefs were that Selassie was god and that blacks must go back to Africa.

Until 1960 Rastas were violently persecuted. In that year, however, the government commissioned a report which commented favourably on their way of life. When Selassie visited Jamaica in 1966 thousands of Rastas came to the airport and the official ceremonies had to be abandoned.

In the last two general elections, Michael Manley's success has been partly due to his use of Rasta images and slogans.



The Jamaican bourgeoisie, which used to regard Rastas as sub-human, semi-criminal fanatics, is now anxious to exploit them as a cultural asset. As Bunny Wailer sings, "Now it's the Black-heart Man children/ Who've become the wonder of the city".

Barrett is a Jamaican lecturer at an American college. The first half of his book is basically a survey of those things in the Jamaican past which he thinks might account for the growth of Rastafari. This is probably the best thing about the book, since it brings together in one place a lot of material about the maroons (runaway slaves who set up an independent state in the hills), about Sam Sharpe's rebellion of 1831, about the Stony Gut rebellion of 1865, about Garvey and about the Pukumina Afro-Christian revival cult.

The rest of the book consists of a factually adequate account of how Rastas live, what they believe and how they relate to Jamaican society.



Rastaman Bob Marley

This is done in a very loose and repetitive way, and is padded out with a lot of sociological jargon (one chapter is called "An Ambivalent Routinisation") which is only there to impress the reader.

What has gone wrong?

On page 65, Barrett says: "... the mantle of Jamaican leadership is today worn ... Michael Manley, whose dedication to the dispossessed and whose dislike of those who sit in the citadels of privilege is well known" — going on to compare Manley to Garvey.

From this point it gets more and more clear that his aim is to describe the Rastas and the earlier opposition movement in such a way as to make it seem that they all lead up to the 'democratic socialism' of the present government.

He therefore says things about Rastafari that are very misleading. For example, on page 226 he says:

"If there is one thing that the Rastafarians have taught Jamaica, it is that one must accept what one has and seek to make the best of it".

In reality, Rastas look on Jamaica as a concentration camp, a place of enforced exile, which is why they use the word Babylon (the place of exile for the Jews in the Old Testament) to refer to the whole structure of Western oppression from the police up. And they have al-

ways demanded that the government repatriate them to Africa ("Zion").

The basic problem is, I think, that the Rastas have worked out a very complex and uncompromising philosophy, which they are able to express very articulately for themselves, in speech, painting and music. The only way an outsider can say something worthwhile about them is if he or she has been moved by their ideas and also has some equally well-organised philosophy that he or she can fit them in to.

Barrett virtually admits that he can't do this, saying, for example (page 197):

"The music of Rastafarians... should soon be the subject of those capable of writing about it; this author is not so endowed".



Owens is a white American Jesuit. He has written the first full-length book in which Rasta ideas are taken seriously in their own terms, as a system of 'reasoning'.

They use this word to refer to long sessions of argument and analysis where events in the news are systematically related to events described in the bible (which they believe is really about blacks), ganja being smoked both as a sacrament and as an aid to concentration.

Although Owens' book does contain some histor-

ical material, it is basically a recreation of his own exposure and partial conversion to Rastafari while he was a social worker in West Kingston from 1970 to 1972.

Every point he makes is backed up by transcriptions of recorded conversations with named Rastas. This method makes it possible for readers to judge for themselves what Rasta thought is all about. In particular, it gives you the chance to decide how far Rastafari is progressive and how far it is reactionary.

For example, most commentators have assumed that the Rastas are straightforward pacifists. Yet Owens quotes one as saying:

"I begs a peace, yet there shall be no peace till Israel (i.e. the blacks) has freedom ... there shall be no peace till the shores of Africa clear of black and white oppressors" (pp. 209-210).

And another:

"Rasta don't fight war. Yet if it come to a war to go home, I-n-I have to war to go home! If it come to a literal fight, I-n-I have to put I-n-I shoulder to the wheel, and fight our way out of Jamaica!" (p.210).

He tells us how:

"... recently I was called to a Catholic primary school where the teachers were disturbed by the refusal of the Rastafarian children to pray in class. But what was of more concern to the teach-

ers... was their prodding interrogation... 'Who is the God that you are praying to?' (p.110).

To Rastas, a god in the sky who you only meet when you're dead is an imperialist con. Owens points out that in Jamaica, "Marriage is relatively infrequent amongst the poor [and] a funeral provides the only real opportunity for communal celebration".

The fact that Rastas "take no part in funeral services and refuse even to say about death" (p. 138) must be seen as a rebellion against this, part of their idea that, "Justice must be done here on this earth and within this age, not in some vague and misty other world" (p. 141).

Does their worship of Selassie conflict with such seemingly rational attitudes? Perhaps not so much as people have thought. For example, Owens quotes a Rasta who says "anything my Father [i.e. Selassie] said, I am qualified to say just as much" (p. 43).

This is mainly a way of saying that anyone who claims special access to god (for example, a priest) is a liar, but it's also tied up with their idea that there can be no god outside human beings.



In a very good section on their special way of talking, Owens tells us how they distinguish between 'Jeesus' (the dead white god of the missionaries) and 'Jessus' (thought to be a previous incarnation of Selassie). They also use the word 'Jeesus' to mean the same as 'Babylon' (in particular, the power of money), whereas they often point out that 'Jessus' sounds the same as the Jamaican pronunciation of the words 'Just us' (p. 107).

Owens' book, then, is valuable for two main reasons. First, it gives us access to the original context of ideas which we normally meet in a transplanted and rather fragmentary form (for example on records). Secondly, it doesn't try to hide how contradictory many of these ideas are.

Everyone who is interested in the relations between religion and politics, in the Third World or anywhere else, should read it.

# GRUNWICKS

## Organise to lobby the TUC

Dear Brothers & Sisters,  
The Grunwick dispute, as we are all well aware, is in grave danger of being lost, thanks mainly to the refusal of APEX and the TUC to mobilise the whole labour movement to win the dispute. We have all been relying on the Strike Committee to call for further action, but, if they do so, then APEX have said they will suspend all the strikers without strike pay. The Strike Committee is therefore understandably disheartened.

It is clear a further initiative must be taken for the dispute to be won. We are confident a mass lobby of the TUC will be supported by many thousands of trade unionists who are disgusted by the TUC's attitude to the strike. Our Support Group (with delegates from the local Trades Council, Labour Party wards and union branches) have written to Brent Trades Council suggesting that they are the body that goes ahead and calls

for the lobby — we suggest that your paper also urges them to do this.

If Brent Trades Council are unable to initiate this call, there is an alternative — the Strike Committee have indicated that, if alternative funds are available, then they themselves will call the mass lobby. A joint appeal from the left press for substantial funds (approx. £10,000) is therefore essential. We urge you to investigate such an appeal as soon as possible to take the pressure off the Strike Committee.

We cannot allow the Grunwick dispute to be lost — thousands of non-organised, non-unionised workers throughout the country will suffer if it is. The Strike Committee have enormous faith in the labour movement — we must show them that this faith is justified.

**KEITH MORGAN**  
Secretary, Cardiff Grunwick Support Group.



## The only way to beat Ward

Dear Comrades,

Being a little bewildered by your reply to our letter in WA 84 ('Unrealistic demagoguery is not what's needed'), we would like to clarify our position and reply to some of the assertions made against our position that the occupation of Grunwick was the next, in fact only, logical step in the fight against George Ward and his mates in the House of Lords.

Your reply that "it is not within the power of the revolutionary left to change that [the setback in the Grunwick dispute] through our own forces" is fair enough, in abstract (although in reality a dangerous centrist formulation). There is obviously no point in a couple of thousand revolutionaries occupying Grunwicks. But this is not what we said. We say that revolutionaries are posed with the problem of attempting to give political leadership, i.e. putting forward ideas, or of liquidating ourselves into a centrist tailing of the working class, like the SWP and IMG whose main preoccupation is cheering on workers in struggle from the sidelines.

We posed the question, "how can we win at Grunwicks?" We have received no answer beyond the endorsement of the strike committee's tactics of seeking mass pickets and blacking. It is now inconceivable that Ward can be beaten by such tactics. The plant is now virtually self-sufficient for electricity and water, and besides he will be financed by NAFF (who in turn will be financed by... ?)

Simple practicalities are posed. Can we hold a mass picket of 20,000 every day of the week? Being hammered by well-equipped SPG thugs seven days a week is no joke, especially given the number of arrests and injuries incurred

on November 7th. Obviously better attended pickets and better stewarding can only improve the situation, but the fact remains Ward will remain inside, warm and cosy, and we will remain outside in the cold.

Ward will continue to control Grunwicks and be able to sell up in the event of a successful blockade, unless we hold the factory. We can do nothing to stop him.

Of course, we do not counterpose occupation to other action, much of which may be necessary to build the solidarity movement, but we must have a strategic aim of the expropriation of Ward. We have attempted to show a way forward out of the present impasse. We have not said 'occupy Grunwicks now' (as you assert). We have said that serious propaganda needs to be made to prepare for occupation. We reject the bald assertion that occupation of Grunwick would be 'insurrectionary action' in abstract, but if it were we should have to accept the logical consequences. When we have to cross swords with the capitalist state we have to make sure of decisive victory.

Accepting your point that the whole capitalist class does not agree with Ward (although they are all 'critically supporting' him). We can find little in your reply to answer our points or to put forward any alternative strategy.

When WA 84 prints a centre page spread on Grunwicks without putting forward any ideas to get out of the morass we need a serious discussion, which your reply scarcely encourages. Unfortunately, comrades, yours is the unrealistic demagoguery, not ours. Let us reiterate: Occupy, Nationalise, Defend the Right to Unionise!

**Peter Hadley, Jack Baker**  
Manchester.

## Reply

"CAN WE hold a mass picket of 20,000 every day of the week?", ask comrades Hadley and Baker. But we do not have the 20,000 people prepared to take action now!

To occupy Grunwicks would probably not be very difficult, even with small forces. But the next day the police, on Ward's request, would arrive to clear the factory. What then?

The occupiers would leave the factory — having gained nothing — or they would resist by force. Machine-gun nests in the packing department...? "When we have to cross swords with the capitalist state

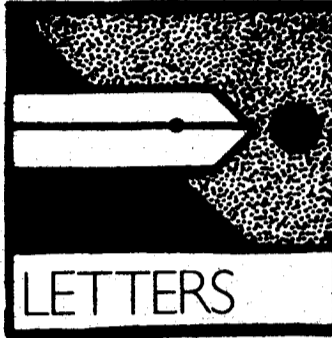
we have to make sure of decisive victory..."

Do comrades Hadley and Baker think that 'putting forward the idea' of occupation would rally major forces (to do what?), thus making the occupation feasible? If so, then why? Unfortunately, there are no grounds for such optimism.

The slogan of occupation is an attempt to jump over the political problem of the isolation of the Grunwick dispute by the trade union bureaucracy. It does not solve that problem. Nothing shows it more clearly than the fact that comrades

Hadley and Baker propose it now — effectively, as a cry of desperation — rather than last June or July, when there were 20,000 on the mass picket.

As for a lobby of the TUC: Workers' Action would support it, whether organised by Brent Trades Council or the Strike Committee. We do not, however, feel able to make the appeal for £10,000 which comrade Morgan proposes. £10,000 is not easily come by in the rank and file of the labour movement — and it should be raised for a cause more substantial than just a single protest lobby.



## Yes, it's a crisis — but WHY?

Dear comrades,

Welcome as the unattributed article in WA 85, 'After the Big Stick, the Very Small Carrot', is, in attempting to refute the onslaught of propaganda that workers are about to reap the rewards of the sacrifices of the past few years, it nevertheless is inadequate and contains serious theoretical errors.

Every capitalist would not doubt agree with the description of the decline, and current rise, of profitability in the international economy. And every socialist would agree that profits are being raised at the expense of attacks on working class living standards. The point is, surely, comrades, to understand the process.

And the article, indeed 'Workers Action' generally (excellent as its politics might be) goes no way towards breaking with bourgeois explanations of the crisis — the sort of explanations reproduced for instance under the guise of 'Marxism' in the article by Bob McKee in the 'Militant' of 9th December where the political conclusion (that the problem with capitalism is the management and not the contradictions inherent in the mode of production itself) flows quite clearly from the paucity of his theoretical 'analysis'.

Similarly the explanation for the crisis implicit in the 'WA' article — that the key to the problem is lack of demand (the quote of B. S. Kellett reproduced uncritic-

ally from the 'Financial Times', and the whole of the second-last paragraph) — can only lead us to comment on the obvious stupidity of the capitalists in opposing higher wages and increases in public expenditure when such measures would increase demand and pull us all out of the recession more rapidly. 'Tribune', where are you?

If we are serious, comrades, about building a revolutionary

tradition within the labour movement, then we must ourselves start to take Marx, and particularly 'Capital', seriously — only by doing this can we make a complete rupture from the hopeless morass of bourgeois theory and at the same time give validity (not just morality!) to our political conclusions.

**RICHARD PAINE**  
Edinburgh Central LPYS.

## Reply

THE general feature of capitalist crises is an excess of production over demand, so that goods cannot be sold, or can be sold only at reduced prices and after long delays. In this capitalism contrasts with previous modes of production, where economic crises were due to such causes as crop failures.

Comrade Paine is right, however, to insist that [relative] lack of demand is not 'the key to the problem'. In the first place, demand is not an independent variable. The capitalists are bound to force down workers' wages, and hence consumer demand, because only that way can they gain the profits which are essential for the dynamic of the system and its recovery from crisis. In the second place, even if the general level of wages should rise relatively high, the inner compulsion of the capitalist mode of production is still to increase production beyond the limits of the market. The root of capitalist crises lies in the mode of production and not just in the level of consumption.

The WA 85 article did not — or did not intend to — imply anything different.

We agree entirely with comrade Paine on the need to study Marx. We hope, however, that comrade Paine will agree that the immediate factors governing the short-term development of capitalist crises can not be read off directly from the basic concepts developed in 'Capital'.

In 'Capital', Marx analyses the inner nature of the capitalist mode of production, as a historically-limited system, torn by inherent contradictions. He shows the extreme complexity of the capitalist economy, within which a breakdown into crisis can originate in many and various ways.

The details fall outside his analysis, and when 'Capital' touches on particular crises [for example, Engels' notes on the crisis of 1847-48; vol.III, p.406-8] quite 'secondary' factors are given prominence.

Thus 'empirical' articles like the one in WA 85 have a role.

## 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: WORKERS' ACTION, 49 Carnac St, London SE27

# WORKERS IN ACTION

## SPEKE BOSSES GO FOR SPEED-UP

Leyland SPEKE — on strike for nine weeks. The previous 5 weeks laid off because of the Lucas strike. Most workers have not been paid since August.

The strike is over management's efforts to reduce manning levels whilst at the same time increasing speed of the line.

Management want to scrap Speke's local agreement to bring the plant in line with the rest of the combine. The clauses in the document relating to manning levels state that they are decided first of all between foreman and operator, then steward and foreman. In case of failure to agree it goes to higher levels. Now management want foremen alone to decide.

This means that in one

paint shop section alone 70 men would be taken off the line. These and other 're-deployed' workers would be used to cover for Speke's high absentee rate or else be put on production of the Lynx model when it is reintroduced. However, Speke workers have strong suspicions that redundancies are also on the cards.

The speed up means in the Trim shop for example an increase from 14½ to 18½ cars per hour. Trim shop workers say 18½ per hour can't be done and say that is why management refuses to call in ACAS. The present 14½ cars per hour rate is difficult enough. In practice the speed is usually 12 per hour and even that is one of the main causes

of Speke's high absenteeism.

Management clearly provoked the dispute. Skinner the new head of the planning department is a former manager of Ford where he was known as the hatchet man. He hoped that the 5 week lay off and the run up to Xmas would be enough to bring a quick victory. Yet despite this and the fact that 500 of the 3000 shop workforce have left the company the strike is solid. A mass meeting 3 weeks into the strike produced a 10 to 1 majority in favour of it.

However the strike is still unofficial. The T&G fear backing it because government would be down on their necks. Despite company disclaimers the closure of Speke plant, is still a possibility with the TR7 doing badly on American market.



Looking for a deal to save the 10% rule: FBU exec. on its way to talks

## Why the firemen lost

THE FIRE Brigades Union recall conference on January 12th voted to end the strike. Although they won some useful concession — the 42 hour week from November and the 2-year pay formula — there can be no doubt that it was a defeat, for the firemen and for all workers, especially in the public sector, going for more than 10% increase.

The firemen returned to work on terms very similar to those they rejected before Christmas.

It was not an easy ride for Rees and Callaghan. The government had promised the insurance companies they could get the strike over in a week. They soon found out how wrong they were!

In most areas the strike was firm from the first day to the last. Areas where FBU membership had been only 50 or 60% came out solid. In some areas part-time firemen joined the strike and in others they donated their retainers to the strike fund. Only in a few districts did they turn out beyond their own areas and help break the strike.

And the fire damage for November — which included the first two weeks of the strike — was over twice the monthly average for the previous year.

The government threw massive resources against the strikers. Every spare soldier who could be found was given four hours' training and sent to fight fires. Some were returned from the Military Detention Barracks, while 5,000 extra American troops were committed to NATO so their

British counterparts could be sent scabbing.

To beat this effort required massive working-class solidarity action. It did not happen. Not because sympathy did not exist, but because it was not organised.

In part that was due to the firemen's own inexperience, lack of self-confidence, and failure to see how vital solidarity action was. But the major responsibility lies with the TUC General Council and its leaders of the miners and local authority manual workers' unions — who all shirked a fight against the 10% rule, despite the expressed will of their own membership.

The firemen's own Executive voted 12-3 before the strike to accept 10%, and during the strike they did almost nothing — except try to witchhunt militants. No regular strike news bulletins were produced.

Militants in the FBU now have three main tasks:

□ to oppose moves to drop out of union membership because of frustration;

□ to stop moves to victimise militants or to penalise firemen for non-cooperation with scabs;

□ and to organise the militants who have learned many lessons from the strike: lessons about the senior officers in the fire service and the habits of 'loyalty to the service'; lessons about the government, the TUC, and their own union's leadership; and lessons about the vital role of solidarity at rank and file level.

SIMON TEMPLE

## 12% claim for teachers, but no fight

Teachers unions met on January 10th to thrash out details of this year's pay claim. A demand for 12½% pay rises came out of this 'constructive and amicable' meeting. Inasmuch as this claim breaches the government's 10% pay limit, and in the wake of NUT general secretary's vote on the TUC to back the firemen, this looks as if the teachers are prepared for a fight. Or does it?

As teachers we are often told that, in periods of wage restraint, strong unions breaking through will mean smaller slices of the cake for weaker unions, like ours. The fact that this is merely a device by the union bureaucrats to hold their members in check is shown by the clause in this year's claim which calls for compensation if other workers get better deals than we do. In this way the bureaucrats hope to gain from strong union action elsewhere without having to show any active solidar-

ity.

The lack of solidarity in the NUT general secretary's 'support' for the firemen is evident in his report back to his union Executive. His vote was motivated 'not by faith in the firemen's campaign or support for their 30% claim', but because he 'did not agree with the TUC's statement that the government was entitled to the same freedom in a collective bargaining situation as the unions themselves.' Is it if the government is allowed to put a financial strait jacket on local government, then the teachers unions have less freedom to negotiate their sectional interests with the local education authorities.

That part of the claim calling for compensation against inflation is truly mind-boggling. No matter what the rate of inflation is at the time of the settlement, the claim only calls for compensation when inflation passes that

rate! So presumably, if inflation is running at 15% in April then it would have to rise to, say 30% before we got anything back, and then we'd only get 5%.

The final paragraph of the NUT says that 'safeguards or redployment' would be sought. This is a scandalous betrayal. With falling school population, there is a golden opportunity to lower class size. But according to Secretary of State for Education, compulsory transfer away from schools with falling rolls 'is going to be one of the major priorities in the coming months'. There should be no transfer but smaller classes. The NUT however has already drawn up a code of practice, accepting transfer as inevitable, instead of fighting to resist it.

Ian Hollingworth

The savage onslaught by the government on education, including the mass closure of teacher training colleges, has resulted in a 38% drop in applicants wanting to train as teachers. The government's low target of 10,000 trainees may well not be reached and there could be a teacher shortage in the 1980's, according to the Polytechnics Council for the education of Teachers.

## 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*, 49 Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

FRIDAY 20 JANUARY. Revolutionary Communist Tendency meeting: Fascism, Racism, and the Labour Movement. Speaker: Frank Richards. 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. Holborn tube. Admission 20p.

SUNDAY 22 JANUARY. Merseyside Workers Action meeting on 'The Labour Government'. Speaker: Dave Spencer (Coventry Trades Council, in personal capacity). 8pm, County Hotel, Islington, Liverpool. [Correction: Due to an error in transmission of this advertisement, it was stated last week in *Events* that Dave Spencer was secretary of Coventry Trades Council. We apologise for this mistake].

WEDNESDAY 25 JANUARY. 'A Woman's Right to Choose': picket of Hackney council in protest against their support for the 'Let Live' anti-abortion organisation. 6.30pm, Town Hall, Mare Street. Called by

Hackney NALGO Action Group.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 28-29 JANUARY. National Socialist-Feminist Conference, in Manchester. Registration/booking fee £2.50. Coach from London leaves Euston 6pm Friday, cost £5; contact Hester Watson, 27 Villa Rd, London SW9. For copies of conference papers: Anne Decker, 232 Mare St, London E8 (254 0597).

SUNDAY 29 JANUARY. Bloody Sunday commemoration march, starts 1.30pm, Shepherds Bush Green.

SATURDAY 11 FEBRUARY. Anti-Apartheid Emergency Action Conference. 10am, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1. Open to delegates from all organisations supporting the aims of the AAM. Further details: AAM, 89 Charlotte St, London W1P 2DQ.

SATURDAY 4 MARCH. Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference. Credentials for trade union delegates 75p from J. Hiles, 137 Wanstead Park Road, Ilford, Essex.

Published by Workers' Action, 49 Carnac St, London SE27. Printed by Azad (TU), 21 York Way, N1. Registered as a newspaper at the GPO.

## NF to try again in Tameside

THE GREATER Manchester borough of Tameside, scene last October of a 'solo march' by National Front leader Martin Webster, has been chosen once again by the fascists as a battle ground with the Left.

An application by the NF to use Hyde Town Hall for a meeting was speedily granted earlier this month by the Tory-dominated town council.

October 8th, 1977, saw the left in great confusion after Home Secretary Merlyn Rees imposed a ban on all demonstrations in Hyde under the Public

Order Act. After many had hailed the ban as a victory, anti-fascists watched helplessly as police chief James Anderton lavished £140,000 on protecting Webster and conniving with the Front to escort their re-routed march through nearby Levenshulme.

Far from stopping the fascists, the five-week ban served only to prevent the left itself from organising. After its expiry on December 31st, the Front are now coming back for more.

North-West TUC Secretary

Collin Barnett, who first called for the ban, also wants to repeat history — he has asked the police to invoke the Public Order Act again; but he has also, through the North-West Committee against Racism, appealed for a massive mobilisation outside the town hall where the Front are due to meet.

Supported also by the Tameside Trades Council, there is to be a mass picket from 6pm on Thursday 26th in Hyde Market Square. This time there must be no reliance on the State — we must do the job ourselves.