

# libertarian struggle



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5p

## THE PROGRAMME OF THE LEFT?



- GASWORKERS • FREE SPEECH
- RANK AND FILE • APEX
- CHRYSLER • RACISM AND  
SEXISM • GAY LIB' • LETTERS

paper of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists



# DEFEAT RACISM AND SEXISM

Libertarian Struggle has attempted to focus attention on recent industrial actions by black and women workers. Capitalism is up against the wall, and desperately attempting with every tactic available to sustain its profits, and thus its survival. One of the classic ways of doing this is to split the working class. The most blatant splitting is between white males and women and blacks.

At a time when the incomes of working class families are shrivelling, and single women are trying desperately to make ends meet, we still have people agreeing that women only work for 'pin money'. At a time when the living standards of the whole working class are under attack, we still have white workers fighting for the defence of racial privileges. To ignore the conflicts within the working class, exploited, exacerbated and fed on by the bosses, is no solution. Unless the working class can recognise the dangers of allowing racial and sexual prejudices to split it, all sections of workers will suffer the consequences of allowing the bosses to build up a source of cheap and unorganised labour. It is no longer possible for white workers to get away with advancing their own living standards at the expense of women and blacks. The bosses have to continually cut into workers' living standards. Cheap labour pools can only result in redundancies for the better paid.

This is not simply an economic problem. Attacking the wages and conditions of all workers is also a political issue. Until we all realise that our class interests are of greater importance than colour, accent or sex differences, we stand no chance of getting the bosses off our backs. Often it is black workers and women, in fighting every day of their lives

for respect as human beings, who see the problems much more clearly, and act more courageously, than their white male colleagues.

The measures that the Tories have taken to cut working class living standards have not neglected to enforce cheap labour conditions. The new Aliens Act, passed earlier this year, is largely unheard-of among white workers. It seeks to bring Britain's immigration policies into line with the EEC. Common Market countries have long imported immigrant labour from Africa, Asia - for example Turkish workers in Germany - and the poorer parts of Europe - Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Yugoslavia. These workers have no rights. They cannot settle or bring their families. They can be deported with ease. Workers who don't have the right of residence are put in a vicious position of having to be subservient to employers on whose 'recommendation' he depends to be allowed to stay. The consequences are the horrifying shanty towns (the only tenancy low wages can buy) on the outskirts of the French cities. Like London's Brixton and Birmingham's Handsworth. These social conditions produce amongst black youth a high incidence of rickets and fatal tuberculosis.

The contract system, the equivalent of a work voucher from the employer, is used as a continual threat in France and West Germany. Renewed every six months or year, it can be used either to cut the work force when recessions approach or to get rid of militants. In 1967 West Germany deported a quarter of a million foreign workers because of recession. In 1968, France deported thousands of immigrants who had taken part in the May strikes. In France the Communist-run CGT has been as irrelevant as our own TUC in defending immigrant workers. We can expect exactly the same to happen in this country.

With the present set-up, black workers face intensification of the repression they already have to live with, both in the factories and on the streets. Along with this, we have the new, retrospective legislation against 'illegal immigrants' which faces many Asians with deportation.

## CHEAP LABOUR

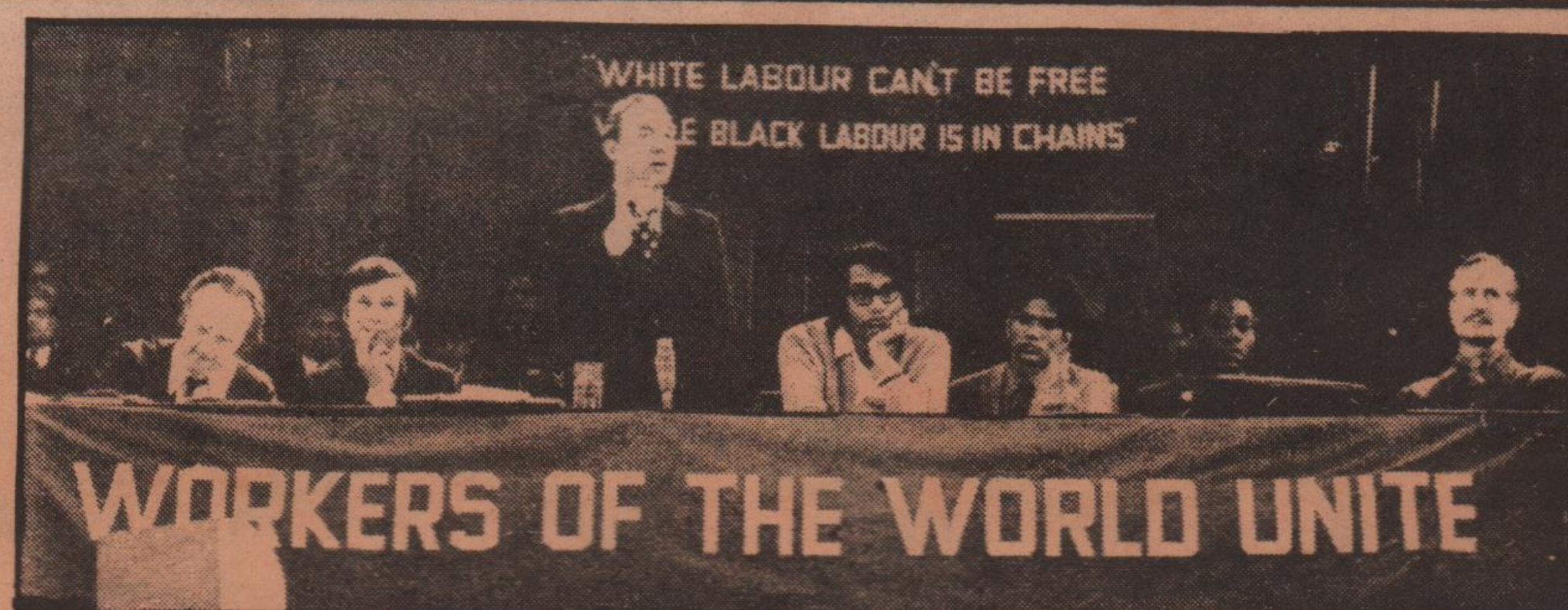
Nor is the use of cheap labour purely a national matter. GEC have laid off 64,000 workers in Britain in the past five years while at the same time building a series of new plants in South Africa and, in the process, doubled profits. British Leyland is celebrating fifty years of existence by massive investment in Spain. A large chunk of it will go on a plant producing between 100,000 and 250,000 vehicles a year. Spanish Chrysler is busy enlarging its plant as the British section threatens to stop investment if the workers don't knuckle under. The British Steel Corporation has closed down plants in Wales and Lincolnshire and laid off several thousand workers elsewhere. They state they have ceased their industrial programme in Britain. They continue to expand their subsidiaries in South Africa. During the famous Pilkington's strike, broken by Basnett and the GMWU bureaucracy, the company found it cheaper to ship windscreens from its plants in South Africa than to concede the glassworkers' claim at St. Helen's.

The rise in black militancy is not something of the past year or two. When the Tories introduced the first law against black immigrants, the Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1962, it was their first reaction to the beginning of the crisis that has torn British capitalism ever since. With each new attempt failing to push the tide of falling profitback, the anti-black legislation made the statute books. Peter Griffiths captured Smethwick for the Tories on an anti-black platform which warned trade unionists that immigration would mean cheap labour undermining their gains. The struggles in the factories did not make the bosses' Press - only distortions of the political activism of people like 'Malcolm X' who could conveniently be torn to shreds and gaoled as a racist on a bill supposedly aimed at white racism. Meanwhile we began to get to know Enoch Powell, whose high principles of 'laissez faire' have crumbled under the desire to have power - first the turn from liberalism to racism on immigration, then against the Common Market, then from

opposition to giving to support for it. 'Spearhead', the National Front mag., rubs its hands and watches him draw closer.

But black industrial militancy is not as recent as might be thought. The strike at Courtauld's Red Scar mill in Preston in 1965 achieved a good deal of publicity. It was the first significant strike when black workers, virtually all Asian, came out and all but four of their white colleagues stayed in. Up to a year before the strike, the management insisted on speed-up, concentrating on one of the two departments where almost all the blacks were employed. The white workers had also opposed the agreement on speed-up between management and union, but during the strike and after there was tension. The black workers tried very hard to break down the hostility, with some success, although there was a short-term white counter-strike in one of the departments.

In 1967 350 Asians and one white worker came out at Coneycgre Foundry at Tipton against sackings which were being made on a ra-



Platform at a national conference of unions against racialism in Birmingham

cial basis. This followed the AEF refusing to accept short-time working made necessary, the bosses claimed, by falling production, loss of orders and management difficulties. The AEF had originally agreed with T and G acceptance of short-term working. During the strike it accepted its members scabbing on the workers on strike, who were all T and G. In spite of all this, the black workers won. A year later the management tried to demote one of the Asian shop stewards. Once again the AEF scabbed, but the strikers won. At the end of the strike, the AEF members opposed reinstatement, refused to work with the steward and went on strike for a week.

At Newby Foundry in West Bromwich, the AEF refused to support the strike of 90 Indian workers, and white members stayed in and scabbed again. At Roebuck Lane MMC Works in Birmingham, AEF white workers responded to an Asian being made a moulder by going on strike. In due course, needing a lighter job, the management sacked him. The AEF did nothing.

In the last year, the Nottingham textile industry has faced a wave of strikes by Asian workers. At the Crepe Sizes and Mansfield Hosiery factories, the strikers won, in spite of having to force what union support they got - in the latter case getting the strike made official by occupying the NUHWK offices. At the Joan Stroud factory and, most recently, at Jaffes, the strike was broken. In both cases, the union was the T and G, under the guiding hand of official Reg Harris. In both cases, too much reliance was placed on the union, which refused to give any support. Both involved, typical of the Midlands textile industry, appalling conditions. At Jaffes, the workers considered picketing the union offices, but by then were too demoralised and simply packed up their jobs. Incredibly, Bennie Bunsee, who was very active in the Mansfield Hosiery strike, reinforced dependence on the union and thus contributed to the defeat. At present 18 Pakistani workers at Courtauld's Harwood Cash Lawn Mills in Mansfield are out, again relying on the T and G, which once more is giving no support. In this struggle they have recruited 110 white workers who are women - an incredible step forward.

In each case, the blacks have faced an entrenched system of discrimination. At Courtauld's, they have stressed a general increase in wages, because here at least, although the gap is wide, the girls are also very badly paid.

In the building strike and the ancillary ho-

spital workers strike, blacks and whites (in the latter case of both sexes) stood solid together, and provided an example of what can be done with class solidarity. This doesn't alter the unpleasant fact that in many struggles white workers fight to preserve wage or job discrimination. We will not smash racism, as the Socialist Labour League (SLL) seeks to, by pointing to the crisis in capitalism and trying to explain it all as a plot by the bosses to split the working class.

## EXPLOITATION

Nobody pretends the bosses don't do that. But racism - and sexism - are rife in the working class basically because the working class is at the raw end of capitalism, and therefore reflects its contradictions in the most extreme form. The bosses exploit this at a time of crisis. Racism is ultimately a product of imperialism. The bosses exploit people at the lowest cost they can manage. They could, and can, exploit black workers at a far lower level than they can white workers. Whether true or not, many revolutionaries at the beginning of the century, including Lenin, believed that white working class living standards were kept up by the crude imperialist exploitation of the third world. Poor workers have been driven to find a scapegoat lower in the ladder who they can hurt when the alternative is to destroy an apparently invincible boss.. This kind of

fear the bosses eagerly reinforce. The ruling class has a habit of redistributing wealth by slashing the incomes of the better-off workers to sedate the worse off, and keeping its own profits at the same level - the so-called Fair Rents Act is an example. It will only begin to be destroyed when blacks have parity - and it is evident that this is going to mean, for a lot of the time, direct conflict with white workers. The same applies with women workers, who have also shown an impressive degree of militancy against bosses and unions. The Leeds women's sweat shop strike in 1970, when women went around the different factories in an ever-expanding picket, pulling out fellow workers, was perhaps the biggest. The Fakenham occupation, when women defied unions and management, took over the factory, and continue to run it, with equality of wages, although operating competitively, is the most recent. The disputes at GEC's Salford Electrical Electrical Instruments and Rugby Turbine Generators, for equal pay for women, along with numerous others, use the chink in the £1 plus 4% Pay Laws which allow more for rises (which should bring women's wages up to parity with men's by 1975) to fight the cheap labour system. It also gives us all a chance to push holes in the 'anti-inflation, higher profits' dam. A united working class will not be achieved by us ignoring the contradictions inside it. The women or black who sacrifices his/her own interests for the sake of the revolution does not only hurt him/her self. Fighting alongside the white male does not end inequality: it simply pretends it isn't there. It damages the revolution. There is a time for conflict, and a time for class solidarity.

Confronting racism and sexism within the working class is vital if we are to prevent the bosses using these divisions to split us and rule. Black and women's autonomous organisations, and caucuses in the trades unions, are essential for this. But this confrontation must be worked out within the class.

The careerist using women's liberation to get into the Stock Exchange; the black shopkeeper getting fat off workers - these are not part of the revolution. Their colour - or sex - is irrelevant. Their class is crucial. We have no need to talk to them, any more than to the boss of ICI. We only have to argue with those they have fooled in the working class. All the battles belong here. We have only communication with the rulers. We have to destroy them to build a society worth living in, managed by workers, male and female, black and white.

## ABOUT 'LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE'

This paper is written and produced by people all over the country, who are active in their trade unions, tenants' associations, claimants' unions, women's liberation groups, schools and universities.

We are united by our membership of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists - a democratically organised group which believes in a socialist revolution, but a revolution brought about, and firmly controlled, by the majority of the working people. We work to encourage contacts and understanding between the different aspects of working class struggle.

We oppose all groups and parties who take the initiative and control of their struggle from ordinary people. We think that the way forward to a better society is not through any kind of 'new' leadership, but through working people discovering their own history, their own ability to organise themselves, their confidence in themselves and their mates.

As part of our attempt to put this kind of politics into practice, we have rotating editorship of each issue.

We are producing this paper (none of us are professional journalists) to provide one means of spreading some hidden facts, of publicising what workers are thinking and doing, to workers in other industries and other parts of the country, to talk about what claimants, women, immigrants, pensioners and schoolkids are doing, and how these battles can't be separated.

We won't give you the familiar crap of 'this is your paper', 'without this paper the working class is leaderless' etc. What we do say is that if you want to USE this paper - to pass on things you've learnt, to ask for help from other people, or just to make contact with others in a similar situation, then please do so. We know that lots of people have no practice at writing articles - but who needs literary genius? We promise to improve its appearance as we get more practised. The contents are up to you so please write to us, whether its an article or a letter.





# CHRYSLER

The victory of the Chrysler workers was good news, particularly at a time when the working class had been set back in other disputes. But the question remains as to why the Chrysler management chose that time to have a confrontation with its workers.

Chrysler has been in the middle of an aggressive sales revival and has lifted its share of the British market from 8.6% to 10.3%. And there has been little substantial trouble at its Ryton Avenger plant, despite the fact that the increased production of Avenger cars from 3,000 to 3,500 per week has led to different manning scales on the assembly line. Production over March and April this year was increasing by 500 cars a week and in the first 5 months of this year 78,906 Chrysler cars were registered. Output at Ryton which produces all the Avenger cars was expected to reach 160,000 for the year. 60,000 of these would be for export. Against this the figure of 3,961 Avengers, claimed by Chrysler Chief Executive Gilbert Hunt to have been lost through disputes in six months at Ryton, looks very small. That's just over the target output for one week.

Yet despite this, Chryslers threatened (a la Henry Ford two years ago) to ease up on a £19 million expansion and on investment. This is impractical at present for Chrysler although it is the way they are trying to go. Nowhere else in the Chrysler combine is capable of producing Avengers for the European market and they can hardly do without the Avenger as it accounts for 50% of its sales. Avengers are only made in the UK and to start from scratch in another country would take considerable time and would mean a considerable drop from last years profits which were \$220.5 million - an increase from 1971 of 163%. Their Simca and Barreiros plants in France and Spain are either capable of producing Simcas only or are running at full capacity already.

Europe is reckoned to be the big car market overtaking the US market in 5 years time. While Chrysler would like to be able to depend much more on its French and Spanish subsidiaries where the workers are much more subservient, its present policy must be to try and fully utilise its plants at Ryton Stoke and Linwood and attempt to push up production there as fast as possible. If it pulled out of Britain it would lose the £50 million invested there in the last 5 years.

It looks as though the Detroit bosses of Chrysler ordered a stand-up fight to tame the unions and workers, so that expansion into the European market could further increase their enormous profits with a tamed workforce flogging themselves flat-out on Measured Day

Work. Whether or not the management of Chrysler in Britain dissented from this decision is unclear, but the announcement that Gilbert Hunt is shortly to retire may be a pointer. Chrysler workers are very sceptical about this supposed £10 million British expansion scheme as it's the first time they have heard about it. They want increased productivity without new investment, especially as, despite last years profits, Chrysler in America is not producing its expected profit and has to turn to its overseas subsidiaries in order to make it up.

Another possible reason for their toughening up in May is the fact that a pay claim was on its way for the end of June. If the workers could be taken on and beaten before that time, then the first steps to a tamed workforce would have begun. The Chrysler bosses must have been extremely disconcerted by the real effectiveness of the flying pickets, which is why they hired thugs to try and break them. In the face of this determined picketing their use of lay-off pay to drive a wedge between the different plants failed to succeed. Ryton workers were able to bring all the plants to a standstill without bringing all Chrysler's workers in Britain out.

Undoubtedly present in the minds of the management at Chrysler was the fact that, although wage bargaining is at plant level, this year, because of an 18-month agreement at Linwood, all the plants would have been negotiating at the same time. This meant and still does mean that Chrysler need only fear one annual dispute over wages and can plan for it. Last year they attempted to get a nationally negotiated agreement, where full-time officials would be able to have a much bigger say than the local stewards. They were defeated then. The experience of Ford and Vauxhall should be a warning of succumbing to this kind of agreement. There they have joint national negotiating bodies. Not only have they been on Measured Day Work longer than anyone else, but they are the lowest paid in the car industry.

Of course Chrysler have not been the only motor manufacturers getting tough recently. Perkins at Peterborough - again a subsidiary of a North American firm - have been taking a hard line over a wage claim based on parity with Coventry Massey-Ferguson. Not surprisingly in view of their key importance to British exports and industry generally, the motor manufacturers are the spearhead of the ruling class offensive. The drive for speed-up has been seen particularly in the British Leyland combine and there have been disputes at Swindon, Cowley, Longbridge and Halewood as well as Linwood.

The need for speed-up was put clearly by the Director of Advisory Services at the Engineering Employers Federation. He called for a relentless productivity drive at the same time as the President of the Confederation of British Industry insisted that employers push up the output of each worker. He emphasised that there could be no return to free collective bargaining.

The situation that faces the bosses at present was put by newspapers on June 5th midway through the Chrysler strike: - 'If investment cannot be raised sufficiently in the short term, more output will have to be squeezed out of the existing labour force, hence the emphasis on productivity deals and worker participation during Phase Three.' - The Guardian.

Because it is more profitable to invest overseas, there is very low investment in British industry. The above quotes show that the ruling class faced with this low investment has to attack still more viciously the living standards of the working class. Head-on battles to usurp the British workers hard-won defensive rights are now part of industrial life.

## APEX ACTION

At the May conference of the APEX union, the delegates of the union branches voted to proscribe the International Socialists and the newly formed rank and file group Apex Action. Under careful supervision the activities of Apex Action had been 'documented' by the union Executive over its short existence and these alleged 'facts' were used to witch-hunt militancy out of the union. Although there is little in common between the International Socialists and libertarians, what happened to IS and Apex Action gives vital lessons for all those who are fighting in rank and file groups for trade union democracy.

In 1972 the previously known Clerical and Administrative Workers' Union changed its title to the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff (APEX). The change of name indicated a development within the union towards recruiting company executives into its ranks. The union now possesses two types of branch - executives' branches and normal branches. It is this very professional

aspect of the union that is now being expanded. It has often found itself in competition with ASTMS and TASS (Technical and Supervisory section of the AUEW) in the struggle to retain and obtain these 'members'.

Apex Action was formed at the very end of 1972 and only lasted 6 months. This rank and file group was instrumental in demanding that all area organisers and union officials be elected democratically and be subject to recall by those who elected them. The Action group had won some support in the local branches for its programme, which called for a fight against the Tories and the pay freeze. Apex Action had tried to organise within the union to fight against graded pay and job evaluation schemes. These schemes divide clerical workers, giving different rates of pay for different types of job - some jobs being much better paid. Graded schemes are organised to make workers fight each other for 'promotion'. This setting-up of graded schemes was part of the union's policy so that it could recruit the higher echelons of clerical administration by securing their privileges in better 'evaluated jobs'.

At Doncaster in a strike of women clerical workers, Apex Action - many of whom were IS members - worked and helped on the pickets. The strike won union recognition, the right to wage negotiation, but also the union negotiators agreed on a job evaluation scheme. The mass of strikers voted for these proposals and went back to work. IS handed out leaflets condemning the job evaluation scheme. The union executive resented this action as it attacked the very basis on which they hoped to recruit managerial staff.

Following this action, the executive proscribed the IS and Apex Action, and this proscription was presented to the delegates of APEX at the National Conference at Scarborough on 12th May as paragraph 8 of the report of the Executive Council. The following excerpt clearly indicates the executive's attitude.

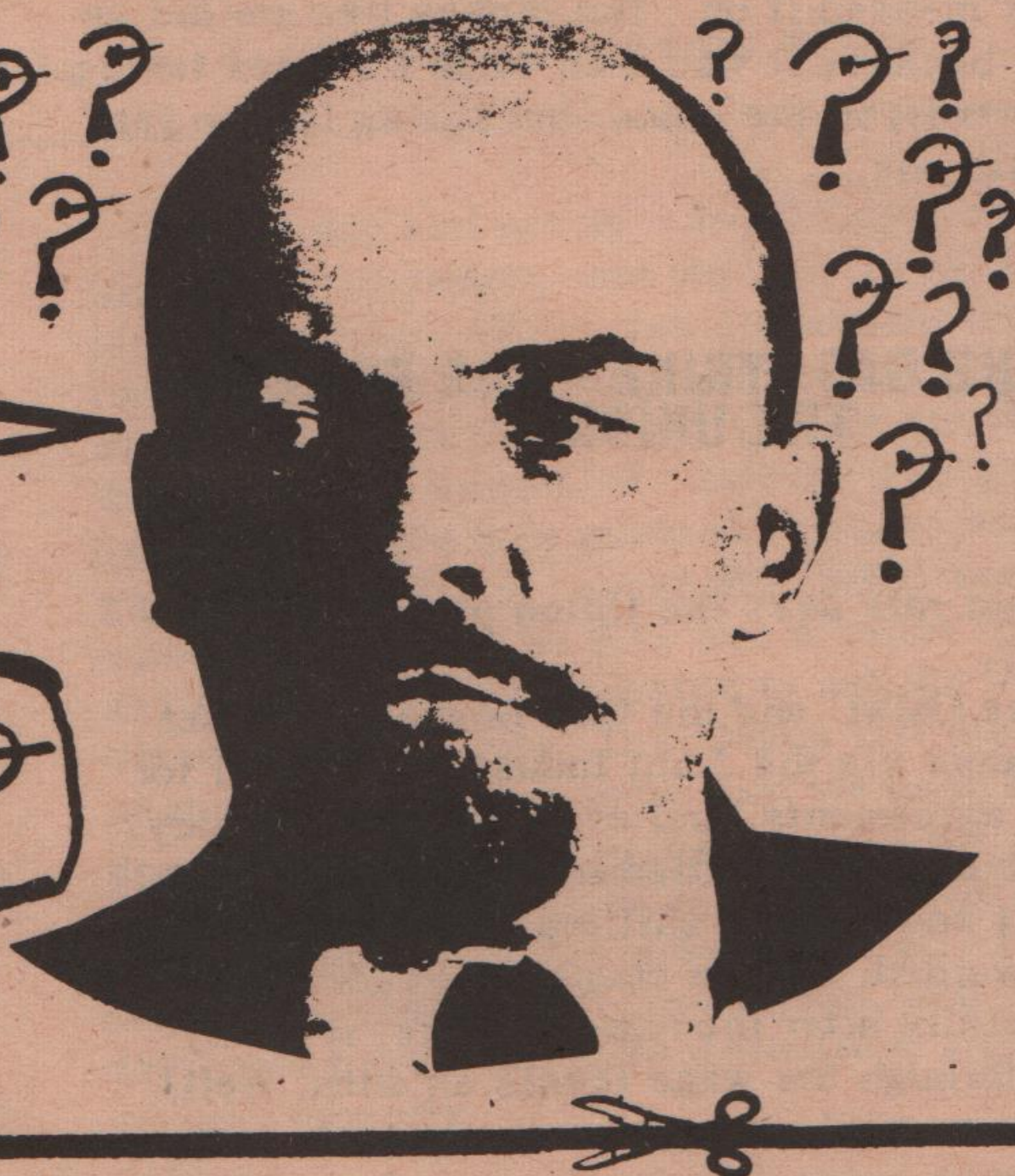
A motion was immediately put up to 'refer back' this part of the Executive report. Within the union constitution this is the only way an Executive Council motion can be thrown out of the report. If it was not 'referred back' it would become a Rule within the union. Dave Prescott, Secretary of the Leeds Communist Party, moved the 'reference back' motion. He pointed out time and again that the union Executive was trying to witch-hunt militants at a time when the Tory attacks on the working class were reaching an unprecedented level. Speakers stated that in a time, when the right to strike, the right of free collective bargaining, and the right to earn a living wage were being threatened, the union Executive was trying to split the membership and crush rank and file initiative.

Finally, the Executive had the right of reply and under standing orders this is always the final speech concerning an issue. No one could therefore give an answer back to any accusations levelled in this speech by the Executive.

Continued on Page 4.

WHAT SHOULD WE HAVE DONE

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## ORA

### groups & contact addresses

If you think that the direct control by working people over all aspects of their lives is worth fighting for..

If you think that what's needed now is independent rank and file organisation linking all aspects of working class struggle - in housing, schools, womens' rights, in work, and all others.

If you think that the independence of these organisations must be defended from takeover by the Labour traitors, union bureaucracies, and the 'NEW leaderships' If you think that an organisation is needed which fights for revolutionary politics in everyday struggles but has no intention of seizing power for itself.

THEN, JOIN THE ORA!

#### LOCAL GROUPS.

Glasgow: Gordon Sykes, 32 Queen Elisabeth Square, Glasgow C3.

Hull: Marion McCartney, 21d Pearson Ave., Hull.

Leeds: Trevor Bavage, flat 3; 35 Richmond Rd York. Neil Hunt, 24 Moss Street, York. Leeds 6.

Manchester: Ron Marsden, 277 Kingsway Park Davyhulme, Urmston M/c.

North London: Doug Durrant, 68a Chingford Rd, London E.17.

#### CONTACTS

Bristol: Mac, 10 Whatley Rd, Clifton, Bristol 8

Colchester: Peter Newell, 'Aegean', Spring Lane, 8 Ash Green, Colchester.

Oxford: Nick Heath, 41 Aston Road, Oxford

Dundee: Mike Malet, 1 Lynnewood Place.

Lancaster: Joe Thornberry, 56 Norfolk St.

Sheffield: Ian Neary, c/o Students Union.

Sheffield University.

There are also contacts in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Harlech, Huddersfield, Leicester, Liverpool, West, East and South London, Manchester, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Poole, Reading, Rochdale, Salford, Southampton, Stirling, Swansea and Wellington. If you want to be put in touch, write to the North London group, who are currently handling contact work. All enquiries about the ORA should be sent to them.



## APEX cont.

The General Secretary accused the IS and Apex Action of 'subverting the union' and also quoted a message from Vic Feather, who had stated that rank and file groups had been formed in other unions for the same ends. The speaker led a spear attack on the IS, claiming it was run by 'an actor and actresses, a bunch of university people and a few lawyers'. Constantly, Apex Action was referred to as an 'outside agency' trying to disrupt the union. This idea of an external grouping trying to interfere with the 'smooth running' of the union was constantly harped on.

This was finally summed up when the speaker stated that:

"After comprehensively searching the lists of union members, we find that the two people who have been secretaries of Apex Action were not union members".

It was this, in the words of a delegate at the conference, that finally tipped the scale.

"It was this statement that swung a lot of uncommitted delegates to the side of the Executive Council. If it wasn't true, anyone there who knew the facts could have called a point of order, interrupted the Executive Council's speech and stated the two Apex Action secretaries were union members - no-one did so".

The 'reference back' motion was put to the vote and defeated by a ratio of 3-2. IS and Apex Action were proscribed (expelled) and so not allowed to be members of the union.

It is beyond question that these attacks by the right-wing must be defended by united action on the part of the rank and file militants. All revolutionaries must fight these witch-hunts no matter upon which grouping they fall. But the question remains - were IS trying to control the rank and file group by appointing secretaries to Apex Action who were not union members? On the day after the motion for 'reference back' of paragraph 8 of the Executive Council's report had failed, none of the many leaflets condemning the proscription mentioned the issue of the two secretaries, even to disclaim it.

In all subsequent issues of Socialist Worker, no disclaimer has been made, even though many column inches have covered the topic. They mention that Ray Grantham in the speech for the Executive Council "claimed falsely that some of the people named as Apex Action supporters were not even members of the union".

It wasn't supporters he mentioned but the two secretaries of Apex Action. Unless IS come clean over this issue and state whether this is fact or not, everyone fighting to throw out the proscription will have to argue in doubt against all those who claim Apex Action to be an external agency disrupting the union.

Being a member of the union is the first principle of anyone forming a rank and file group in that union. It is impossible to accelerate the pace of progress of any rank and file group by involving at the very centre of rank and file activity those who are not union members. It opens one to the worst smears and attacks from the right and can cost, as we have seen, the total expulsion of a militant rank and file grouping from a union.



Militants in A.P.E.X. defy their Union to march on May Day.

Q. What is the situation of the gas industry now that the gas board is a corporation and must make a profit?

A. When I first came into the industry, it was a really soft job, that is compared with the usual factory work which awaits the working class - poor money - but even so, a good job. Within the last five to six years it's changed enormously. Productivity deals and bonus schemes cover most types of work, even covering jobs that can't really be measured, as on such things as servicing and repairing the equipment. It's silly in some ways but in other areas, like Mains and Service, bonus can be dangerous; blokes will often cut corners if there is a chance to make bonus, once the scheme is introduced, the blokes make sure they're going to earn the maximum amount.

Fifteen to twenty years ago the industry was on its knees. Dirty coal gas, no modern appliances, a general feeling of running things down. About ten years ago the changes were starting to occur, attractive fires, cookers and so on were being developed, the gas was being made cleaner, and then of course there was the discovery of Natural Gas.

With the new gas came the conversion programme at a tremendous cost, something like fifteen hundred million quid was borrowed to finance it, it works out around £47 per house hold. The thing is, anything can be done with the gas; Natural Gas can be made to burn on Town Gas appliances, so why the conversion programme? - Other than the bloody system wanting to make money out of it. Also, the Gas Board has plans in hand for building gas-manufacturing plants like the Americans, to make gas from oil, so that when the Natural Gas is finished, the manufactured gas will then be burnt on the existing appliances; so again, why the massive conversion programme?

Q. Does this mean that they replace a lot of the appliances then?

A. Oh yeah.

Firms like George Brays in Leeds, who for donkey's years have manufactured Town Gas burners, well all these burners are thrown away with the conversion, and Bray then makes them all again, this time for Natural Gas. The firm has opened another factory now.

In this area the Gas Board do their own gas conversions, but in other parts of the country contractors do the job for them. The contractors now are asking to continue in the Gas Industry, doing work that was done by Gas workers before. It does seem that now the Gas Industry is on its feet and booming, it becomes a corporation - and is hived off to private interests. Whereas before, when it was tottering about burning old Town Gas, nobody wanted to know. As for being a nationalised industry, "run for the people, by the people", there is not even a charade anymore. In our last month's magazine, the chairman is saying that "the primary aim of the Gas Corporation is to make money". (Any connection with the 5% price rise applied for on the 12th of June?)

Q. Which Union is it?

A. The Transport and General Workers' Union has about 10% of the members, but the main Union is the General and Municipal Worker's Union, which of course grew out of the old Gasworkers' Union, led by Will Thorne, which had Marx's daughter-in-law on the executive. But today it's fantastic to see what it has become from such beginnings. There is joint Industrial Councils that have come up over the years, apparently they meet monthly. I'm sure if you were there you'd find it difficult to know who were the Management and who were the Union in what they said, really. There's no lay members on the Councils, you don't get elected to them, you cannot stand for it.

Q. You're appointed by the management and you're appointed by the Union?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there anyone else on them? No Government representative or anything?

A. No, because as far as I know they have it on regional levels and also on the National level. So of course, it's a means of control really, I suppose.

### LOCAL CONDITIONS - THE FIGHT OVER THE USE OF VANS

Q. That's where the wage negotiations are done?

A. It seems that's where everything's done, yes. Local conditions, they're not really interested.

# the gas

A couple of years ago, we had trouble with the vans, with Gasboard vans we could take them home when we'd finished our day's work, because we use vans often with the job. When we moved depots, the management decided that we should take the vans in on a night. Well I wasn't involved at all in the Union then, virtually no-one was, except the existing steward who's still the steward. He's a right-winger, he wouldn't even call a meeting. The blokes bloody hell, they were really pissed off about it. So we forced a meeting through, and went on strike for a week - well as far as the vans were concerned - there were no vans driven at all. You don't get paid for driving a van anyway. Whilst the affair was in our local depot, we didn't know how to put pressure anywhere, or even to publicise it. It was in the summer time which made it worse, not much work to do, as far as the Gas Board were concerned. We got information down via the Steward, that the regional official, the G.M.W.U. official wouldn't even come to see us about it. He considered it not worth his time to come down to see us, because it was so silly a dispute as far as he was concerned. Bloody hell, and that's caused more bitterness, that issue, it's still with us now. I mean, it can mean an hour or more on a bloke's day now

I've seen some blokes who live at Garforth (8 miles outside Leeds), they work out there, they finish out there, then they've to bring the van back to Leeds and then go home. The Chairman and the bloody Managers etc, they don't bring vans in or cars; the Gas Board have a lot of cars that are indistinguishable from private cars, but they are in fact Gas Board owned and I'm sure they don't bring theirs in. Also, there's a lot of home service girls who come from the showrooms, and have diplomas in cookery, and they show people how to cook, they all get estate cars, and they certainly don't take theirs in. It's only us, of course.

Anyway, the attitude was, as far as the Union were concerned, it weren't worth any trouble. All the time, the Union and the Steward wanted to know how much we wanted in cash terms, and all the time, we told them, we didn't want any cash, we wanted to keep the vans out. It was essentially about the conditions of work, it's a thing that we'd practised for years and years. It wasn't something that we were asking for, it was something we already had.

Anyway, in the end it turned out the GMWU settled for twelve bob with the management, for driving a van. But to get that twelve bob, you've to drive a van every day, you've got to sign for it, so you check battery, oil, tyres, water. They really put the responsibility on you. They really messed it up. But blokes like me did as well, because it was then when I started taking an interest in the union, but it was far too late for that one..

### THE GAS STRIKE - THE ROLE OF THE UNION

Q. What role does the Union play in the industry?

A. The GMWU and the Gas Board have a set procedure via the Joint Industrial Council for wage agreements, and every year, in January, we have a wage settlement. It's always been, I don't know, eight shilling or something, you get awarded. Until a couple of years ago. Especially after the miners strike, it really burst through the wage levels as such. Well, last year, while things were certainly getting expensive, prices were going up, the executive of our Union were meeting in October of '72, to decide what to ask for in '73, which they normally do. Well, we put a resolution through our branch that we wanted an £8 rise, it seemed fantastic at the time, but really with the miners settlement, it wasn't that much. We found out we met lads from Harrogate Gas and they'd put £8 through. We found in the Midlands they'd put a £10 claim through. In Hull they'd put an £8 claim through. It was starting to come. The thing is, we weren't in touch with any of these, we really were isolated, because of the nature of the job, and because, by the Union rules we

cannot contact other branches. So it comes along to the executive meeting and they throw it all out. They weren't interested, they thought it was a bit silly, you know, asking for £8 and especially because the GMWU will not put figures forward. It turned out, after they'd sorted things out, that they would ask for 'a substantial increase', come January.

So along comes January, and there's the Phase 1 has come into force. Lord Cooper retired in December, and we got Basnet, who's supposed to be a bit more to the left.

Q. He was responsible for Pilkingtons - he was the regional officer there?

A. They nearly hung him up, didn't they? He's just the same really, when it comes to it. They are worse in fact, at least the Coopers you can identify better. Anyway, Heath sent that letter (to Basnet) saying you can't really negotiate, to the Gas Unions, because it will clash with our Phase 1 policy. And it was in fact putting the brake on collective bargaining and he had apparently no legal right to do it, even on their bloody terms. So it soured things a bit more. So the unprecedented step, the GMWU took, of threatening to call a work-to-rule nationally. So it must have given some of the blokes a few ideas. After a while we heard of one or two depots, in Bristol of walkouts, in Hull it turned out they'd been on a work-to-rule for 6 weeks, and it was slowly coming through that people were starting to get upset in various places. Especially with being told that the Gas Industry's booming, and the showrooms are really smart places, pushing gas and that, and we couldn't get a bloody rise through properly. And also the rundown of the Town Gas plants - the manufacturing gas plants, causing 1,000's of redundancies. Even on the Tories' terms we had a wage claim that was justified.

The next thing we knew, out of the blue, there'd been some sort of delegate meeting, of different areas, inspired by Basnet. He started pushing that different areas should have some sort of representation from different areas. They were very undemocratic, I mean, you didn't elect delegates in your depot, or anything, we found out that the existing stewards just used to go along. Out of one of the delegate meetings the Hull gasworkers called for a strike on a Wednesday. On the Tuesday the shop steward wasn't entertaining a meeting at work to publicise that the Hull gasmen are wanting a meeting. So another lad pushes it, and starts to call the blokes round him in the depot, which doesn't sound very much, but in an industry where it's never happened it was quite something really in its way. But the same time the local Gas Board management sent down a bloody letter saying that, in effect, the responsibility for gas leaks was on our shoulders and not the Gas Boards and would we sign to that effect. And the letter came down at the same time that there was the trouble going on so everybody was really pissed off with it. In fact the one day strike was as much more out of bloodymindedness about the management than about the wage claim.

So we had the one day strike, and then from that day on, we had meetings every day and it ended up that the blokes were fed up with meetings. We had no direction at all. We were not only fighting the stewards, the GMWU didn't want to know at all. But the word had got out to other depots, they went on strike after us, a few days after, especially in South Yorkshire. At the end of the week, gas workers from South Yorkshire sent a representation to our place, saying we're on strike, we thought you were - but we'd already gone back to work, you see and we didn't know what was going on. There were no links at all.

The next week we decided on a work to rule at the union branch meeting, we tried to push a strike, but we were mandated by the branch that we should ask for a work-to-rule. In the end we ended up asking for a strike mandate but we were splitting the shop that much that we settled for a work-to-rule. A week later we're on a work-to-rule and bloody 200 gasworkers come



# industry

## A RANK AND FILE GROUP FOR THE GAS:

from South Yorkshire, charging up the gates, shouting "blacklegs" and "scabs"! These blokes in South Yorkshire were out for weeks and weeks on strike. They really had some guts, these lads, because they had no support at all.

Anyway, after three weeks, the GMWU stepped in and they kept threatening that they should have talks with the Government, and what they were going to do, and all the time in different areas, there were groups either going on strike, or on a work-to-rule, but you didn't really know what was going on.. At the end of the three weeks unofficial work-to-rule, we had this meeting at the Trades Hall, with the regional officials down, and they really tried to sit on it, really did, saying there's only you in the area that's causing trouble, they were saying negotiations are going along, and you'll spoil them by striking. They really think of their public image, wanting to appear respectable, the GMWU. Anyway they nearly got lynched that particular night.. The best thing about it that was - pulled off the stage, told to piss off out the place! But from then on it was made official nationally, it was decided that regions would interpret the course of action to be taken depending on - there were so many things it depended on - whether you had Natural Gas or Town Gas; what sort of depots you were in, either making gas or servicing something.

It was areas like Birmingham, where the Town Gas supplies were getting so critical, that they were having to start to turn them off. (Apparently, if the pressure's not kept up to a certain level in the mains, when you start turning on at the appliance end of it, you can let air into the main, and it becomes an explosive mixture. It doesn't mean it will explode, but it could. Of course all the papers, television and all were all shouting what a load of cows we all were.

So, locally, we were on a work to rule. Now in our job, although it was winter time, and it was quite bad weather, we weren't having much effect. There's no set procedure about our job; it was left up to the individual how to decide how you were working to rule. On our job, each group of men work a certain district and they have a foreman over them. Well, some of these foremen were really putting a finger on these blokes. They were getting them individually and making sure that they weren't working to rule in fact. Like, if central heating were broken down, and no-one was in when they called, instead of ignoring it and putting it on the waiting list, the foreman would try to make sure it got done.

London, in the North Thames, they were on the point of chopping half-a-million homes off, and it would have come about on a particular weekend. Immediately preceding that weekend, on the Thursday, was a national delegates meeting in London, on the new Gas Board offer of £2.40. The delegate meeting rejected it on the Thursday. On the Friday, the executive sent out to all the regions, instructions to the people involved not to escalate the industrial action any more. So just when things were almost getting chopped off, the workers had to manufacture gas to keep them on. As soon as that was said from the executive, blokes who really weren't that bothered, well certainly weren't bothered politically, knew that the bloody thing was lost.

It seems if you don't go for ward continually you've had it, you can't stand still, that's all. Those homes would have been cut off that weekend, once you've stopped that, to generate the conditions where that came about again was impossible.

After that weekend the Union carried out the ballot of the membership. It took about ten days. Meantime we're on work to rule, all losing money, all can't see any results at all. They won't let us shut the gas plants down, we are not really that organised enough to do it ourselves. Comes to a ballot and there's eighteen thousand for a return to work as normal, there's eleven thousand voted against a return to work, and there was something like nineteen thousand who didn't vote at all. That's a tremendous amount, seeing it was about their payrise. They just got so pissed off with it all.

In the industry there's about five thousand tradesmen from different crafts, like electricians and plumbers, they're in the GMW, but they're covered by a Confederation Agreement. (An agreement with a different Union.) Anyway, there's five thousand of them and they weren't allowed to vote, and they'd been on strike with everybody else from the beginning.

Q. In the Union is the branch secretary appointed or elected?

A. He's elected every two years. It's not a full time job. The present branch secretary is a friend of the regional organiser, who's appointed. I'm quite close to the bloke in some ways, because he's very working class; over the years, perhaps twenty years, he's put a hell of a lot of time into being branch secretary or whatever. However, I think he's wrong politically. He does know he's from the working class, even though he accepts all the crap that the GMWU accepts about the system. And also in the dispute he was always trying to put the brake on things. All along in the dispute, there was no-one going along to branch meetings, it was some abstraction somehow, the Union was something outside the dispute. People weren't going along and getting involved. When it comes to a branch meeting, it doesn't seem to affect them.

### THE SITUATION NOW

Q. What effect has the strike had?

A. Well, locally, some of the best blokes who were pushing it, some of the best militants, they certainly left. The people who were pushing mainly are the people who do the hard work of laying mains and services. It's like working on the buildings, and if you're getting lousy pay for it; especially they're the ones who'd been on strike and not on work to rule.... So a lot of these blokes left.

We were supposed to have some sort of delegate meetings in Yorkshire, from this dispute, that the GMWU had set up, so the shop stewards in different depots would meet regular I've never heard a thing about them since. In our particular depot we did have the ballots for two extra stewards, they were friends of the existing steward. But they got very good votes. When there's nothing happening, apparently, they've got a lot of support.

As far as the wage agreement goes, we've got £2.80 paid on top of what we earn. It's not on your basic rate, so it doesn't affect your bonus or your overtime, it's just paid on top. It's subject to you not taking any industrial action as well. When we were off on May Day, we lost ten bob of that £2.80.

Q. So the next rise is next January?

A. Well it's supposed to go to the pay board now, we're supposed to have an outstanding claim, in the Autumn, but well there's no obligation.



Gasworkers organising for victory while their leaders negotiated for defeat.

Up in the North East, they went on strike straight away, well virtually straight away. What regions had to do was to decide on a policy, then submit it to the Executive: an Executive that didn't have a bloody gasworker on it because it was the GMW. I think there are some lay members on it, but they get picked but even among the lay members there are no gas workers.. And these were the people deciding on a bloody gas strike. There was Basnet and the other bloke, Edmonds, he's chief gas officer or something, he was always billed as an ex-public school boy, very well-spoken bloke he was. Basnet's side kick at the time. He was saying all the wrong things, you know.

So it turned out that when regions were really wanting to push, the Executive wouldn't sanction what they wanted to do. But the North East ignored them anyway, and went on strike. It was such a mess, it was so unorganised. When we were on work to rule, there were some areas on strike, and some on work to rule, but even in some different depots it was different. Although all the depots in this area were under one Leeds gas branch of sixteen hundred members, the manufacturing plant in Meadow Lane, in Leeds, were all working - they were all bloody working normal they weren't even working to rule - and apparently, nationally, this area was one of the worst.

We already had set up a local committee, to look after old people, and anybody in need, like pregnant women. The mains department even run a new mains to a pregnant woman's house, so she could get the gas on. But all the time the GMWU had control. We wanted to picket the gas works where they made the gas, to cut the gas off in Leeds, of course the GMWU wouldn't entertain it at all. So they had a ballot there and eventually they ballotted to get the blokes out on a work to rule. The blokes left the plant in such good working order that we used to go down on a night time, picketing, and the bloody gas pressure was sailing out through the gas pipes without a drop in pressure at all. They could have slowed their work down, and in a day could have made sure it wouldn't supply any gas properly.

So it keeps going on like this, and of course the government won't give in at all and the executive keep meeting them and threatening, but all the time we're on a work to rule that's not bloody doing that much good, and the blokes are losing about £7 or £8 a week, well more with the loss of overtime.

In the Midlands it was getting so critical, after four weeks, that if the men didn't start to work normal soon, they were just on the point of chopping off fifty-thousand households. In

Q. Why did you write the leaflet, and what do you hope to achieve by it?

A. The job I do is not really the sort of job that creates militant people, even though it's been tightened up a lot over the last year or two. We're not inside at all, we're off out all day on jobs, so we do have some sort of control over our work.

Even though the blokes won't go along to branch meetings and get involved, I thought something like a leaflet could start to try to express something of what they feel about their job. We hope to start up a rank and file organisation. I don't know if it's going to be any good or not, as I said, a lot of the blokes have left the industry anyway. There's been a few months since the dispute, so it's cooled off a lot, and we may not be able to reach that many people.

There may be a chance for a type of broadsheet, mainly about their conditions, and not some abstractions about an organisation.

'WALK TALL - THINK BIG', was the message the new chairman of the Gas Corporation sent out in a personally addressed envelope to all gas workers on 1st January this year. Seven days later, in the depot where I work, we were on strike. It was only a one day token strike to show solidarity with militant Hull gasmen, but still, it was the first time for fifty years, and the pot was starting to boil.

New Wortley Depot in Leeds, where the events took place, is the Pride of the Gas Board (management that is), built a couple of years ago, and containing a Service Centre, Main Store, and a trendy Technical College. New Wortley is a showpiece. Though ask someone in overalls and the remarks show anything but Pride. Awkward to get to, badly planned for those on the shop floor, this place is dismal and dispiriting for those who daily clock-in and lose their identity.

After the token strike we started a work-to-rule and go-slow, which of course was unofficial. Three weeks later the GMWU gave us their blessing, for the dispute was spreading over the country and they were losing their grip. In the next two months gasworkers everywhere showed their willingness to fight, and were always kept in check by the union, who in the end weakened the workers so much for them to accept a return to normal work. The fault was ours, in an industry without even a trade union consciousness, instead of trying to put pressure on the GMWU we should have been building links to by-pass them.

Everything is back to normal now, apathy at union branch level, deference shown to management, District Inspectors (foremen) finding fault with men's timesheets, not much dignity and along with the rest of the working class, the thought of another year of useless toil to face.

To any gasworker reading this, and who would be interested in building a rank and file organisation within the industry, please write: C/o 15 Gledhow Wood Grove, Leeds 8.

This is the leaflet being put out by gasworkers attempting to make contacts in other depots to build a rank-and-file organisation within the union. Copies of the leaflet, for distribution at your local depot, can be obtained from the ORA at 29 Cardigan Road, Leeds 6. The organisers would welcome contact with people in other industries, with experience of rank and-file work.



# NO DEFENCE

A rather surprising omission from the agenda of the Leicester Rank and File meeting was that of the Wandsworth 3 - the three R & F members who are being 'tried' by the NUT. In February a section of the National Union of Teachers in the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) were organising strikes over Margaret Thatcher's £15 pittance offered as a rise in the London Allowance. Several NUT associations (branches) organised a series of one-day strikes and demonstrations. The NUT executive was merely opposing this offer without taking any action. The struggle between the strikers and executive came to a crisis at a meeting of the NUT in Central Hall where the Chair tried to prevent militant motions concerning an alliance with other striking public sector workers (hospital staff and civil servants).

The meeting broke into uproar when the executive refused to put the motions on the agenda because they 'had not had time to discuss them.' The speakers calling for discussion of the motion against the will of the executive had the microphones pulled out on them and the meeting broke up.



Teachers picket outside NUT headquarters in support of the 'Wandsworth Three'

Three militants were charged by the NUT for 'unprofessional conduct' by the very executive that had tried to gerrymander the meeting. These three teachers were 'picked on' - all from the militant Teachers Association in Wandsworth - and the NUT is searching for ways to victimise them. Instead of appearing before the normal lay committees, the Wandsworth militants will probably appear before the Professional Conduct Committee during

the weekend July 13th-15th. The Executive has not yet, however, decided this.

They are still pondering on how to provide any kind of case, for they have none. Although the secretary of the Greenwich Association of Teachers is being used as a frontman, the Executive are strongly behind his move and, as they appoint both the Professional Conduct Committee and the Appeals Committee, as they compose both of these committees, they are effectively acting as prosecutor, jury, judge and Appeal Court. A similar situation exists also in other unions.

So who are the three teachers? They are, naturally, leftwing militants who are active in both the NUT and the Rank and File Group. The Executive would dearly love to begin the destruction of the hated R & F thorn in its side, but what is not appreciated by many R & F teachers is that if an attempt to victimise their militants is not fought against and defeated then no other R & F teachers will be willing to expose themselves to risk in order to fight for socialist policies by militant tactics. As R & F say in their pamphlet 'Democracy in Schools', when discussing pupils striking in support of their own demands and victimised teachers, "Teachers have yet to show the same solidarity for one of their colleagues." It is no wonder either that those teachers who 'stick their necks out' in fighting for democracy cannot count on NUT backing - no wonder when they cannot even count on support by fellow militants!

The failure of Rank and File to mobilise nationally since February on this victimisation is a failure by the leadership too busy contemplating its navel to look up and see the writing on the wall. To build any kind of 'combat organisation' (to quote the phrase they use of themselves) from rank and file teachers depends on the credibility of the Group both to the members themselves and to the NUT Executive. If the Executive knows they can victimise militants without any sign of protest from R & F, they will continue to do so in order to consolidate their reactionary policies under the leadership of the CP-member President Max Morris. If the members know they are on their own, it will take a brave (or foolish) militant who will attempt to fight for changes in NUT tactics. Those teachers who are not so shortsighted see this failure to recognise the importance of defence of militants as a crisis in the thinking of the R & F Group. For one IS 'delegate' to say that by ratifying the amended constitution they had 'polished up the bodywork' and that they now needed to 'put in the engine' of the R & F machine by discussing the Journal shows the political naivety and blind approach to the reality of the situation.

The real situation is that militants everywhere are under attack by the present ruling class - in this case the NUT Executive are merely carrying out the policing role of the State. This is happening, and will continue to happen, in other unions as well (e.g. the Shrewsbury building workers and the APEX Action Group) unless unionists organise to defeat such attacks on working class militancy.

## LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST REVIEW quarterly journal of the ORA. 15p

This journal is not intended to be a 'heavy theoretical' in which academics hand down established truths.

It is a journal for the discussion and development of ideas and understanding

It will be able to go into problems which lack of space prevents LIBERTARIAN STRUGGLE dealing with.

Having established the newspaper and begun the organisation of a libertarian revolutionary movement involved in everyday struggles the ORA hopes that establishing this journal for the development of ideas will prove to be another useful addition to the development of the revolutionary movement.

Orders, articles and enquiries should be sent to the Convenor of the LCR Board :-

Les Smith, 277 Kingsway Park, Davyhulme, Urmston, Manchester

## FREE SPEECH

The question of 'free speech' raises itself again in British universities. Students assaulted Professor Eysenck at the LSE in May in protest against his racist theories and a month later Sussex students prevented Professor Huntingdon deliberating on his reactionary role in the administration of the Vietnam war.

It was only three years ago that we saw extreme right-wing MP's such as Enoch Powell, Patrick Wall and Harold Soref being hounded out of universities by students who did not want their creed on campus.

### RADICALS

Each time this sort of action occurs, we see a great split amongst the 'radicals' over the question of free speech. Every instance where right-wing academics are forced to shut up we see radical liberals entering from stage centre, bleating 'academic freedom' and 'tolerance'. Revolutionary students are accused by the 'liberals' of being 'like the bourgeoisie' because they inhibit freedom. We are seeing a compounding of this stance as the Communist Party and 'independent socialists' like the incumbent President of NUS, Randall, move in to 'remove student struggles from the hands of the ultra-leftists.'

These liberals, who crawl around the sherry tables of the Universities paving the way to future careers in business, the Labour Party, or the trade union bureaucracy, tell us that universities are the place where 'essential truths are discovered and stored', and that this 'can only occur in an atmosphere of freedom and tolerant debate.' They ignore the very fact that universities are built to equip and train the future technical and managerial elites. They turn a blind eye to big business influence on the controlling bodies, often compounded by 'grants' tied to courses and research programmes tailored to the needs of industry. These middle class defenders of free speech are the first to demand closed campuses and card checks, to prevent the local population from enjoying university facilities paid for out of the taxes lifted from working people's wages. Their tolerance extends only to those with their own 'culture' - bourgeois culture.

### INTOLERANCE

The accusations of 'intolerance' were aimed at students at LSE and Sussex when the two professors were prevented from speaking. The attack on Eysenck at LSE was tactically inept but not morally wrong. The mass of students at the LSE had decided to allow him to speak. The left could not persuade the student body otherwise. In this atmosphere the only tactic was to face Eysenck on his platform with clear argument, and a campaign within the

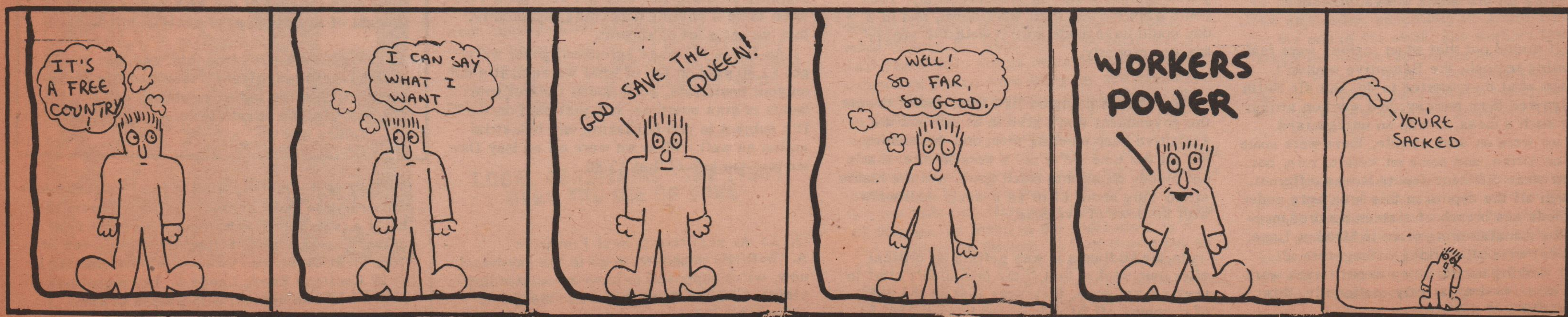
School to expose to the students who was paying for, and who was benefiting from, Eysenck's 'research'. It was the wrong ploy for a small group to split off from the students and physically attack Eysenck. That could only be done when the mass of students thought it necessary. The Communist Party of England (Marxist-Leninist)'s only consideration was to be 'militant'. In a wave of childish 'cowboyism' a few stormed the stage and smacked Eysenck on the nose. It was an adventure.

The liberals and Communist Party (GB) were aghast and took their real position to its logical conclusion. They tried to witchhunt the whole left and lined up with the right-wing. The students didn't fall for this attitude and while they voted to apologise to Eysenck, they also pledged to defend the Maoists against victimisation.

At Sussex a month later another academic was prevented from speaking. The situation was totally different from the LSE event. The organisers of the Indochina Solidarity Committee had the backing of the mass of students. 700 students and staff prevented Samuel Huntingdon from speaking on 'The Role of the Military in US Foreign Policy'. Huntingdon had taken part in planning the prosecution of the war in Vietnam until it lost its economic viability for the US. Students made the point that they'd give him more rights than he gave the Vietnamese people - he supported the 'strategic hamlet' ie. concentration camp scheme - but they would not let him speak on their campus. The liberals and the right were soon clamouring that this was 'a blatant example of left-wing totalitarianism' and a breakdown of 'free speech'.

Throughout the world the oppressed find that there is very little 'free speech'. The same liberal papers that attack the students, have attacked workers for defending closed shops against the 'rights' of scabs and bosses arse-lickers. The same papers obeyed - without one exception - the Tory orders to play down the May Day strike. The same papers attacked the Miners, the Hospital workers etc. etc. Liberals forget that we are not all equal, that there is a war on - a class war. This division expresses itself in all sectors of society, even in the universities. Tolerance of bourgeois speakers is a tactical question not a moral one. Free speech for all is a myth when a few can buy all the freedom they like, while others rely on the media owned by the rich few. Free speech is allowed to the left when our rulers think that no one is listening. When people listen they shut down newspapers, jail militants, make up new laws etc.

Free speech within the working class and revolutionary movement is a principle. And we have to fight for this, against the bureaucracies which prevent rank and file communication and who themselves victimise militants. Free speech for the paid intellectual servants of the bourgeoisie is the cry of dreamers, cowards or idiots.





# letters

Dear Comrades,

After the first numbers of **Libertarian Struggle**, from which some articles were translated in Dutch to be published in *Repressie Revue*, a periodical which contains some information about the repression in Europe and about the means to face it, I got your pamphlet about the tyranny of structurelessness, which is important enough to make a Dutch paraphrase from it. The Dutch Federation of Anarchists, FVS, also has a bulletin in which problems about politics and organisation are discussed.

The problem women's lib has been confronted with is not unknown in the Dutch Anarchist movement. We know too well the history of little individual anarchist groups, with some vague 'principles' and with their endless quarrels about trifle details. At the moment problems about organisation also are discussed in Holland, but from another viewpoint, which has its origins in political discussions about society.

The question of this pamphlet envisages the organisation of a libertarian movement and raises some good ideas. The problem is, however, that with the organisation of the anarchists movement itself, the organisation of society based on workers' control is far from to be reached. In my opinion the organisation of the movement itself is secondary to the organisation of the workers' movement, i.e. the creation of possibilities of workers revolution in

order to let them create the libertarian society. The experience of May 1968 teaches us, that it is our task to support that revolution prior to our own organisation. On the other hand the militants of May 1968 met with bureaucratic tendencies not only from the reformist CGT, but also from some marxist party inclined comrades.

Thus a clear perception of our own organisation doesn't really exist: the guerilla-platform of Archinov (published by ORA in France and England last year - Eds.) lays a stress on self-discipline and a rigid executive and action platform in order to defend the people against their traitors; others argue that anarchists organised on the base of anarchist theory, chose reformist solutions in Spain 1936 (Garcia Oliver) because of their little contact with the really anarchistic acting people. In my opinion organisation of the anarchistic movement is not a formal question, but a question of content, a question of fulfilling tasks as: support working class actions combat the army and militarism, contest bureaucratic and political repression, organising resistance against fascism and totalitarian monopoly-capital, etc. The Dutch Federation sees itself as a centre of actionist groups with concrete viewpoints, demanding mutual solidarity, and sometimes as a discussion platform in which means and ends are put in question.

However, the pamphlet contains much to

think about, eg. the 'Star' system question (almost inevitable cf. Dutschke, comrade Danny even our imprisoned heroes like Valpreda, Marini and so many others), I'd like therefore to receive full particulars about the continuing of your discussion!

Much thanks and fraternal greetings,  
J.B.

Dear Comrades,

let me reply to the letter of comrade S in June's *Libertarian Struggle*, on Rank and File Teachers.

Comrade S is evidently not in R&F or he would be aware of the IMG's position on the question of its internal organisation. We see R&F as a united front of various groups and individuals based on a set of common demands. For such an organisation to function effectively it is necessary for its leading bodies - editorial board and executive committee - to be elected democratically and to include representatives of the various political currents within R&F. We would suggest that the best way of ensuring that these bodies reflect the political composition of R&F is to elect them on the basis of documents put forward for discussion and voting at the conference, with proportional representation for minorities. There are two perspectives submitted for the last R&F conference, one by IS and one by IMG. One third of the votes went to the IMG document, but since IS are not in favour of minority representation there are no IMG representatives on the leading bodies. This is a concept of R&F we agree is bureaucratic, and against which we have consistently argued.

Let me repeat, we are in favour of all minority groupings, including libertarian socialists, being proportionately represented on the leading bodies as a matter of principle. We stated in our report of this year's conference in Red Mole 17 Feb. "The only way in which an organisation like Rank and File can move forward is by recognising ideological differences (eg. between libertarians and Marxists) while uniting

in action all those forces who are prepared to struggle along a principled strategic axis and on a clear class basis."

However, to my knowledge, no document putting the libertarian socialist position has been put forward for discussion within R&F. They have submitted NO critique of the positions of either IS or IMG. They presented no alternative perspectives for R&F at this year's conference. The precondition for achieving representation for libertarian socialist views on the leading bodies of R&F is to make them known to the membership of R&F and win support for them.

yours fraternally,  
Rick Hatcher,  
Leeds IMG.

Editorial comment:

Rick Hatcher of IMG rightly points out libertarians' failure to define a clear position in Rank and File, but this does not prevent us from criticising IS and IMG for abusing the ideas of 'democracy' and 'rank and file groups'.

The thesis of rank and file groups as an expression of democracy has historically been the line of libertarians only. Today we see IS and IMG playing at 'rank and file' to produce the bureaucratic ginger group that will take over a bureaucratic union. In the past Hatcher himself has stated 'I see nothing wrong with a bureaucratic rank and file group.' The article in Red Weekly calling for their share of the bureaucracy is just a reflection of their inability to gain union executive posts from the CP. The IMG and IS work in Rank and File is just a tactic to build a 'new' bureaucratic union leadership - not workers' control.

## GAY LIB'

**Homosexuality. Women (or men) getting sexual pleasure from other women (or men). It happens everywhere - despite every kind of establishment hysterics the homosexual instinct continually asserts itself.**

We are imprisoned by the courts, beaten up by the police, abused by the press, damned by the churches, sacked by our employers, evicted by our landlords as soon as we make our presence known. There are moments when the the homosexual becomes the target for all the oppressive mechanisms of the state. The fear of homosexuality that the establishment so clearly feels is passed on to everyone else. Official education and official culture are virulently anti-homosexual. At very best it is given the status of a sickness (or 'problem') - the same status as a broken leg. The whole expression of this important area of a basic human activity is left to those few who feel prepared to brave the wrath of the machine. The total suppression of homosexual feeling in most people in this society is yet another part of the alienation that capitalism causes.

The 'why' of all this is twofold. First the form of sexual organisation that has arisen to meet the needs of capitalism is the nuclear family - mum, dad and 2.5 kids. This works as a means of servicing the (male) worker by giving him a slave (wife) to cook, sew and be fucked by him, so that he stays docile at work. It works by creating a small consumer unit with stereotype roles that the advertiser can easily manipulate. Notice the way t.v. commercials use the family image to push their worthless goods. It works as a means of seeing that the basic social unit has few enough people in it at a high enough degree of tension with each other for little or no learning to take place. Because of this accepted values are merely passed on and the next generation of workers (the male children) has been properly trained. Homosexuality threatens this whole complicated mechanism and it does so because a homosexual relationship cannot fulfill many of the economic and political functions of the nuclear family and because (in the case of women) the mere existence of homosexuality suggests that the serfdom of the wife is not inevitable.

The second reason for the state's oppression of homosexuality arises out of the first. Capitalism uses every means it can to divert the workers from an awareness of their own position. One of the ways this happens is the attempt to channel the workers frustration onto various 'minority groups'. One of the most ideal

groups is homosexuals, (this explains queer bashing) - for encouraging workers to hate them kills three birds with one stone. It makes life difficult for natural enemies of the system; it redirects the workers frustration and (since the way of doing it is to justify that state false hood-masculinity); it helps the male worker in continuing to function as slave master at home. Obviously the more homosexuality is out in the open the more difficult it is for this state of affairs to be maintained and the more homosexuals organise themselves the more difficult it is for the workers to avoid the conclusion that they have been misled. No mistake is made about the threat from homosexual organisations by the far right. A primary target of the Whitehouse-Longford campaign is homosexual organisations.

Because of the position of the homosexual in the west it is impossible to consider their struggle a side issue. Sexual struggle is a crucially important part of creating socialism. Many important mechanisms of Capitalism cannot be attacked except through sexual politics. Moreover a revolution that does not create sexual freedom is at best a partial revolution. Absence of sexual freedom is a seed of the failure of revolutionary ideas. It is worth noting in this context that the triumph of Stalin in Russia coincides with the re-introduction of anti-homosexual legislation (1934). Sexual freedom is not something that just happens - it has to be fought for. It is part of a whole revolution but is also an independent struggle.

The organisation most concerned with the homosexual aspects of revolution is the Gay Liberation Front. There are groups nationwide and within the front a wide variety of left opinions has grown up. GLF supported action against the Industrial Relations Act, allied itself with the Free Angela Davis campaign, picketed during the miners strike, marched on behalf of Indo-China and Ireland and has been extremely active in support of the women's movement. All in all it has an amazing record of solidarity. Amazing because the rest of the left, by and large, has ignored it, pushed it to the back of the queue and (in the case of the SLL) attacked it outright. Too many revolutionaries are failing to realise the effect of state conditioning in this area on their own awareness. And as a consequence the initially strong solidarity of GLF is declining in many areas. This cannot be avoided unless revolutionaries accept the principles of homosexual revolution and unless they make the promulgation of those principles rank among their priorities.

## REVIEW

**THE POLITICS OF HOMOSEXUALITY** - a pamphlet by Don Milligan, 20p, published by Pluto Press Ltd, Unit 10, Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Road, London NW18LH

This pamphlet by Don Milligan is the first clear indicator that the 'liberation' movements (women's lib and gay lib) are developing a strategy that is directly linked with the class struggle.

Deformations of revolutionary ideas abound within these movements - radical feminists, careerist women and gay businessmen have gathered around their liberal platforms large sections of the movement, due to the reactionary attitudes with which the labour organisations view their fight. It is against these reformist tendencies that Milligan has spelled out the basis necessary for these movements to survive and win their struggle.

The 'Politics of Homosexuality' studies at length the varied and complex oppressions that capitalism uses to isolate sexual minorities and majorities - gays and women. It shows how the ideology of these oppressions are built into and forced onto working class people in order that the sexual relationships of people are 'familiarised' (stay within the family). The family is the basic social building block in that it preserves the correct 'attitudes' necessary for capitalism to exist amongst those from whom capitalism robs life.

Milligan also studies the relationships between homosexuals and women, and demonstrates how many homosexuals continue to use their domination against women homosexuals. Using this, and contradictions amongst the gay movement, it is shown how the campaigns by CHE (Campaign for Homosexual Equality) will not solve the basic problems for the gay movement in calling for law reform.

"Law reform is widely held to be a panacea on the gay scene and is the major objective of most political organisations. Law reform is clearly important but to make it the central aim of the movement implies that gay people are oppressed by laws. THIS IS NOT SO."

Capitalism does not oppress just by laws - it does it through the calculated development of prejudices. Oppression is not legislated - it is engendered by the most powerful class. Until that class has disappeared, the oppression will be used according to the needs of that class.

"Homosexual equality is not possible under capitalism"

but the immediate corollary is stated also: "and it is not guaranteed under socialism".

This is the main and constant warning that Milligan presents to all gay liberationists and women's liberationists. Your liberation is not guaranteed under socialism. If we don't fight the chauvinistic and sexist ideologies that have been pounded into the working class - if one chooses other 'arenas' for propagating liberation - we will not succeed. For when the

revolution comes, the working class (the only class that has the power to liberate anyone) will not tolerate these 'liberationist' ideas.

We will be on the bayonets of the workers, and not be with them, holding them up.

The revolutionary movements have no clear perspective or principle concerning gay liberation and that can only come about by gay liberationists fighting at every turn of the struggle for the principle of homosexual equality. Their autonomous movement must constantly argue and demand from any revolutionary the principles of gay rights in the revolutionary manifesto.

Milligan clearly sums this up when he states:

"But workers' control of industry and the abolition of capitalism would create only the possibility of gay liberation. The abolition of gay oppression can only be brought about by breaking down sexism in the working class and by building up an understanding of the way male supremacy and persecution of homosexuals represses everybody".

Also:

"Because the oppression of homosexuality is tied up with the very fabric of capitalist society, gay liberation must also aim to spread our ideas throughout the labour and socialist movement".

The message to all revolutionaries in this pamphlet is one that must be considered and given full assistance. Not a carte blanche assistance for the liberal ideas of homosexual reform or its distorted counterpart - radical gayism - but to those gays who wish to change the whole of society and acknowledge the agent of this change - the working class.

Any revolutionary who does not rapidly 'evolve' as a principle homosexual equality and the destruction of sexism has to seriously face the question of whether his/her revolution is worth having. For the society we intend to build must not isolate and oppress anyone for their sexual behaviour. That vision of the future must not carry any oppressions from today's existence.

The first step to that evolution of principle for a revolutionary is to read this pamphlet.



# IS. BUREAUCRATISE RANK AND FILE

In teaching, as in other jobs, the International Socialists (IS) are finally showing what they mean by 'rank and file.' At the last meeting of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) Rank and File Group National Committee on June 16th in Leicester, IS totally subordinated the aims of the Rank and File Group to the immediate necessities of the International Socialists in a manner that is detrimental to the fight against the NUT bureaucracy.

The necessary struggle against union hierarchies by the development of the mass consciousness of the rank and file is now secondary to IS's only indices of class struggle: the number of shop stewards in IS. What happens to the mass movement is now unimportant to them. Their whole attitude and practice will only serve to weaken the working class if they are not regularly exposed and consistently fought.

Terrified that a small and growing minority would dispute their control at the next conference the IS, in an attempt to crush opposition, tore up the constitution, muffled the non-aligned membership and 'fixed' the delegation of future conferences. It is a known fact that IS members predominate in Rank and File. Their total disregard for principle and legitimate action, within the Rank and File Constitution, can only be because they feel their position is weakening.

To see clearly the role of the IS in Rank and File it is necessary to understand the constitution of the R. and F. Group and how the IS faction set out to break its democratic character.

The constitution of Rank and File sets down that the organisation be run by a meeting of the membership at National Conference. Under this sovereign body exists two committees - the National Committee and the Executive Committee. It was by controlling the subordinate National Committee on June 16th that

IS succeeded in altering the constitution of the sovereign body of the National Conference in a manner that was unconstitutional. They feared that their bureaucratic controls, which they wished to build into the Rank and File constitution, would not be sanctioned by the membership at Conference.

National Committee is composed of non-mandatory delegates from local Rank and File groups - in fact representatives who do as they please and can ignore the wishes of their group. Each delegate 'represents' from 3 to 10 members. At Leicester on June 16th this committee, containing a majority of IS members, presented the delegates with copies of the accepted constitution. All committees and delegates and the day-to-day running of the paper are organised according to this constitution. People present were told to pen in 'Draft' before the heading 'Rank and File constitution' and the National Committee claimed the constitution to be 'provisional', even though it had itself been elected under the auspices of it.

With one sweep of a pen the Committee had removed the rights of the National Conference by which ordinary members controlled the Rank and File Group. Many of the procedures that defined the democratic workings of R. and F. then came under the hammer.

Motions stating that National Committee could only make recommendations to Conference concerning the constitution were immediately thrown out by the IS majority. A series of amendments had lain on the table from the last National Conference concerning the constitution - 'somehow' these amendments 'appeared' on the agenda of the National Committee in Leicester. At this meeting the mass of the membership was not present and non-delegates were not allowed to speak or vote on the very procedures that control the organisation.

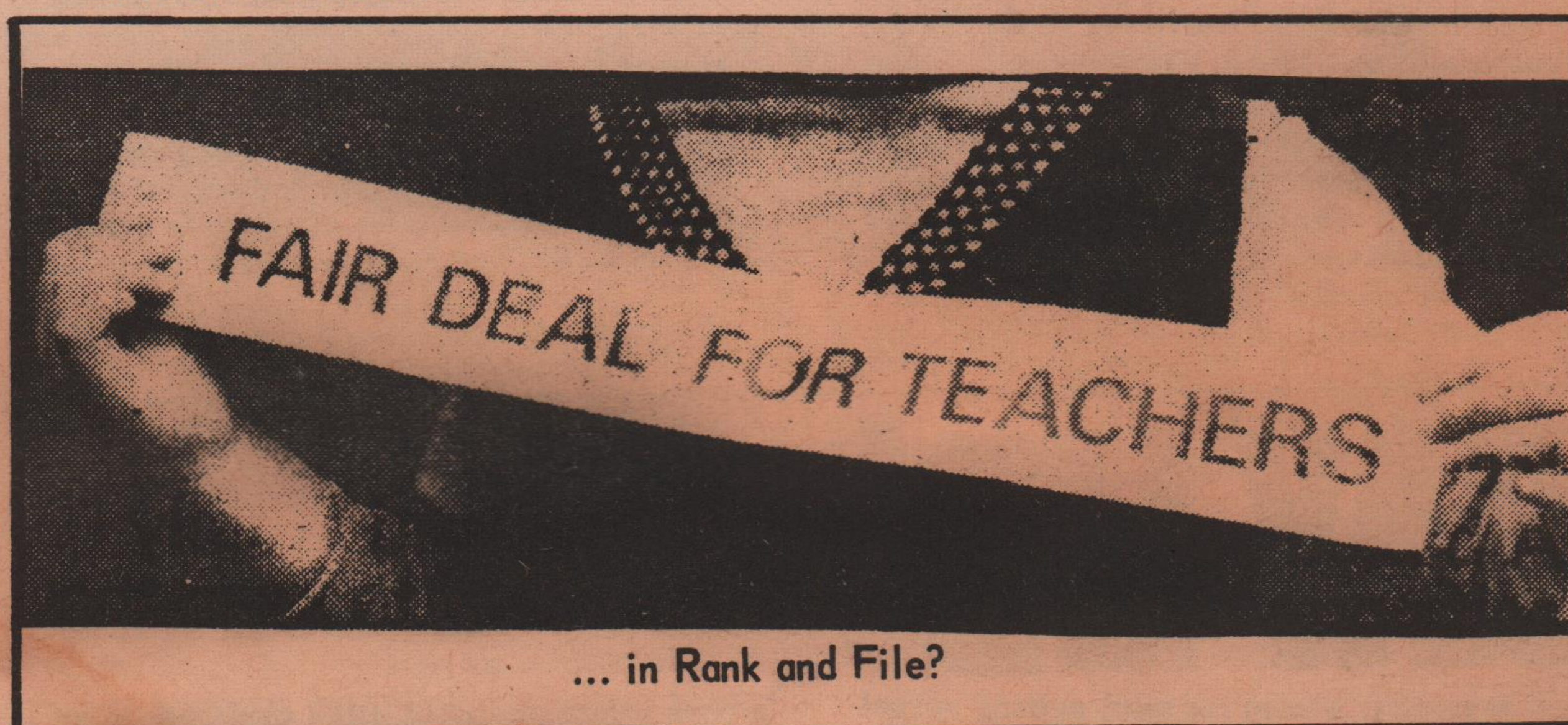
This 'convenient' occurrence along with

the appearance of 'Draft' on the constitution is what IS means by 'rank and file democracy'. The National Committee then declared that the constitution had not at this time been ratified so NO action could be declared unconstitutional. This statement was legislative veneer for the next attack on democracy in the R. and F. group. As the constitution was now 'provisional' or 'draft' the IS could take any decision it wished.

When some of the constitutional amendments, carried over from National Conference came up on the order paper there was no-one to propose them. The proposers at Conference had not been elected as 'delegates' and the motions fell. The proposers had expected the motions to be dealt with by Conference, not National Committee and so were not present. Of the motions that were ruled out of order or voted out, nearly all called for more democracy in Rank and File:

#### Motions

- 1a: We urge the Executive Committee to call as quickly as possible the special one-day conference agreed at National Conference for the purpose of discussing any outstanding business.  
... ruled out of order



... in Rank and File?

- 1b: Supporters of minority documents submitted to National Conference should be represented on the governing bodies of R. and F.  
... ruled out of order

- 1c: Since National Conference is the highest policy-making body of R. and F., all members must be allowed to participate directly in the Conference, and any idea of a delegate conference must be rejected  
... ruled out of order

- 1d: Individuals should be allowed to send resolutions to the Conference and nominate people to the Executive Committee and Editorial Board  
... ruled out of order

The non-IS members present were still trying to assert democracy against the IS hegemony.

The final blow came when the IS destroyed the practical and democratic format of National Conference. Conference was no longer to be the platform of the mass membership but a meeting of 'delegates' (again, not controlled by those they are to 'represent'). The Bradford R. and F. group forwarded the motion

- 1f: Due to the 'confusion' of the last National Conference and to cope with the evident present and future growth of R. and F., Bradford group recommends that future National Conferences be on a delegate plus visitor basis, with delegates having voting rights, and that resolutions for Conference and nominations for the Executive Committee should come from local groups rather than individuals.  
... carried 50 to 30

IS had used the subordinate National Committee to usurp the function of the sovereign body of National Conference by substituting a meeting of representatives. This new organisation was the formalin by which the IS hoped to mummify its fast-decaying majority in R. and F. The preservative was the abandonment of democratic principle for a non-proportional delegate system.

The principles of democracy are outlined in the R. and F. pamphlet 'Democracy in Schools' which states:

"We believe the concepts of real democratic control are best learned through practice by all those involved exercising collective decision-making."

Also in this pamphlet, R. and F. say, on the subject of staff councils in schools, that

"After much deliberation, we conclude that it should be composed of the entire teaching and non-teaching staff ... We are convinced that to constitute the staff council as a small body elected from the staff would open the door to many denials and abuses of collective responsibility and that it is vital that this principle should not be breached... Where sub-committees are deemed necessary, it is important that they be democratically elected by the entire staff council."

Rank and File may advocate democracy in schools, but the IS do not want it in their own organisation - they find the whiff of democracy too dangerous for comfort and try to gerrymander it out of existence by bureaucratic and undemocratic moves.

IS have added yet another nail to R. and F.'s coffin. How long are members who are not in IS - the majority political caucus - going to

accept the bitter taste of disgust at the desperate attempts by the 'leaders' to exert their control over the membership? Claimed membership has only reached 810 after 5 long years, not a success story for any group supposedly engaged in struggle. Recruitment has just about been balanced by defections in the past few months. Unless democracy is allowed to operate in R. and F., it has no future as a credible organisation combatting the reactionary policies of the NUT, and will continue to degenerate into yet another IS-dominated 'front'. This will be a defeat not only for the teachers who are genuine in their attempts to win 'democracy in schools' and changes in the rest of society, but also for the working class, whose children are the victims of such narrow political games and who need solidarity in their attempts to control their work and their lives.

For all IS's talk of 'rank and files' it is becoming clear how they interpret it. It is just another tactic for recruiting a caucus which will be trained to take over the executive of a union. Soon we will no longer hear of IS notching up 'x' shop stewards but boasting loudly of Union Presidencies, as does the Communist Party. It is the only course that follows from their actions at Leicester.

The road from unprincipled opportunism to gutless reformism is a very short one.

#### STOP PRESS

The Great Northern Hotel in Wellington St., Leeds has taken to banning overt homosexuals from its bar. A visit by Leeds GLF resulted in the police being called and GLF members being forcibly removed. Further action will be taken by GLF and they hope to attract support from other revolutionary groups in fighting this blatant example of sexism.

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## ORA Publication

Tyranny of Structurelessness by Jo Freeman  
Obtainable from Leeds Women's ORA, 29, Cardigan Road, Leeds 6. 5p. plus 3p. post.  
'Libertarians in all movements should study this pamphlet because it contains the core of the argument that ORGANISED libertarians have stated'. review in April L.S.

### PUBLIC MEETINGS AND EVENTS

MANCHESTER AREA REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISTS  
Fortnightly public meetings  
Thursdays, 8.00 p.m.  
Lass O'Gowrie, Charles Street  
July 19th: Which way to workers' power?

LIBERTARIAN SOCIALIST DISCUSSION  
meetings at Leeds Trades Hall, Upper Fountains Street  
Fortnightly meetings  
Wednesdays, 8.00 p.m.  
Topics for future meetings will be:  
Racism, the Women's Movement

### LIBERTARIAN STUDENTS' FEDERATION?

Anyone interested in "a Student Federation within ORA, mainly those involved in Union work" ?  
Write to Larry Law, Berks Coll. of Ed. Students' Union, Bulmershe Court, Woodlands Avenue, Earley, Reading, Berkshire. READING 666506.