



Part of the mass lobby of the UCATT Executive on November 5th. (Photo Workers Press)

Workers' fight

No. 76 Nov. 9th to 16th, 1974
Special Issue — 8 pages
5p

SHOT DOWN IN COLD BLOOD

THE SCOPE of protest actions in the north of Ireland following the shooting of IRA volunteer Hugh Coney has given the lie to Britain's boasts of having smashed the IRA and having "gained the confidence" of the catholic population of the region.

Workers in Belfast gownned tools in several factories in both Belfast and Derry and marched through the towns. In Derry a group of workers stopped outside the Fort George army post for two minutes angry silent protest. In Belfast students left the university and joined demonstrating workers blocking streets in the city centre.



HUGH CONEY

with a number of others from the hellish Long Kesh internment camp. He had been in that place since June 1973 — **over a year, that is, with neither charge nor trial.** His 'offence'? Being **suspected** of IRA 'offences'.

About 35 men escaped from the now ruined camp along a tunnel, but most of them were immediately recaptured. Three are still free.

NO TRIAL

Not one of these men has ever been brought to trial for the 'offences' for which many have served years of internment. Any trial they could get from the British authorities would be no sort of justice anyway; those British authorities have no right to be in Ireland in the first place.

And yet the internees are now being hunted like animals and — if they are to be treated like Hugh Coney — shot down like animals too.

This is the real face of Britain in Ireland. This, and the freezing huddles of prisoners trying to find shelter among the charred ruins of the Maze (Long Kesh) which even the miserable apologists for British imperialism in Ireland, the SDLP, described as "compounds like hen houses two or three feet high". This, and the raids and murders.

But that is for Ireland. If anything remotely like the shooting of Hugh Coney had occurred in the island of Britain, there would have been a massive outcry, a public scandal reverberating for months. It happened in Ireland, as part of Britain's war to keep a grip on Ireland — so it causes very little stir. War is for Ireland, peace is for Britain.

When that war spills over into Britain, through such events as the bombing of a pub in Woolwich, then there is an outcry.

WAR

Any socialist — any person with ordinary human feelings — is sickened by bombs killing innocent people at random in pubs. But that's what war is like. The way to end it is to end the war. And the only real

way out from the war in Ireland is through British troops getting **out, now**, and through the victory of the Republican cause — a united, independent Ireland.

FORGET

As long as the British working class allows the British army to be used against the Irish people, we have no right to condemn the Irish people fighting back, for the right to determine their own future. We have a duty to support them.

People happy to rely on peace in Britain financed by the profits of oppression and violence overseas may hope for the defeat of the IRA, or prefer to try to forget about the whole situation. The Republican people of Ireland cannot forget and will not put up with Britain's oppression in Ireland.

JAILED PICKETS

ALL OUT FOR THE 28th!

JUST as the movement to free Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson was gathering momentum, it was stopped short. No sooner had the building workers of Manchester voted to strike and back up their brothers in Liverpool in their struggle to free the two building workers, re imprisoned after appeal on charges arising from picketing in the national strike of 1972, than the leaders of the Liverpool men told them they were isolated and ought to return to work.

Instead of a rolling strike, a lobby of Parliament is advocated. And no sooner has that been agreed for November 21st than it is postponed another week.

That lobby on November 28th must be turned into a massive one day strike and demonstration. The best demonstration won't be one tenth as effective as a rolling strike movement which could quickly have freed Warren and Tomlinson. But at the very least it can show the judges who jailed the pickets, the building employers who are now rejoicing, and the politicians, Tory and Labour, who solemnly talk about the 'rule of law', that opposition and protest isn't just going to peter out after a few days.

The "National Defence Committee" of officials and MPs has failed completely to do any consistent work for a mobilisation. Let them start now — better late than never. The TUC, which at its last conference pledged to

mobilise all its resources, has done nothing. UCATT, Warren and Tomlinson's union, has been leading the retreat. We must demand of both UCATT and the TUC that they call **everyone out** on November 28th.

But we can't rely on them. That at least is something we should have learnt from the campaign so far.

What we should also have learnt is that the officials of UCATT couldn't have stalled action as they did without the actions of the Communist Party militants who in many areas form a local rank and file leadership among building workers. Not every militant in the C.P. is toeing the line, but the great majority of those who haven't the heart to get on a platform say "Go back" remain silent when someone else does.

INSIDE: Poster to free the pickets - centre pages
Conspiracy Laws - Campaign setback - p.2.

Sick girl gets the full treatment

AFTER the M62 bombing, Judith Ward told the police she had planted the bomb. On investigation it was clear she hadn't.

But still she went on trial, on charges of helping to organise the bombing. Her evidence was confused, contradictory, and nonsensical. Still the trial went on.

As the Provisional IRA have said in a statement, "It is evident... that the English authorities are using a person who obviously needs medical treatment in a manner designed to satisfy the lust for revenge on the part of the British establishment."

The IRA's statement also

points out that: "The Irish Republican Army wish to let it be known that Miss Ward was never a member of our organisation, and was at no time involved in any actions carried out by our organisation."

IMAGE

There was a purpose to his

Ward trial. Judith Ward's rambling, incoherent evidence will be of great value to the state authorities in giving 'incriminating' material against a number of people. And the press reporting of the trial will help to strengthen the lying image of Irish Republicans as mad, motiveless killers.

A hasty retreat in fight to free the Pickets

ON Wednesday November 6th, the front ranks of the movement to free Warren and Tomlinson were forced into a retreat from their decision to strike until the two lads were free.

What the employers, the Government, UCATT officials and probably even Christmas couldn't have done, was achieved by lies and soft soap from leading local Communist Party (CP) members following the Party's 'no strike' line.

Such has been the betrayal — and it really has to be called that — of the

men's hopes of a real struggle at last, that even many CP militants are bitterly angry and disappointed.

The 'front ranks' referred to are the militant building workers in Manchester and Liverpool. On Wednesday morning, November 6th, 3,500 Liverpool were on strike, leaving 20 sites idle. It wasn't a token strike either, but what the men hoped would be the spur to all-out strike action by other workers in the city. And 1,400 came to a mass meeting to hear a report back from the lobby of the UCATT Executive in London the day before.

At this meeting Bill Jones and Alan Abrams, previously strong advocates of continuing strike action, didn't speak. Instead another Party man, Bro. Marsh, spoke, telling the men that they were completely isolated in Merseyside

and that no other such actions were taking place; and further, that as there had been a decision by UCATT to ask the TUC to do something and to hold a lobby of Parliament, and there was talk of an emergency resolution to the Labour Party Conference, the matter was now 'being dealt with higher up', and they may as well go back to work. The Chairman of the meeting even stated that there would be "no more unofficial action"!

AGREED

With this message of despondency and complacency delivered, in the name of the 90 shop stewards who had met earlier in the morning (only a majority of whom had agreed, the others favouring continued stoppages) the meeting voted to return to work the next day and 'work for a one-day strike of all Merseyside

workers on November 21st'. A meeting of all Merseyside stewards would be called on November 14th.

This vote, which has effectively scuppered the whole attempt to get a mass strike movement off the ground, was based on a blatant lie. For Merseyside was not isolated.

INDEFINITE

The very day before — and many Liverpool stewards knew this — a meeting of 200 men representing 2,000 men from 12 striking Manchester sites, had decided that they would begin an indefinite stoppage the following Monday. Although they hoped for a call from the special meeting sponsored by Manchester and Salford Trades Council on Friday (8th), for other local strikes, they resolved that even without such a call they would come out, to

spread the message "Two trade unionists are inside — why aren't you out?"

This courageous decision is the sort of thing that's needed all over the country and in every industry if we are to get the 2 lads out of jail. Ian Heyes, site convenor of Pochins Manchester Poly site, who had worked since the failure of the Appeal for such a response, told Workers Fight "On Tuesday night, we felt on top of the world, as if we'd just climbed up Everest."

ROLLING

But on Wednesday came the let-down, as Liverpool abandoned the field, pouring an avalanche of icy water on Manchester's efforts, and leaving them with no option but to follow suit.

So now instead of a rolling strike movement, involving more and more people and appealing for solidarity, it's back to the tired old business so

favoured of the Communist Party, of going back and working for a later date. Always later, except when it has come and gone...

Instead of using rank and file action to force the union leaders into official action, the CP's sluggishness reverses this, using promises of official action even 'action' as pathetic as a lobby of Parliament to put a stop to unofficial action.

And instead of urging solidarity to spread the action, giving encouragement by pointing to others who are out there holding the front line, the CP has done the opposite, lying to Liverpool about its isolation and thus letting Manchester down flat, and beating a complete retreat.

Such a retreat will not build anything, but can only demoralise those ready to fight, let the trade union leaders off the hook, and put new heart into the enemies of the working class movement.

Harold Youd, Manchester dockers' shop steward, speaking to building workers on Friday November 1st, as they planned a further strike for the following Tuesday.

On Bro. Youd's right is Ian Heyes, site convenor at Pochins Manchester Poly site, who urged strike action "until the pickets are free".



SONG OF THE FLYING PICKET

It was in the year of seventy two, the miners' strike was done, and the dockers just released from gaol, another victory won. When a claim for shorter hours and better pay was being made On the part of those construction men who work in the building trade.

Chorus:

So it's out you go, on the road, Jack,
Whether morning noon or night,
From Stoke to London, Wales to Brum,
Get 'em out on every site!

Said the union leaders, 'Cool it lads, just leave it up to us,
We've always seen you right before, and the gov'nors want no fuss.'
But the lads had seen through them alright, knew they were hand in glove
With governments, employers and with all the powers above.

From day to day the struggle spread, but still it would not do
'Lump' labour sites were working and supplies were getting through.
Said the local strike committee, 'We'll pull out all the stops,
We'll pull out all the blacklegs and we'll pull out all the cops!'

So up and down the country drove many a gallant band,
The young 'uns and the old 'uns, strong of purpose, firm of hand,
From underneath a trailer, in a trench or up a crane
The flying pickets put their case, and then drove on again.

The tide began to turn at last, the 'Lumpers' organised,
With their support the industry was damn near paralysed.
Though bosses ain't benevolent and don't give owt for nowt,
Just like a shot they give the lot when the flying picket's out!

By the 'Combine' group

CONSPIRACY!

WHETHER Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson were jailed under a good law or a bad law, after a fair trial or a farcical one, and whether according to law or according to fact they are 'guilty' or not, we would still be fighting for their immediate release. It isn't a matter of a great deal of concern to workers whether the law

Star Chamber

Conspiracy as a crime first appeared in English law in 1304, but the political potential of the conspiracy charge was "emphasised by the Star Chamber, which recognised its possibilities as an engine of government ... Before its abolition in 1641, the Star Chamber had established that the essence of the crime of conspiracy is the actual agreement. ... Moreover, conspiracy was ... extended to agreement to commit all crimes, however trivial.

The conspiracy law is a bitter but tenacious legacy of Star Chamber methods. ... It authorises trial and imprisonment of critics of conventional authority and value systems.

The sudden revival of "conspiracy to intimidate" charges is widely attributed to a political policy decision to put down working class protest of the 'flying picket' variety which erupted during the building workers' strike in 1972.

Scapegoats

The conspiracy device is ideal for scapegoat prosecutions ... to convict scapegoats representing a mass movement.

Every trivial offence punishable by a small fine in magistrates' courts can be elevated ... into a crime of the utmost seriousness by using the conspiracy device. Suddenly the penalty is increased from some statutory maximum authorised by Parliament — perhaps a fine, or a short jail sentence — into an offence carrying a maximum punishment of life imprisonment. ... It is this power to jail those whose activities conflict with 'public interest' as divined by judges which makes conspiracy such an effective "dragnet for compassing the imprisonment ... of men whom the ruling class does not like".

The 'real merit' of this law lies in its unique ability for manipulation by the government of the day to ensnare persons whose conduct is inconvenient but not illegal...

Police weapon

It is now a frequent practice for prosecutors to charge both a conspiracy and a substantive count, and to bargain with the defendant by offering to drop the more serious count (conspiracy) if he will plead guilty to the lesser offence. This "plea bargaining" can, so the leading American study warns, "create pressures than can prove too great for even the innocent to resist."

that clobbers them is made up by a few upper class judges, or by 300 MPs toeing the party line.

One way or another, most of the laws in this society are there to serve property and not human

life and happiness. And laws that relate to the working class political or economic struggle are invariably heavily biased towards the established capitalist authority.

One thing is for sure,

and that is that workers have nothing to do with the making of these laws. We can have no obligation to stick to them, especially when we are faced with a vital struggle.

Yet the fact that the two

pickets now in jail were charged with conspiracy is important all the same.

The following quotations and extracts from a new pamphlet published by the National Council for Civil Liberties

(WHOSE CONSPIRACY? by Geoff Robertson) will show why it is vital to deprive the police and the bosses' courts of this potent weapon which they have used over and over again in the past ten or so years against anyone whose activities they fear or dislike.

50p, from NCCL, 186 Kings Cross Road, London W.C.1

hearsay evidence which would be inadmissible on statutory charges. ... the tactical advantages

reserved for the prosecution in a conspiracy case destroy the accused's right to a fair trial.

One sort of conspiracy charge was defined by Lord Diplock as "the device of charging a defendant with agreeing to do what he did instead of charging him with doing it" in order to embarrass him at his trial with evidence which would otherwise be inadmissible.

The practical effect of a conspiracy charge is to put the defendant at an acute disadvantage in the battle of courtroom tactics...

A conspiracy count put the whole lifestyle of the accused on trial: he can be convicted for what he is and for what he believes, not necessarily for anything he has done.

Des and Ricky - 2 out of 300

"A nod or a wink may amount to conspiracy" the jury was warned at the Angry Brigade trial. The case against the Shrewsbury pickets was even flimsier: their 'conspiracy' was inferred from the mere fact that they were amongst 300 workers who invaded certain building sites. "You know very well it can be a conspiracy when they never met before and never knew each other" the Judge told the men's Counsel.

Trade unionists had always imagined that personal violence, or at least some threat of personal violence, was an essential ingredient of "intimidation". But Sir Peter Rawlinson and Mr. Robert Carr had other ideas: "sheer numbers attending can of itself constitute intimidation" Parliament and local police chiefs were informed by the Conservative Government in 1973.

Several of the Shrewsbury 24 building workers met for the first time in the police cells: they were selected from a picket line of 300 by such fortuitous (accidental) factors as their identification from press and TV films of the demonstration. Now every person who joins a picket line risks a conspiracy prosecution for the simple reason that the necessary 'agreement' can be inferred from the mere fact of his attendance, and the necessary "intimidation" from the size or behaviour of the crowd.



JAMES Callaghan is probably regretting the fuss he kicked up over the displays of friendship between the Navy and the South African government during a recent "joint manoeuvres" operation held under the Simonstown agreement.

Under pressure from those black African nations who oppose connections with South Africa's racist regime, Callaghan has now decided that the "diplomatic" arguments for scrapping the 1955 agreement outweighed the "military" arguments for keeping it.

'Wither on the vine'

That is, being able to trade with Africa was more important than carrying on the cold war against Russia.

SIMONSTOWN

Labour Lefts offer only token protest

by Jack Price

There was in this judgment neither a consideration of Apartheid and its evils, nor any dumping of NATO myths about the "red peril".

On the same day as Callaghan stated to the Commons that the agreement would "wither on the

vine", Lord Elwyn-Jones was telling the Lords on Labour's behalf that the government "would continue to have dealings with South Africa outside the sphere of military supplies."

But the most emphatic confirmation of Labour's real role on South Africa came when the racist regime's leader Vorster full-

somely thanked Britain for using its veto power in the UN to stop moves by a majority of nations to kick South Africa out of the organisation.

With the re-opening of the Suez Canal under way, the government realises that the strategic importance to imperialism of the Cape route is swiftly diminishing. That is why for a whole period of relative peace in the Middle East there was next to no naval activity in

that region.

Wilson's fury at three ministerial "rebels", Benn, Hart and Lestor, for voting for a motion "deploring the recent naval exercise in South Africa" is less for their posturing on this issue than for the threat this poses to the stifling unanimity he wants.

The fact that they have lodged no protest at all at Elwyn-Jones' speech shows up the shallowness of their protest for what it is.

If the Labour Left opposes any links with apartheid and it should then it must demand a total boycott of all relations, diplomatic, trade, military and financial, social and sporting.

Better still, it could go on to demand that Labour give material aid to those in South Africa fighting apartheid and to those struggling to form independent black trade unions.

U.N. recognises PLO as Palestinians' representative

THE ARAB summit conference which took place in Rabat last week confirmed the UN decision of a week before, in according the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), led by Yassir Arafat, the status of "representative of the Palestinian people."

At the UN, only four nations (Israel, the USA, the Dominican Republic and Bolivia) voted against the 105 supporters of the move to invite the PLO. Britain abstained.

The Palestinians have not, by this decision, been accorded a seat to the UN. But the fact that they have been invited to address the organisation during the debate on Palestine is a huge step forward.

Israel — a nation based on racism, supporting South Africa, supporting the US war on Vietnam, the Portuguese wars in Africa and a dozen other barbarities around the world — claims the invitation to the PLO marks, to quote ambassador Tekoah "a surrender to murder and barbarism".

MASSACRE

The reality is exactly the opposite: the Israeli state was born out of a systematic barbarism against the indigenous Palestinians. Massacres, like that of Deir Yassin (carried out by terrorists who are today national heroes and even cabinet ministers) were all part of Zionism's effort to throw the Palestinians out and gain 'vacant possession'.

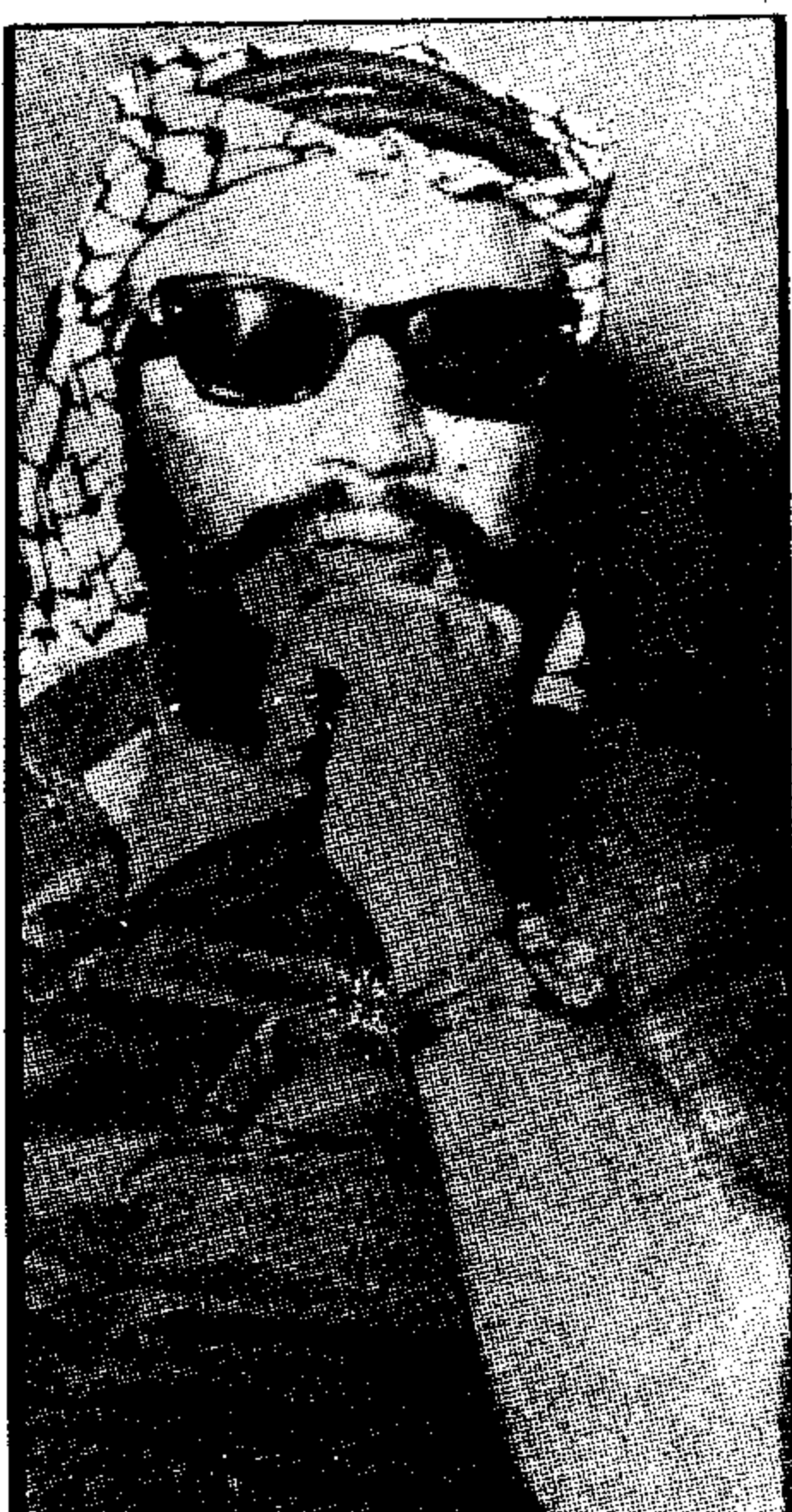
The Israelis constantly demand that the Arabs devise policies to "fit the facts". The chief "fact" being Israeli dominance of the South East corner of the Mediterranean, backed up by US imperialism.

Socialists will welcome the UN's step towards the recognition of the existence of the Palestinians as a distinct national entity. Zionism of course, does not even recognise the existence

of the Palestinians as a nationality — merely as refugees.

SHIFT

The fact that this UN recognition came after a rightward shift in the PLO, marking the decisive and unquestioned dominance of the bourgeois intelligentsia, may diminish the enthusiasm of socialists for the PLO's success, but it should not diminish their support for this achievement of the Palestinian nation.



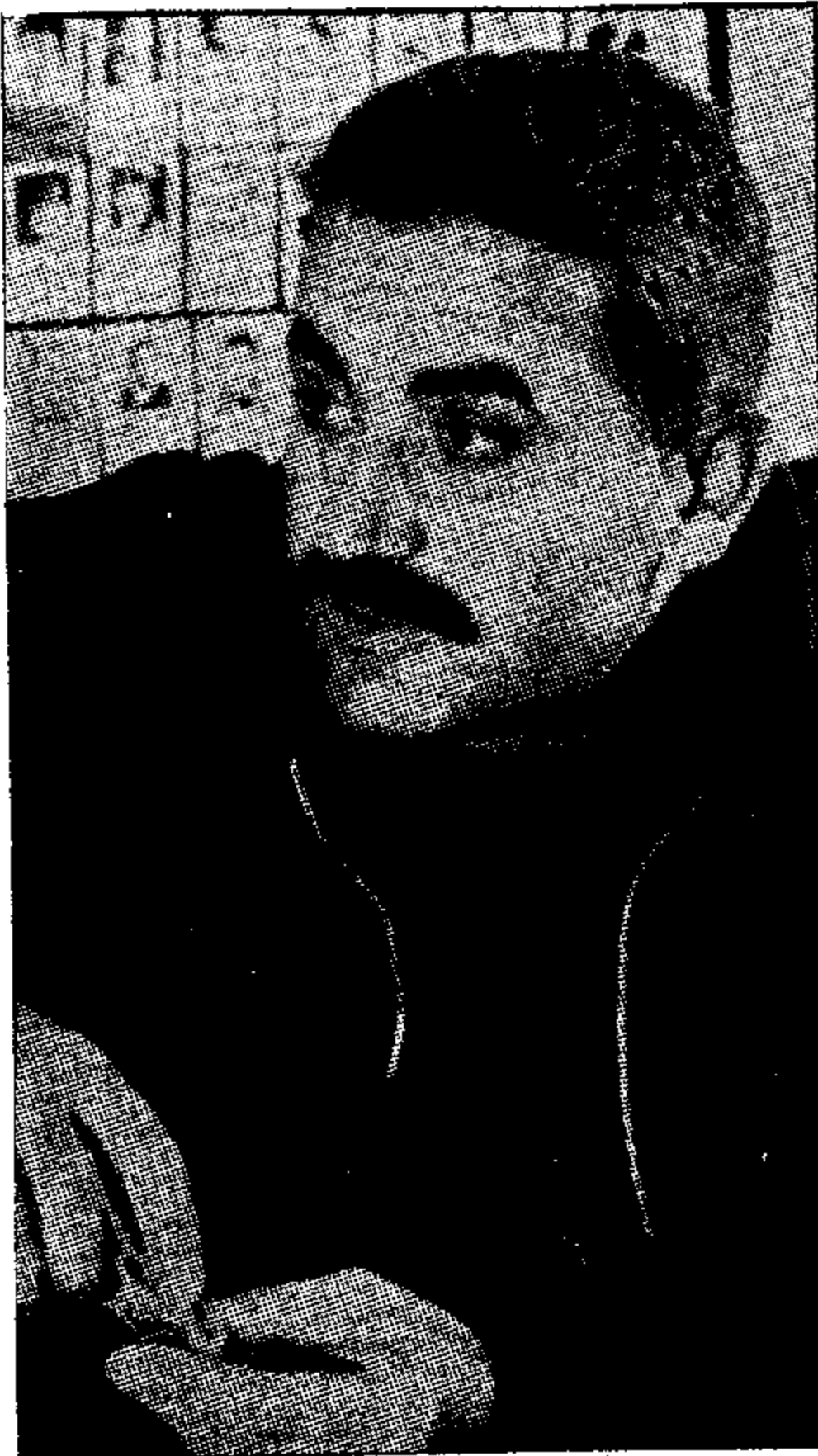
Arafat

ine, which over the past 18 months has shifted away from the positions of revolutionary Marxism, decisively to the right.

The main challenge at the Rabat conference to the PLO's (and Arafat's) leadership of the Palestinians came from Jordan's King Hussein: the same Hussein who butchered thousands of PLO members and supporters and actually bombarded Palestinian refugee camps with his army's artillery in September 1970; the same Hussein who has carried out secret talks with the Zionists; and the same Hussein who has refused to take up arms against the Zionists even when they have launched attacks on the Palestinians in Jordan!

SOOTHE

Hussein, the mass butcher, is however to be given his blood money to soothe his anger at losing out to Arafat: the oil states,



Habash

The rightward shift took place when early in October the three organisations most hostile to any compromise with Zionism broke away from the PLO. They were the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (led by George Habash), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (a breakaway from the PFLP) and the Arab Liberation Front (sponsored by the Iraqi government). Under the PLO umbrella there now remain three principal organisations: the largest, Al Fateh, led by Yassir Arafat, Al Saiqa (sponsored by the Syrian government) and Natif Hawatmeb's Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palest-

particularly Saudi Arabia, will be giving Jordan massive economic aid.

Israel says that Hussein's displacement by Arafat means the end of the Geneva talks. The hypocrisy of this statement is glaring. After all, the statement only a month ago by leading Israeli minister Pinhas Sapir that Bethlehem (which lies in the Israeli-occupied West Bank of the Jordan river) is "inextricably linked" with Jerusalem and therefore "not negotiable" meant an end to the Geneva talks on the old basis in any case.

In all likelihood, therefore, war is once again on the agenda in the Middle East.

Aryye Ben Shmuel



The daily life of apartheid

Prod. deals — oppose them all!

THE FRONT page report in WF75 on the mineworkers' ballot contains a potentially misleading assertion regarding productivity deals.

Although the NUM Executive (and even its left and Communist Party wings) present the issues as being between local prod. deals and national prod. deals, WF should not accept this. Clearly socialists must be in favour of a vote against local prod. deals, which is what the ballot is about. However, WF has to come out quite clearly against prod. deals of any kind.

PRICE OF SUGAR MOUNTING

Following on the debate on 'price control' in recent issues of *Workers Fight*, I would like to report on some action on prices that took place locally.

On Friday 1st November, the manager of Tesco's Castle Centre branch in Stockton on Tees was forced to take refuge in his office when angry shoppers protested about a rise in the price of sugar.

The protest began when housewives got to the store's sugar counter and saw a notice showing the new price of 20p for a 2 lb. bag — several days before the "official" date of the price rise. A sympathetic crowd of regular Tesco customers, including pensioners and widows, quickly gathered, and the manager was sent for. But when he tried to remove a "Save at Tesco" sign from the price placard, he had the notice snatched from his hands, and was sent scurrying back to his office.

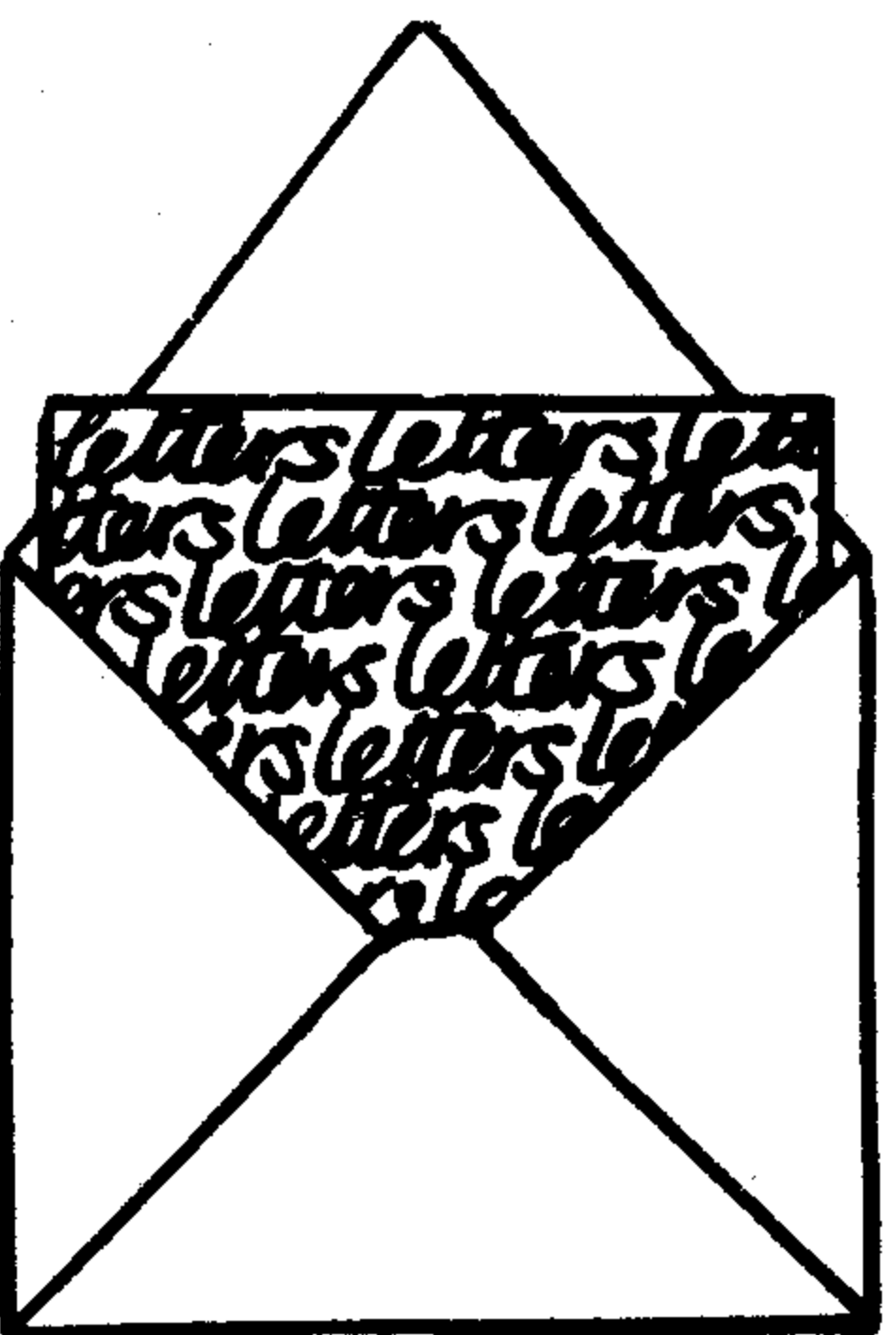
"He was lucky he wasn't hung", commented one shopper.

Price protester Mrs Hilda Chillmaid said, "The newspapers and TV said that sugar prices would rise on Monday (November 4th), but the new price went on this

Apart from the effects in increasing pneumoconiosis and pit accidents that the 'productivity' scramble would entail, socialists must be against any deal which attempts to tie workers' wages to increases in productivity. We must, rather, fight for:

1. Flat rate increases, together with a 60p rise for each 1% rise in the cost of living, as calculated by trade unionists and houseworkers.

2. All benefits of extra productivity to go to the workers in the form of safer



working conditions, reduced hours with no loss of pay, and longer holidays.

Phil Semp

prices down". A complaint has been sent to Shirley Williams, the "Prices Minister", and some protestors said that the government should start controlling prices. Those making this last demand apparently were unaware that Healey has backtracked even on Labour's farcically ineffective 'price controls'. However, the more realistic policy of cost of living increases for all wages and benefits did not get a hearing.

Alan Theasby



Shoppers protest at sugar prices

TWO JAILED FOR PICKETING

ALL OUT

TO GET

THEY WOULD

THEM TOO!!



DEFEND
THE RIGHT
TO PICKET

workers'
fight

Published by WORKERS FIGHT,
98 Gifford Street, London N.1

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE NOBODY AT ALL...

IN THE constitution of the International Socialists, the 'Statement of Basic principles' concludes by saying that IS fights for "Uncompromising opposition to all forms of racialism..." However, as IS's unwritten eleventh commandment is to compromise on anything and everything just as long as it keeps them popular with workers, we can take that bit of IS's Constitution with a large pinch of salt.

IS certainly does. When it first suggested a programme for the Rank and File movement it was trying to get off the ground, it didn't even mention the need to fight racialism. Very uncompromising... Anyway, someone pointed out that it had been forgotten, and they added in a clause saying that they were against racialism "because it splits and divides workers." (And if it didn't split and divide workers, are we to take it IS would think racialism the best thing since Janie Jones?)

However, up to that point, the worst that could be said was that IS just couldn't care less about fighting racialism. But worse was to come when they held the first fully fledged delegate conference of the Rank and File movement in March this year.

Detailed guide on how to fight racialism

For that Conference, Workers Fight formulated an addendum which included a very detailed guideline on how to fight racialism. It was passed by the Spun Plant G&MWU branch at Stanton steelworks, who sent Geordie Barclay along to the Rank & File Conference to speak for it.

Now, there are many areas of the class struggle and trade union activity where there is no pressing necessity for revolutionaries to spell out this and that detail of how to fight. But the fight against racialism is different.

Here it's essential not just to declare that you are uncompromising, but to spell out what racialism is and formulate demands which really do commit workers to a fight against it.

The point is, that most people who are poisoned to some degree by racialism simply don't know it. The man who casually remarks, on seeing an 'Asian' — "He looks browned off", will probably deny he's a racist. Another might say "I'm not a racist, but I'm damned if I'll have them darkies wearing them turbans to work."

People like this will not be educated by a rank and file movement which simply says "we are against racialism because it splits and divides workers." In fact, they'd probably agree. And their agreement would quite likely only serve to fortify their belief that they were not tainted by racialism. Certainly it would give them no guide to action, and would give their fellow workers no guide as to how to relate to them.

Unite as many as you can together...

Yet IS urged rejection of the addendum, arguing that they wanted to unite as many workers as possible against Phase 3 and the Social Contract, and that therefore the Rank & File programme shouldn't be worded so as to exclude people who wanted to fight the Social Contract but weren't interested in 'a political programme'. By a narrow majority, the addendum was rejected.

Probably IS don't see the implications, but as it stands, Rank & File's programme would exclude a conscious racist such as a sympathiser of the National Front, but it would tolerate the racist jokemonger, or the man who would insist on "foreigners" fitting in with British norms, or the man who thinks that black people are probably to blame for housing shortages, or the man who says he won't fight for a black to be made supervisor

The resolution I.S. opposed

THIS CONFERENCE pledges itself to fight against racialism and religious sectarianism. We advocate campaigns to recruit immigrant workers to trade unions (using leaflets in the immigrants' own languages, etc). We fight against any discrimination at work or within the unions (including social clubs). We fight for full equality in pay, conditions, status, grading, training, further education, access to skilled jobs and promotion opportunities, in support of any demands black or immigrant workers make for educational and special religious rights (holy day paid leave, right to wear religious dress,

turbans etc.). Recognising the importance of the specially close relationship between black and immigrant workers and their communities. Against all immigration laws and controls or discriminatory legislation against their offshoots, the contract labour system, voucher system and deportations. For the physical defence of black workers under attack. For automatic official endorsement of industrial action by black or immigrant workers against instances of racialism whether they are in the minority or not.



White workers scabbed on this strike at Art Castings, Nuneaton. But the T&GWU took no action

and denies he's a racist "because I'm against supervisors anyway."

This is the implication of the insistence on not excluding people. Whether or not IS saw it like that, or intended to keep the wording loose and vague deliberately to include people who weren't clear about racialism — and no doubt they didn't — the effect is the same as if they had.

And it isn't just a matter of the wording on a programme. What is so bad is that the whole of IS's policy (or lack of it in any clearly defined way that action can be pinned to) makes its members and sympathisers totally unprepared, ignorant and misguided when confronted with a fight over racialism. And this is nowhere better illustrated than in a report in last week's *Socialist Worker* (No.398) by John Charlton, a longstanding member of IS.

Leeds busmen striking to ban turbans

After describing the hysterical atmosphere in which, led by fascists, Leeds busmen struck to enforce a ban on Sikh busmen wearing turbans, the article (Racists take Leeds busmen for a ride,) goes on to explain the racist feelings in terms of the low pay and poor working conditions on the buses. "The racials have channelled these frustrations into a blind alley".

So far, not so bad. One might have wished for a fuller explanation of the roots of racialism, but after all, it was only a short report. Moreover, "blind alley" would tend to suggest a neutral 'missing of the real target', whereas the target of these violent feelings is in fact a very vulnerable group of people who, as a result of this action, are right now probably going in fear of real violence to themselves and their families.

But here is the conclusion of the report, containing Charlton's

— and IS's — solution to it all:

"A rank and file busman's leaflet handed out at the mass meeting got a sympathetic response. Many busmen were disgusted by the events but unwilling or afraid to act."

The leaflet spoke of the programme of demands risen (sic) by Glasgow busmen, £35 minimum wage for 35 hours work, improved shift payment and 40 per cent one man differentials.

A further mass meeting planned for next Sunday on pay and conditions offers a great opportunity to fight for such a programme.

The appearance of a group of workers ready and willing to fight is the only way forward from the ugly impasse. Only such a campaign can isolate the racials who never have anything positive to say."

Here the narrow, economic trade unionist myopia of the Rank & File formulation is taken to its most illogical conclusion, with Charlton talking starry-eyed about launching a split and viciously divided workforce into a major wages battle.

There is no mention of the need to tackle racialism head-on, to educate and galvanise those who are "disgusted by the events but unwilling or afraid to act", and to try to win over or neutralise the others. No. Nor of a counter campaign of education, nor one of demands, such as for a clear affirmation of the rights of immigrant workers to have their customs, religious holy days etc. respected. (See resolution.) Nor is there any hint of organising defence of the victimised Sikhs from violent physical attacks. But then, IS's own Rank and File Conference was told to vote against endorsing such demands.

An arid and ignorant approach

His final sentence sums up both the aridity and the ignorance of this approach. We can't rely on the racials never

having "anything positive to say". In fact it isn't true at all. Even the National Front can stand up and pose as good trade unionists, even militants, on precisely the level Charlton is looking to for a solution.

And then, if we accept that racialism in one degree or another goes right through the British working class, then even some of the very best trade union militants are racials. Look at the London dockers who came out in support of Enoch Powell in 1968, striking and marching in support of his racist speeches: they actually identified their racialism as something that was part of their militant defence of their living standards. And they, unlike the Leeds busmen Charlton describes, were very well organised and relatively well paid, and any rank and file leaflet suggesting a wage claim would probably have been screwed up with the question "who do you think you're talking to?"

Never mind the turbans — feel the wage claim!

Summed up, the whole strategy expressed in this article (and it is a direct result of IS's refusal to take a political lead both with its rank and file grouping and in general) is one of turning one's back on racialism and trying to distract workers' attention from it. It's the same attitude as holding up a bright toy to a child in order to take away from it, with as little fuss, tears and argument as possible, the box of matches it's got hold of.

Which is hardly the best way to advance socialist consciousness in the working class.

Nor, for that matter, does it represent an "uncompromising opposition to all forms of racialism".

Jane Gordon

OPEN LETTER FOR A REVOLUTIONARY REGROUPMENT

Send stamped addressed envelope to Workers Fight, 98 Gifford Street, London N.1

A two-part article by CHEUNG SIU MING

THE decision to extradite Peter Godber, one time Chief of the Hong Kong police, to face corruption charges there has focussed some attention on Britain's most valuable colony.

Such attention is in fact rare. Knowledge about Hong Kong in Britain has been systematically kept at an abysmal level by both Tory and Labour Governments. Combined with the general sluggish attitude of the British labour movement towards Britain's imperialist activities, this has meant negligible solidarity with the exploited masses there, throughout the whole of Hong Kong's history.

The Hong Kong Government itself never publishes real statistics. Only in the past few years has there been any unearthing of basic information, mainly by the Hong Kong Research Group — which has recently published an excellent pamphlet called "Hong Kong — a case to answer".

"SPECIAL"

The British ruling class has always tried to stress the 'special circumstances' in Hong Kong as justification of the continuation of colonial rule. They say that the colony is prosperous and the people are content; that China does not wish the situation changed; that Hong Kong workers enjoy hard work and are not interested in politics; that Triads (Mafia-like gangs) are responsible for the colony's drug, gambling and corruption problems and that the situation would be even worse if not for the efforts of the colonial regime.

The pamphlet 'A case to answer' in fact shows that unique circumstances do indeed exist in Hong Kong — but often as a direct result of British policy.

OPIUM WARS

The island of Hong Kong, the Kowloon peninsula and the New Territories bordering China were seized from China through unequal treaties resulting from Britain winning the Opium Wars (1840 and 1858, interrupted by the Crimean War). Britain had initially traded with silver for Chinese tea and silk, but soon tried to redress this expense by importing into China opium grown in India. China's reluctance to expand trade, and its banning of opium imports, resulted in several rounds of British military aggression, including the invasion of Peking.

The treaties gave Britain access to ports like Shanghai and Canton, as well as legalising opium, and Britain also got a huge 'compensation' which included the 400 square miles of land making up Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's excellent natural

harbour has since been used as the servicing base for British trade, mainly in Shanghai. Up to the second World War, its economy was controlled by British trading interests, with apartheid type laws preventing social and economic advancement of Chinese.

But during the Japanese occupation in the early '40s, the Chinese were first drawn into the regime as collaborators, and later aspiring Chinese capitalists were the prime agents in re-establishing British rule and reviving the economy.

As more capitalists fled from the revolution in China, bringing with them machinery and international contacts, the colonial racist laws were amended to absorb this group into the ruling class, allowing British controlled banking and shipping interests to move into manufacturing.

turnover behind New York and London; and the Hong Kong government is the only major capitalist government which refuses to publish statistics on GNP, national income and foreign ownership of assets. It actively encourages overseas investors by offering cheap labour, secrecy of operations and tax dodges.

This type of cover allows high rates of exploitation, capital accumulation and profit. The recent harbour tunnel was allowed to set a toll rate which brought the construction consortium their money back in only 3 years.

It is impossible to know exactly who owns what, but the expatriate firms like Jardines, Wheelock and Marden enjoy special protection and control within an 'old boy' network. For instance, the top man in Jardines holds 87 directorships

manufacturing wage index grew by only 71.5%, and the rate of profit rose from an already high level of 20% to an astonishing 35%.

These conditions are possible only because Hong Kong is very much under colonial rule. There is no democracy at all, and the regime feels no need to even promise any limited participation in the future. Instead it just claims that Hong Kong people are content with things because the regime satisfies all their needs.

With a London-appointed Governor, an unelected legislature, an abundance of British troops, rights of assembly and association denied and all political parties banned, it must be hard to know how the people do feel. However, with the world's third highest suicide rate and periodic outbursts of rioting, contentment would hardly seem the appropriate way of describing the

Section 54, states that a policeman may stop, search and arrest without warrant anyone who 'acts in a suspicious manner, or whom he may suspect of having committed or being about to commit, or of intending to commit, a crime).

The plain facts are that Hong Kong is an international smuggling centre with an uncontrollable crime rate, with flourishing gambling, prostitution and protection rackets. The police force is hated by the population mainly for its role WITHIN government corruption and organised crime.

FIDDLED

The unlicensed food vendor or taxi driver, as well as gambling and prostitution syndicates, all make regular payments to the police as they make their daily beat or when they make a 'raid'. The crime detection rate is fiddled by counting all arrests as solved cases, by getting criminals with long records to admit to all current unsolved cases by torture, or by preferring lesser charges. Only when Europeans or the privileged sector of the Chinese population are affected will the police make real efforts at case-solving. The result is that most people do not report crimes like armed robbery, since they are merely subjected to abusive and bureaucratic procedures at police stations and courts, losing several days' pay with no prospect of recovering what they lost in the first place.

Most of the Force's officers are recruited from Britain, and they either turn a blind eye to the systematic corruption they find pervades the entire force, or they join in.

RIOTS

Corruption, in fact, permeates every government department, so that anything from obtaining land leases and contracts to passing a driving test or getting on the housing list is affected by it. But it is the corruption of the police force which makes it all possible.

This explains the outburst of riotous demonstrations which followed the exit from the colony of Chief Inspector Peter Godber with over £400,000 in various bank accounts, when his total earnings amounted to only £60,000.

In applying for the extradition of Godber to face charges of corruption involving the promotion of a Chinese police officer, it seems that the Hong Kong government is hoping to deter others from being over greedy and to defuse the popular anti-corruption movement in Hong Kong, but not to upset the rest of the corruption iceberg that lies hidden beneath the surface.

NEXT WEEK: Hong Kong and China

Behind the secretive Colony

The present economy is thus a 'transferred' economy, and the same group of businessmen from Shanghai and Canton, together with the expatriate British firms like Jardines, are still the driving force of the economy. The primary sector is insignificant, with most food and raw materials imported. The manufacturing sector is strongly export orientated, in light industries like textiles, plastics and electronics. Overseas investments come mainly from USA, Japan and the UK.

In the electronics industry, all basic research, design and raw materials are brought in from overseas (mainly USA), with assembly done by a highly skilled yet cheap workforce. 40% of the working population is engaged in manufacturing (the highest in the world) ranking this tiny colony among the world's top twenty trading nations: it exports more than India, which has 140 times the population!

The financial sector has unusual features: private banks and not the government control the money supply and interest rates; the stock market easily ranks third in

including that of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank which issues 85% of the colony's money. The ruling clique is effectively on the inside of every major economic event, and able to supplement their profits with regular killings on the stock exchange.

Hong Kong holds many attractions for investment. No minimum wage nor maximum hours; no unemployment insurance, sickness benefit nor paid maternity leave; a highly regressive tax system full of loopholes; and severe restrictions on trade union activity.

CHILD LABOUR

What laws there are protecting workers are ineffective and seldom enforced. In 1968-9 there were only 9 government employees to check industrial complaints, while in 1971 there were 36,000 children aged between 10 and 14 working legally, plus many thousands working illegally. The fine was as little as 40p per child! Of the few studies available, one showed that from 1960-67, manufacturing output grew by 275%, labour productivity went up by 207%, while the

feelings of the working people of Hong Kong.

In every government department there is deep corruption and a tangled web of bureaucracy. The remoteness of the administration is shown by the fact that English is the official language, whereas 98% of the population is Chinese, and many know no English at all. Only after recent anti-colonial riots was Chinese even made the second official language. Thus the population views the Government with complete cynicism.

Cynicism and fear. For 'law and order' are kept by a ruthless police force (on which the state spends eight times as much as on the social welfare department) backed up by harsh laws which include the death penalty.

But, as we might have guessed from the Godber affair, there is more to the Hong Kong police force than just the fiercely repressive apparatus that first meets the eye. That aspect is clear enough: its enormous numerical strength, the common cases of brutality and the wide powers of arrest and detention (e.g. police Ordinance Ch.252,

THOUSANDS of working class people will have watched the Colin Welland - Roy Battersby play "LEEDS UNITED!" last week and felt that at last a play had appeared on television that captured something of the reality of the struggles they have experienced, and that gave a voice to feelings that usually get smothered by the nauseating hypocrisy of the capitalist media: feelings of the hope and transforming pride generated by the solidarity of the slaves of capital, and feelings of despair and betrayal at a bureaucratic sell out. All these found expression in this play, constructed from the events of the unofficial strike of Leeds clothing workers in 1970.

Shilling an hour

What happened was that the workers at John Black's, almost all women, came out for a shilling an hour, in defiance of an agreement made by the trade union leaders. The strike rapidly spread to the entire Leeds clothing industry.

The early scenes where the strike spreads are the best in the play, as the thousands of women workers storm through the city, rounding up the support of their sisters in all the factories, vehemently opposing the efforts of the trade union bureaucracy to get them back and in the

Applause, applause — but no

hint of how things can change

process expressing a tremendous hatred of the masterclass.

The Communist Party shop steward at Black's, however — a man named Gridley — connives with the bureaucrats to get a return to work. (It should be said that CP militants are entitled to be angry about this — Gridley is presented as an out and out stooge of the bureaucracy, and is given no motivation for his treachery.)

The management is desperate for a return, in order to give an 'interim' award in return for a productivity deal. But as the strike goes on the weak side of the strikers, their lack of any clear strategy, is increasingly revealed; the militancy is eventually dissipated, and a rotten deal concocted and foisted onto a divided and confused strike committee.

Social change

And it is here, too, that the weak side of the play is revealed, and in this respect it is necessary to be very critical of it.

For artists attempting to come to grips with the class struggles that increasingly force the questions of social change upon them, do not

political and artistic terms, it is not enough simply to portray militancy. It is necessary also to face the problem of how understanding develops, and to create artistic structures that try to break down the idea that things are inevitably "given" as they are. Such structures should be able to show the leap in consciousness that events demand if the "inevitable" is to be altered.

Turning points

Unfortunately, Welland's play did not seem to be concerned with this problem.

Basically, the play had a very passive relationship to the events on which it was based. There were crucial turning points in the situation, especially at the mass meetings. The strike came to a point where it had to find a concrete way of raising its level through definite, thought-out action if the solidarity was not to begin to show cracks.

But at this point Welland was unable, dramatically, to develop any conception of the change needed in terms of consciousness and strategy, and tended simply to repeat himself by showing scenes of solidarity over and

over again, counterposing them to the wooden caricatures of the union bureaucracy, and the scheming employers.

In other words, the play merely followed events, and did not attempt to draw lessons imaginatively from them, so as to introduce ideas of change in the workplace, the home (particularly important in a women's strike) and in society at large, either involving the viewers directly in such ideas, or showing them developing among the strikers.

This cannot be got around by simply calling at the end for "a leadership that won't sell us short" next time.

Next time

A play should not just "reflect" things — the writer should be active in shaping his material in such a way as to reveal how workers themselves might develop such a leadership in struggle. Things are not "inevitable" or "given". But from a reformist attitude towards working class militancy, the play was only able to show the "inevitability" of defeat, "given" the bad leaders.

The women displayed tremendous resources — passionate anger and deter-

mination, warmth and humour, an enormous power of self-mobilisation — and all Welland and Battersby did was to stand and applaud them.

Again, the trade union leaders, the CP steward and the employers were mostly stock figures, repeating phrases put into their

Crude melodrama

The play also broke down dramatically when showing the period of the strike's downturn and eventual defeat, in scenes of fairly crude melodrama.

These are some of the ways in which the play did not develop the potential of the scenes of mass activity we saw at the start. However moving these scenes were, it is true to say that the play got carried away by them and could not suggest how it would be possible to make an analysis from within the struggle to take it forward consciously. And it is interesting, in respect of the strike's defeat, to note the near-unanimity of the capitalist press in saying how wonderful the play was. This says something for the play's acceptance of "inevitability".

Unfortunately, most of the socialist press seemed to be equally uncritical.

ALAN HASLAM

NEWS BRIEF

Anti Fascist campaign

IN SEPTEMBER Bolton anti-fascist committee organised a picket of a National Front meeting with John Tyndall speaking. 14 arrests were made and fines will total over £200. The anti fascist committee is appealing to socialists and trade unionists to contribute to the payment of these fines. Please send donations to Bill Ward, 61 Heaton Ave, Bolton.

ON Monday November 4th, 200 pupils at Latymer School, Edmonton, together with over 100 anti-fascists from all over London, demonstrated against National Front organiser Martin Webster.

Webster had been invited by the headmaster to address a lunchtime session of the sixth form 'liberal studies' group. NUT leader (and Communist Party member) Max Morris heard about the invitation 10 days before, but did nothing. The demonstration was organised by Enfield Anti-Fascist Committee after a parent found out on Friday 1st that Webster was invited.

After the bell went for afternoon school, police moved in, and forcibly returned students who had joined the picket to school premises. Edmonton council was picketed on Tuesday 5th to protest against Webster being allowed to speak and against the police action.

T.C. I.H.

Students sit-in

STUDENTS in occupation at Sussex University have called a national conference of students actively engaged in fighting the education cutbacks, on 23rd November, at Sussex university.

The conference is specially important because of the inactivity of NUS and the present fragmentation of the many different local struggles against the cutbacks.

The demands of the occupation at Sussex are: freeze of campus rents and refectory prices; tying of guest house rents to university campus levels; registration of students who have been and still are on rent strike; and ending of the guest house accommodation scheme.

500 students at Liverpool Polytechnic voted two to one, on Thursday October 31st, in favour of continuing and extending their direct action over education cuts.

In the halls of residence two thirds of the students are on total rent strike against the planned one third increase in rent. Although a handful of staff are cancelling lectures, most support the students' demands, and accept any inconvenience caused by the students' occupation of Walton House (now in its third week).

Leaflets have been distributed in Liverpool detailing the students' six demands (see WF 74) and calling for support.

Paul Barker

THREE of those arrested on the recent Troops Out demonstration have been denied legal aid. Paul Davidson, Steve Griffiths, and John Graham, all of Birmingham, will now appeal against this decision. Others arrested have had their claims for aid neither approved nor rejected as yet.

AUEW soft-peddles on pay, supports 'Contract'

THE A.U.E.W. National Committee met on Tuesday 4th November to discuss resolutions on a pay claim. The previous National Committee, in April, granted the Labour Government its first victory in maintaining the Tory Phase 3, by leaving over any decision on pay. And this National Committee helped to bolster up the Government's "Social Contract" wage restraint, by voting 27 to 25 for the right wing motion,

In place of going for £50 basic for craftsmen, the NC decided to aim for a "substantial increase". The NC rejected a call for a public campaign of propaganda and mobilisation for the claim. The demand for a reduction in the working week to 35 hours was kept in, but basically the NC decision said: No fight now.

Hugh Scanlon, as President, did not have to use his casting vote. But he did intervene... on the side of the right wing,

suggesting that the public campaign and mobilisation for industrial action might not be a good idea. The next National Committee, in April 1975, could discuss progress.

Despite being very strong in some factories, and appearing left wing nationally the AUEW is in some ways weak as a national union. While refusing to recognise the Industrial Relations Act, the AUEW never made any effort for national action against the National Industrial Relations Court and the fines it imposed on the AUEW.

Order books

The call for a campaign of mobilisation was a positive attempt to fight that weakness. The NC decision was a flabby cop out in the face of severe cuts in working class living standards.

But order books in the engineering industry, and especially

in heavy engineering, are up. If one tenth of the 'left' words of some AUEW leaders were translated into action, real gains could be made by strike action.

Campaign

After the NC's rejection of a campaign to mobilise for the pay claim, rank and file militants will have to fight to start the campaign from below. The unofficial committee of convenors and stewards which has grown up in the last year (mainly round Sheffield and Manchester) should take a lead in this. Militants should insist that mass meetings of Confed. stewards are held in every area, not just in the better organised districts. From those meetings, committees can be elected to organise a campaign in all the major factories in the area, and publicly.

The aim must be national action; but after this National Committee decision it's

certainly no use relying on the national union leadership to do the job.

The facts to be brought out in a campaign are simple. Engineers, like all other sections of workers, have suffered severely through wage restraint and rising prices. When the present national pay agreement runs out, next March, the basic rate of labourers will be £23.50.

Minimum

As Hugh Scanlon himself pointed out, a serious effort to raise the labourers' rate to the TUC minimum of £30 would (maintaining differentials) take the craftsmen's rate up to the £50 claim. And with prices rising at 20% per year, a £30 minimum is hardly even a start. £5 increase would be needed just to cover price rises between now and next April; and on top of that militants need to demand automatic cost of living increases, at least 60p for every 1% rise in prices.

Melvin Kaye

Clay Cross - a few more steps towards victory

SOME of those who have supported the Clay Cross councillors in their courageous struggle against the Housing Finance Act will probably be glad that the ex councillors have been let off their disqualification.

Certainly the Labour Government's promise to remove the disqualifications is victory. But in fact it's more an attempt to find a let-out for the Labour Government than a let out for the councillors.

According to the letter of the law, the Government could extract £7,000 in surcharges from the ex councillors or put them in jail if they didn't pay up. In fact, the Government knew well enough that if they tried to do that, they would be faced by mass protest from millions, declaring that if the Housing Finance Act was unjust then so also were the penalties on the councillors.

The councillors could sit tight, secure in the support of the rank and file of the labour movement. The Government had to find some way out. They have retreated a few steps, in order to find a way out.

The Government still wants the £7,000 surcharge — but it will take it out of the pocket of socialists and trade unionists who give to show their support for the councillors. The Government still wants the unpaid rent — but it will try to collect it bit by bit through rent increases over coming years.

Our stand should be clear. Not a penny to be paid. If the Government have retreated this far, they can be forced to retreat further and grant complete victory to Clay Cross. The Labour Party conference decision should be carried through.

IMI Workers ask

DO THEY THINK WE ARE LUNATICS?

A LOT OF people could be forgiven if they got somewhat confused at the mass meeting on Friday 1st November at IMI Witton. It was extremely difficult to tell the difference between the management and the AUEW officials. In actual fact, there was no difference in what they were saying. They were both telling us we should go back to work, and both using blackmail.

Management were giving us the same old rubbish that all companies give out when strikes are prolonged (five weeks now): we're losing so much money, it could mean closures. Yet last year, when for quite a while a three day week was in operation, they made record profits. They have also started laying off

people throughout the country and are telling us that more will follow if we don't go back. This is nothing but pure blackmail, and it is up to the workers in other areas who get threatened with layoffs to demand full pay, and if needs be, occupy the factories and try to spread this type of action on a national basis to force IMI into backing down. It may be our fight today, but it could be your fight tomorrow.

£15 p.w.

What about the union officials? They have refused to make our strike official because we did not exhaust procedure. (But we have exhausted our pockets, which is why we have put in for £15 per week). Therefore the officials will not negoti-

ate "formally" with management, although they have had "informal" talks and come up with a formula for a return to work.

The formula for a return to work is as follows:

1. Management's final offer is £6 a week for craftsmen and then the non-craftsmen will get a percentage, in some cases £3.50 or less.
2. As long as we accept that offer, the company will honour the threshold agreement until November, when it will be terminated.
3. The £6 and the threshold payments will be incorporated into the base rate. (Whilst we are in favour of the consolidation of threshold payments, this should not be seen as a let-out from or alternative to further increases).
4. All increases payable only from the day we return to

work, and not from when the claim was submitted.

5. The agreement should run for twelve months (nothing about cost of living increases during that period).

6. Any further increases can only be negotiated through productivity deals (i.e. by selling jobs).

We would have to be lunatics to accept these proposals. But one of our officials, "Brother" (and I must use the term loosely in this case) Bottomley, told our shop stewards that if we did not accept the proposals, then the national officials would "wash their hands of us".

I can only suppose that it was this attitude from the officials which prompted 32 of our shop stewards to vote for acceptance of the proposals, with 15 against. However, when the shop stewards' committee put the proposal to the mass meeting, it was overwhelmingly defeated by about 65% of the 1,000 craftsmen present.

We cannot afford to back down now. The company are just beginning to be hit. We must press our advantage forward and accept nothing less than our full claim: £15 with no strings.

John Bryant

LORRY DRIVERS GO FOR PARITY WITH SCOTS

SPURRED by the success of the Scottish transport drivers, drivers from Wales, England and Northern Ireland have struck, or are about to. Both private and nationalised road haulage firms will come under pressure from drivers wielding the demand for £40 for 40 hours.

The parity fight with Scotland has already been won in Hull and in parts of Lancashire. 5,000 drivers in Northern Ireland have been out for over two weeks — with British troops acting to break the strike.

The nationalised National Freight Corporation, which is nothing but an umbrella for 60 or so different concerns, could soon be totally strikebound.

Already depots of the National Carriers, and Freight-liners, in Southampton, Glasgow, Liverpool and three different London depots (Willesden, Stratford and Kings Cross) have been closed following unofficial action.

The 30,000 men employed by NFC had in fact recently agreed to a new pay deal, giving a top rate of £35.95, but the news of

the Scottish victory had the men pushing their officials for a new deal.

The bosses have tried to play off the men with an offer to consolidate bonus and threshold payments.

But the men of the NFC are sticking to their demand for £40, and preparing for a struggle. A national stewards committee was formed just less than a month ago, and with sections of white collar staff at NFC also in dispute — plus solidarity from railmen — the NFC bosses could face a long and effective stoppage if they do not pay up.

Hunger strike victory for Frank Stagg

FRANK STAGG, an IRA political prisoner at Long Lartin Prison, has won a victory in his hunger strike. The prison authorities conceded on his protest against being strip searched before and after all visits.

Frank Stagg had been on hunger strike since October 6th, and was close to death

before he finally convinced the humane prison authorities of civilised Britain to treat him with a minimum of respect.

Published by Workers' Fight, 98 Gifford Street, London N.1 Printed by voluntary labour. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.



2500 demonstrators supported a march and rally organised by the Campaign for Homosexual Equality on Sunday 2nd November. The demonstration demanded a lifting of some of the restrictions and legal ties facing homosexuals. At present, for example, two men aged 20 who have sexual relations can be put in prison — and this isn't just a long forgotten bit of medieval law, it actually happens.

In detail, the demands were: to lower the 'age of

consent' for homosexual men from 21 to 16 law reform to be extended to Scotland and Northern Ireland; equality for homosexuals in the Armed Forces and Merchant Navy; and the right for homosexuals to express affection in public.

LONDON Workers Fight readers' meeting. "The Present Situation in Ireland" Speaker: Sean Matgamna. 8pm, Sunday 17th November, at the 'George', Liverpool Road, Ni (Angel underground).