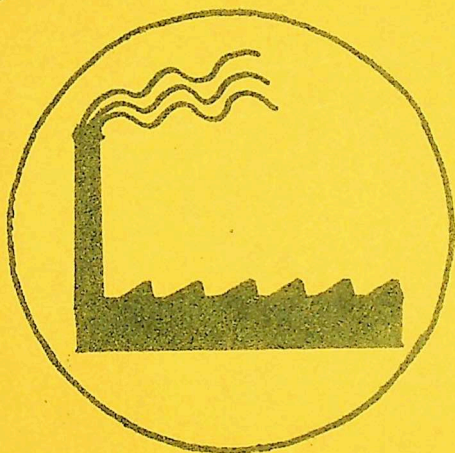


# solidarity

north west



A WOMANS PLACE

BUILDING WORKERS  
FIGHT BACK

TURNERS ASBESTOS GETS  
UNION CO-OPERATION

NO SMOKING IN LANCASTER

MAIL ORDER MISSIONS

AS WE SEE IT

COMPREHENSIVES — WHAT DO WE WANT ?

volume 1. number 1

6<sub>d</sub>



# EDITORIAL

This is the first regular issue of North West Solidarity.

You can read what we stand for in the statement below. The paper is our way of making these principles into a reality.

We want to spread news about the struggle of people - people as workers, people as tenants, people as students, all people fighting against a total system which oppresses them.

That's what we're here for -- **SOLIDARITY!**

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## AS WE SEE IT

1. Throughout the world, the vast majority of people have no control whatsoever over the decisions that most deeply and directly affect their lives. They sell their labour power while others who own or control the means of production, accumulate wealth, make the laws and use the whole machinery of the state to perpetuate and reinforce their privileged positions.
2. During the past century the living standards of working people have improved. But neither these improved living standards, nor the nationalisation of the means of production, nor the coming to power of parties claiming to represent the working class have basically altered the status of the worker as a worker. Nor have they given the bulk of mankind much freedom outside of production. East and West, capitalism remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work, and manipulated in consumption and leisure. Propaganda and policemen, prisons and schools, traditional values and traditional morality all serve to reinforce the power of the few and to convince or coerce the many into acceptance of a brutal, degrading and irrational system. The 'Communist' world is not communist and the 'Free' world is not free.
3. The Trades Unions and the traditional parties of the Left started in business to change all this. But they have come to terms with the existing pattern of exploitation. In fact they are now essential if the exploiting society is to continue working smoothly. The Unions act as middle-men in the labour market. The political parties use the struggles and aspirations of the working class for their own ends.

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Manchester 13.



The degeneration of working class organisations, itself the failure of the revolutionary movement, has been a major factor in creating working class apathy, which has in turn led to the further degeneration of both parties and unions.

4. The Trades Unions and political parties cannot be reformed, 'captured' or converted into instruments of working class emancipation. We don't call however for the proclamation of new unions, which in the conditions of today would suffer a similar fate to the old ones. Nor do we call for militants to tear up their union cards. Our aim is simply that the workers themselves should decide on the objectives of their struggles should remain firmly in their own hands. The forms which this self-activity of the working class will take will vary considerably from country to country and from industry to industry. Its basic content will remain the same.

5. Socialism is not just the common ownership and control of the means of production and distribution. It means equality, real freedom, reciprocal recognition and radical transformation in all human relations. It is man's positive self-consciousness. It is man's understanding of his environment and of himself, his domination over his work and over such social institutions as he may need to create. These are not secondary aspects which will automatically follow the expropriation of the old ruling class. On the contrary, they are an essential part of the whole process of social transformation, without this no change will take place.

6. A Socialist society can therefore only be built from below. Decisions concerning production and work will be taken by workers councils composed of elected and revocable delegates. Decisions in other areas will be taken on the basis of the widest possible discussion and consultation among the people as a whole. This democratisation of society down to its very roots is what we mean by workers power.

7. Meaningful Action, for revolutionaries is what ever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the egalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. Sterile and harmful action is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others - even those allegedly acting on their behalf.

8. No ruling class in history has ever relinquished its power without a struggle and our present rulers are unlikely to be an exception. Power will only be taken from them through the conscious, autonomous action of the vast majority of the people themselves. The building of socialism will require mass understanding and mass participation. By their rigid hierarchical structure, by their ideas and their activities both social democratic and bolshevik types of organisations discourage this kind of understanding and prevent this kind of participation. The idea that socialism can somehow be achieved by an elite party (however revolutionary), acting on behalf of the working class is both absurd and reactionary.

9. We do not accept the view that by itself the working class can only achieve a trade union consciousness. On the contrary we believe that its conditions of life and its experiences in production constantly drive the working class to adopt priorities and values and to find methods of organisation which challenge the established patterns of thought. These responses are implicitly socialist. On the other hand, the working class is fragmented, dispossessed of the means of communication, and its various sections are at different levels of awareness and consciousness. The task of the revolutionary organisation is to help give proletarian consciousness an explicitly socialist content, to give practical assistance to workers in struggle and to help those in different areas to exchange experiences and link up with one another.

10. We do not see ourselves as yet another leadership but merely as an instrument of working class action. The function of Solidarity is to help all those who are in conflict with the present authoritarian social structure, both in industry and in society at large, to generalise their experience, to make a total critique of their condition and its causes, and to develop the mass revolutionary consciousness necessary if society is to be totally transformed.

.....  
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# Union "Co-operation" at Turner & Newall

Turner and Newall are regarded as one of the 'top companies'. The Unit Trusts lavish millions of pounds of investors' money on them in the sure knowledge of a high return (eleven and a half million pounds last year). Like most 'top companies', Turners survive by exploiting the rules of the capitalist game to the full.

They employ a high proportion of immigrant labour - Irish, West Indian, Polish - with each group concentrated in a different shop. There's also a fantastic turnover, so job organisation is difficult. This summer, the blokes on the 'heavy gang', (the unloader's section) - on 6/3 an hour - brought out a broadsheet which advocated joining the Union (in this case T & G). By the time three issues had come out, at approximately fortnightly intervals, the management was becoming progressively more hysterical - the lockers of the men on the heavy gang were searched, several of them were searched on their way INTO the factory. The union officials were unhappy - at the distribution of a union recruiting sheet! When the lads joined and put in a wage claim, it was rejected by the management, and a militant sacked - he got his cards through the post, as he was on the sick list at the time! Union full-timer Bro. Cox, District organiser of the T & G (and just due for promotion), called on the management without bothering at first to see the shop-steward, although after 1/2 an hour he was allowed to be present.

The management produced a copy of a 'libertarian marxist' document - which must have been stolen from the militant's jacket while it was in his locker - read extracts from 'HeavyGang' No 3, the ostensible reason for the bloke's dismissal (although 'Heavy Gang' No 3 was not published until two days after the letter of dismissal was sent)... Accordingly, the union official subsequently informed the shop-steward that, since the dismissal was on political grounds, no action would be taken. The shop-steward was also instructed not to see the militant again.

( Maybe they think he's a corrupting influence!)

\* \* \* \* \*

# BUILDING — no more WORKERS sell-outs!

The Building Unions are engaged in negotiating a pay claim which could very well lead to the biggest sell out in the history of the trade.

The last offer from the employers, which has in fact just been turned down, was for 4 1/2d an hour increase in November 1969, the same in November 1970 and a further 4 1/2d in November 1971. This would bring the basic wage up to £18/2/0 with a further £2 minimum earnings payment for jobs where no bonus is paid. The pay offer as it stands is an insult, but it is bound up with enough strings to tie the lads hand and foot for ever.

Before they actually rejected the proposals the union leaders asked for time to consult their members. The A.S.W.\* in fact called a series of regional conferences to allow delegates to accept or reject the proposals, but the conferences were in reality an utter sham. The proposal the delegates were allowed to vote on was to the effect that the conference supports the Executive's rejection of the employers pay offer as being inadequate. Not a word about the strings! At the conference which was recently held in Manchester the delegates overwhelmingly rejected the offer. The Executive - in their usual democratic way - refused to accept any motions from the floor, thus preventing the delegates from objecting to the strings. It seems from this that the leaders intend to leave a way open to accept an amended offer which may very well be little different to the present one, strings and all.

## LOSING MEMBERS

The likelihood of a sell out is all too real. Over the years these union leaders have sold us out time and again. Only last year they won a 3d an hour rise, only to give back a penny of it when the Prices and Incomes Board said it was too much. This kind of grovelling has led to a steady decline in union membership over the past few years. As a matter of fact the Building Group is the only section of the T.U.C. which has lost members - every other section has been gaining members steadily. The only time the union leaders have ever taken a tough line has been when militants in the industry have been expelled for doing the job we elected the executives to do.

This steady fall in members must surely show even the thickest of union bureaucrats that the lads no longer have any faith in their ability to win better pay and conditions. Disillusionment with the officials is widespread and the old

\* Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers



cry "Vote for left-wing officials" has been exposed as futile.

Time and again "left-wingers" have been elected, but as soon as they have been asked to take any militant action, they have ducked, claiming they would lose their jobs!

If you have your tools stolen or some firm is withholding some bonus payment you have earned, then you may get some help, but don't expect a lead in any real struggle.

In fact the building unions are now so weak and ineffective that the only chance they have of making an official strike successful is by relying on the very militants they have been condemning for years.

### THE LOST PENNY

When the penny was taken away, feeling was very high on the sites and any call from the "leadership" would have been supported on every site in the country, but of course the call never came. The penny went, and with it went a lot of members. The rest of the men were fragmented and dispirited. The bosses were naturally delighted. Any union which will accept a wage cut without even the pretence of a fight is no threat to anyone. The way was wide open to the employers to dictate their own terms in any future wage claim, and this is exactly what they are doing.

If we are to make any gains at all the first thing we must do is to forget about the leadership. To be at all effective, organisation must be at the job level. The only way to get action is to take it! Solidarity with our mates on the job is the only way of fighting the bosses- it is useless to rely on officials who have only been consistent in one thing- their failure to deliver the goods.

### IT'S UP TO US

The feeling on many big sites gives grounds for optimism. Building workers everywhere are saying that in the event of an offer being accepted which resembles the present one, unofficial action will be the only thing left for us. The dustmen have recently made gains as a result of rank and file action. Even though they didn't get all they wanted they have gained more than we have been offered. These were workers who have no real experience of struggle, yet they put up a magnificent fight. We in the building trade with our long history of rank and file action and the experience we have gained in day to day fights at job level are far better equipped. It is up to us to mount a battle which will not only gain us an economic victory but will also give us back the dignity and self respect we lost when we let them take away the penny.

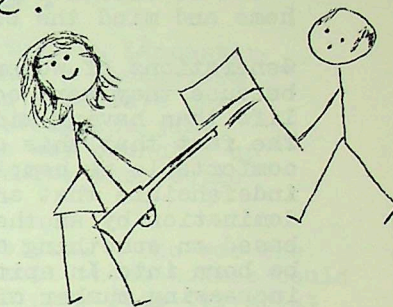
A. Naylor. (A.S.W.)

## a Woman's Place?

by CHRISTINE SUMNER.

Working class revolutionaries scream for social justice and worker's power. Black militants fight to overthrow white domination: but when the 'woman question' is posed many of these 'socialists' take up a paternalistic position, and expose themselves for the reactionaries they really are.

While they are prepared to overthrow most aspects of society they almost invariably regard women as being very nice and very good in their way, but slightly inferior. Everytime a man talks in terms of 'treating HIS woman well and with respect' he is expressing the exact same outlook as that of a progressive employer talking about HIS workers, or an enlightened slave owner talking about HIS slaves.



We demand to be treated as full and equal human beings. Men have been fighting for generations for better working conditions ----- women have a different type of boss. Women militants are in many ways in the same sort of position as industrial militants find themselves when faced with a considerate and paternalistic boss. The average working class housewife relies on her husband for just about everything she has. Her standard of living is determined not only by her husband's income, but also to a large extent by his sense, or lack of responsibility. How much she spends on clothes, the type of house she lives in, the whole quality of her life; all these things are of course largely controlled by her husband's income, but within this broad framework whether or not a woman gets a fair share of this income is dependant upon the personality of her husband.

Even in homes where both husband and wife are socialists it is usually the man who goes out to meetings, the assumption presumably being that he is the more intelligent and has more to contribute. A North London Solidarity member, who shall be nameless, recently stated that women are in left wing politics for one of two reasons. They are either emotionally involved with a revolutionary, or they are looking for a husband! I am sorry, comrade, but you are not the kind of revolutionary I want beside me at the barricades. The Russian revolution was a failure in that the workers never achieved any real power: but even



a revolution in which the workers did gain real control would be abortive if women were still expected to stay home and mind the baby afterwards.

Generations of women have accepted their place in society because they were conditioned not to expect any more from life than having kids and being kept in slavery for ever. The fact that this slavery may or may not have been comfortable is completely irrelevant. It is surely quite indefensible that any human being should be subject to domination by another, particularly when this domination is based on something as arbitrary as the sex one happens to be born into. In spite of this, men are surprised that an increasing number of women are not prepared to tolerate their present role in society. They expect more, and they will fight to get it.

To talk in terms of a Socialist society in which women are not totally emancipated is as nonsensical as to talk about the old Greek city states being democracies, when their whole way of life was based on a system of slave labour. In a true Socialist society, all forms of superiority, whether based on class, colour or sex must be abolished.

A WOMAN'S PLACE IS WHEREVER SHE WANTS IT TO BE!

"COMRADES! Your meetings are unbearable! You are riddled with inhibitions which you have to release as aggression against comrades who say something stupid, or something you already know. These aggressions are only partially the result of insight into the stupidity of the other side. Why don't you at least admit that you are exhausted from the strain of the last year, that you don't know how to bear the stress any longer, that you consume your physical and intellectual energies without getting any pleasure from them? Why don't you discuss before you plan your campaigns, how they can be carried out?

Why don't you all buy Reich\*? Why do you speak here about the class struggle and at home about the difficulties of orgasm? Is this not a subject for the S.D.S.†?

Helke Sanders ( German Women's Liberation Movement )

\* Reich - a German writer specialising in the subject of sex and dominance.

† S.D.S. - German Revolutionary Students Organisation

## NO SMOKING!

In November 1968 a council estate in Lancaster called the Marsh Estate was made a 'smokeless zone'. This policy which can alleviate one of the minor problems of industrialism just proved to be an example of the way councils up and down the country fail to serve the people they are meant to represent.

The scheme involved a number of problems. One was the higher cost of smokeless fuel. Whereas these houses could previously have been heated with ordinary fuel for about 24/- a week, tenants were now finding themselves spending about 35/- on smokeless fuel. In a low-income area such as Lancaster a rise of 11/- on the weekly budget is no joke.

These people were, however, the luckier ones! Many of the tenants were unable to use this fuel. For a start there simply was not enough smokeless fuel to go around. The coalmen were under strict instructions not to deliver any ordinary coal to the estate with the result that many people found themselves without fuel last winter. Last winter was fortunately extremely mild but there could be great hardship if there is a cold spell this winter for the coal merchants admit that little has been done to alleviate the shortage of suitable fuel. Of course, the Coal Board have made statements saying that there was in fact a surplus of smokeless fuel; it's no wonder the NCB is losing money when it does not seem to want to sell it.

### NO HEAT AND NO MONEY

Many of the tenants who managed to get coal have run into yet another problem. Smokeless fuel just will not burn in the grates of some houses on the Marsh. These 'Yorkshire Range' grates are the old type and are found especially in the houses occupied by elderly people. The cost of replacing these is in the region of £70, a high price for anyone and especially so for retired people. It is usual when creating a smokeless zone for grants to be made available for necessary changes - 40% is paid by the government, 30% by the local authority, and 30% by the householder. The Council have failed to make provisions to get this grant although they applied for and got grants for owner-occupiers and private landlords. Though the Council have denied in the press any discrimination against council house tenants, the people of the Marsh have been unable to get any grant at all.



These problems were apparent in a very short time and by the end of November 1968 there had been a public meeting oftenants, which set up a Council House Tenants Association. The local councillors - Mr. Holgate and Mrs Sweeny - were contacted; they agreed that there was a problem but in a short time Mr. Holgate had changed sides and Mrs Sweeny appeared to forget the matter.

### KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

In January 1969 the tenants were honoured by the invitation of the council to send a deputation to the Town Hall for a talk on the problems. The tenants were seated around a gallery some 15 yards from the councillors - one tenant commented that he felt as if he was on trial. It was certainly no atmosphere for free discussion. The council proceeded to spout the well-worn arguments of how council tenants are subsidised and any grant given to them would be yet another burden on the ratepayer. Furthermore there would be no suspension of the regulations regarding the use of coal, irrespective of smokeless fuel supplies.

Going to Lancaster's M.P., Mr. Stanley Henig, the tenants appeared to convince him of their case but months went by before anything was done. Then he introduced a private member's bill to get equal treatment for council tenants. Considering the history of most private member's bills, it is small wonder that the Marsh tenants wonder how many more winters they will have to wait.

### BREAKING DOWN THE APATHY

Throughout the last year the Council has continuously tried to cheat the tenants with promises and lies. Besides their utterances on the 'fair' method of grants they have adopted, there have been promises to shelve further plans for other smokeless zones. This was a blatant lie for other zones have been created this year. As yet this Tenants Association has not had practical success but it is promising to see such an association looking into other problems in their area since North Lancashire has in the past and has at present a reputation for apathy. It has become clear to the Marsh tenants that they must unite to oppose the arbitrary methods of the Council. It must be hoped that other working - class people in the area will show similar solidarity in opposing the Council and the industrialists in Lancaster and elsewhere. Individual complaints to the council and letters to the press have for so long proved inadequate.

Isn't it strange that the smokeless zones in Lancaster have been set up in primarily residential areas. Most factories, which belch out more smoke than the houses, have not been included. Does this suggest some influence on the Council by the industrialists? No! No! That couldn't happen in a 'democratic' country.

## — MINERS — militancy returns!

BRITISH MINERS have traditionally been the most militant section of the working-class. They have also had to put up with some of the country's toughest and most respectable Communist union officials. There has not been a single official strike in the industry since nationalisation in 1947. The full-time officials of the NUM, whether Communist or not, have co-operated with the National Coal Board in the most servile fashion, and have been duly rewarded with knighthoods and well-paid jobs after their retirement from union "service".

Nowhere has the stupor of the NUM officials been more obvious than in its total failure to prevent the accelerating rundown of the industry. Employment in mining and quarrying has fallen from 766,000 in June 1960 to 448,000 in June 1969(1), and shows no sign of levelling off. A couple of years ago, the Power Loading Agreement was signed. This replaced the traditional piecework system with the closely-supervised, speeded-up timework of the type under which Ford and Vauxhall workers have suffered for some years. It has been a major cause of the discontent leading up to the recent strike of surface workers.

All this was unable to destroy the miners' militancy, which was increased by the realisation that things had changed very little as a result of nationalisation. A few years ago the coal industry led the country in terms of strikes: in 1962-4, for example, coal accounted for nearly 50 % of all strikes, and for over 10 % of all working days lost(2). The Power Loading Agreement has greatly reduced these figures in recent years, so that in 1968 coal had 15 % of strikes and 4 % of working days lost(3).

These figures show that strikes in coal have tended to be short and localised. The struggle has been unofficial and fragmented. So in many respects the recent surface workers' strike marks an important development. The extent of the strike - almost nation-wide, involving at its peak at least 125,000 men - is by far the largest since nationalisation. For the first time, unofficial links have been built between districts and between different coalfields. The issues were important: the demand for a 40-hour week, inclusive of meal breaks to help share the declining amount of work; and



for a substantial pay rise for very low paid workers. (Surface workers are appallingly poorly paid: 29 % earn less than £15 per week, and 46 % less than £17 per week (4). Also, the miners are beginning to see that they are exploited and manipulated jointly by the bosses and by their union officials, however "left" - hence the demand for the resignation of the new NUM General Secretary, Lawrence Daly, blue-eyed boy of the "Morning Star".

The miners have won a partial victory. Their pay demand was granted in full almost immediately by Lord "Alfie" Robins, whose self-appointed role as 'The Miners' Friend' no longer convinces anyone. They have failed to achieve the 40-hour week inclusive of meal breaks. Certain districts, notably Lancashire, stayed at work, bludgeoned into submission by the threat of still further pit closures. Yet, for the reasons already mentioned, it is not too fanciful to see the strike as a start of a new era in the miners' struggle, as the beginning of a campaign for self-management which will develop independently of the NUM officialdom. The vision of the revolutionary miners who, half a century ago, wrote "The Miners' Next Step", may yet be achieved.

John KING

- (1) Dept. of Employment and Productivity Gazette, September 1969.
- (2) Ministry of Labour Gazette, April 1963, p.143; April 1964, p.143; January 1965, p.20.
- (3) M.O.L. Gazette May 1968, p.385.
- (4) D.E.P. Gazette May 1969, p.406.

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# COMPREHENSIVES

by Paul Harris

THIS ARTICLE is an attempt to explain the position in Bolton over the issue of Comprehensive Schools, for those who don't know. Bolton is one of the few towns in the country to refuse to go comprehensive. What this means in terms of the future of Bolton's education system, why this position arose, and what the general relevance of this issue is to the Party political scene, are points that shall be covered, but first of all, let's take a look at the causes of Bolton's present plight.

1. Selley's Report. When the Government first decided to make education comprehensive, Bolton had its Education Officer, Mr Selley, make a report on the subject. Selley's report is supposed to be impartial, but in fact he is quite prepared in it to show how the "best" kids can be creamed off in Comprehensives by juggling IQ scores - though IQ tests are rejected by progressive educationists as being biased against working-class kids. Selley's report comes out in favour of replacing the 11-plus by Primary School assessment, which can be "quantified in the same way" as the 11-plus. In other words, he wants an 11-plus but refuses to call it that! Just to show the report's impartiality, it has an Appendix by the Most Rev. G. A. Beck, Archbishop of Liverpool (obviously an expert on education!) who says that he wants to continue the old education system until comprehensives "prove" themselves.

Apart from Selley's bias, one or two things are worth noting in his report.

- (a) Bolton is organising its secondary schools in bases, each base has all 3 schools, grammar, sec. mod., and technical. There are 3 bases now, 3 more were planned.
- (b) Bolton will have to provide schooling for 1,000 more kids by 1971, 4,000 by 1981.

2. The Education Committee Report 1965-6. Following Selley's masterpiece, the Party Council set up a working party on education in Bolton. The Party included representatives from each school and from the main Teachers' Unions. From what the Report said eventually, I can only say that the teachers who agreed with it ought to be ashamed of themselves. The Report made the following ludicrous proposals:



- (a) The Education Authority wants 6 school bases, each reflecting a cross-section of the social structure as a whole, each base to have about 1,600 pupils.
- (b) All the kids in town of the right age would be placed in a "town order of merit" from A to E, in sections. There would be no "objective tests" - instead primary school headmasters would assess the kids. The "order of merit" would be based on "literary ability", "mathematical ability" and "certain personal qualities". An "objective (sic) test of verbal reasoning" would be given to about 2/3 of the kids, not to sort them out mind you, but merely to "equate the degree of assessment" between schools.
- (c) In one of its appendices, the report gives hints to Heads on how to assess kids. For the maths and English parts the method is the same as the 11-plus, but without the exam. But Heads have also to assess 8 "character" traits - Ambition(!), Alertness, Industry, Co-operation, Perseverance, Emotional Stability, and Retentiveness. He must further make "relevant comments" on such items as "appearance", "home environment" and "speech"!
- (d) Following this assessment the kids will be sent to 2 schools in the base, called "A" and "B" in the Report. After one year together, doing the same subjects (apart from a foreign language, which is only for those "for whom this appears advantageous") the kids who make up the top 90 or so, as decided by the heads of the schools and the assessment from before, will be whipped off to school C, where they will do a GCE course. Although parents' wishes are to be taken into account, there will need to be "strong" reasons for a kid to transfer schools after this sort-out.
- (e) The rest of the kids will do CSE courses. As a sop, there will be joint choirs, games and a "house system" in which kids from all 3 schools will be lumped together.
- (f) For the sake of "simplicity" the word "secondary" will be omitted from the names of schools! (In fact, the Tories have just come up with the brilliant device of calling Bolton Sec. Mods. "High Schools", and the Techs "Grammar Schools".

#### Comments on the Report

The Report was obviously a Tory swindle and was chucked out by the Government - some of the reasons are obvious: kids would be sorted out by a variety of methods on 11-plus lines at 11, and further sorted one year later. The "top" kids would go to what is obviously

a grammar school, the rest would get a usual Sec. Mod. or Tech. education. Each school has separate staff, so the "best" kids get the best staff, etc. The old system would grind on, but would begin one year later.

Some of the report makes interesting reading, for example, how the hell is a headmaster qualified to judge such things as "Emotional Stability", and what does that mean anyway? What is "Co-operation"? - does this mean being a goody-goody? Also - why do "Home Environment" and "Speech" count? These things are all included and have one and only one effect, as do all the other so-called "objective" methods - to encourage favouritism in the schools and more important, to discriminate against the working class. The Tory fear and hatred of having their vile offspring mixing with the kids of the proles shines through this report. At every turn of a page, another way of keeping the old system going is spewed out. Even the sops of "mixed" choirs and games and Houses are a fraud. The kids know that the old system is going on under another name, teachers at the bases admit that the kids don't mix, the working class kids take hardly any interest in the public-school farce of a "House system"; and there is little or no co-ordination between the staff of the schools on matters of importance, like academic matters.

So much for the report.

#### The Battle

As soon as the Government chucked out this Tory plan, Bolton became enmeshed in a furious debate between the 2 main Parties. Let's have a look at the 2 sides in this battle.

The Tories - who have since spent all their time squealing about "Socialist Dictatorship" and "Freedom of Education". Their motives are simple, they want to preserve a system of education that recruits an academic and social élite, they know that middle-class kids have academic advantages over working-class kids (for reasons explained later); they want to keep these advantages and to keep the working-class kids in their place. The Tory snobs fear "the great unwashed"; society needs recruits for the ruling class, the Tories want their kids to be those recruits. To them "freedom" means freedom to exploit, to maintain their privileges, and to keep society divided into classes, with them on top.

The main Tory protagonists in the debate include - Alderman Ethel (windbag) Ryley; a self-appointed "expert" on education, she is a governor of almost all the "better" schools in Bolton, and head of



the Education Committee; Alderman Eddie (I'm just an ordinary working man at heart) Taylor, whose trades of meat-pie maker qualifies him to speak on education; and Mr Lawrence (Smoothface) Reed, Parliamentary Candidate for Bolton East. These three loons have kept up a constant barrage of speeches, letters to the paper etc, on the evils of the Government and the greater evils of "all-in" schools. It would be funny if only it wasn't tragic. Because the Government has refused to give any money for secondary school building until the Tories agree to comprehensives. Bolton now has a situation whereby the existing schools, many with rotten facilities, are becoming rapidly overcrowded. The Tories, holding out for a Tory Government, have responded by building "temporary" classrooms, with money supposed to be for primary schools, and the primary schools are bad enough as it is. So we have the kids being forced into a rotten, over-crowded education system by the Tories, to save the Tories' 'principles'.

What of the gallant opposition? The Labour Party.

For a start, the Labour Party and Government is only in favour of comprehensives because they will help streamline education to fit the needs of modern capitalist society. They want to substitute meritocracy for aristocracy, and they also hope to revamp their image as the "workers' Party" by putting forth comprehensives as a big boost to the working class.

\*\*\*\*\*  
 god made the bees,  
 the bees make the honey,  
 We do the work,  
 The teacher gets the money.  
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\*\*\*\*\*  
 They want to substitute  
 meritocracy for aristocracy,  
 and they also hope to revamp  
 their image as the "workers'  
 Party" by putting forth  
 comprehensives as a big boost to the working class.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

Locally, Bolton Labour Party, helped by MPs Bob (I'm everybody's friend - but not the blacks!) Howarth, and Gordon (Smiler) Oakes, has fought for comprehensives. But what kind? As Labour Party expert on education Harry Lucas said "It's just the system we want, we don't care how it's organised". Or, as the Bolton Labour Party agent said to the author of this article, over the 'phone, when asked what kind of comprehensives the Labour Party wanted. "well, we don't know exactly". In other words the Labour Party is just toeing the Party line and has no idea what kind of comprehensive it wants.

Let's look at the nature of comprehensive education in this country, and at the Labour Government, and see just how big a step forward comprehensives would be for Bolton.

First of all, the comprehensive systems so far in existence have "streaming", - that is, kids are

divided up according to "academic merit" into Forms A to E or whatever, with the A forms getting the best teachers and the best teaching. Now, working-class kids start with the scales weighted against them. The schools tend to teach in a middle-class way - the child who does not think and behave in a middle class way feels misunderstood and confused when starting at such a school. The main reasons for this are:

- (1) working-class children usually have parents who have never had much opportunity for education themselves and therefore do not encourage them to do well in school as much as middle-class parents do.
- (2) Because their parents are less educated they cannot help as much with school work.
- (3) At the same time working class families usually are less articulate and have a smaller vocabulary than middle-class families. Therefore their kids are not so used to learning via words, to thinking via words, as are middle-class kids. So that when they start school they find it harder, as most teaching is verbal and more protective.
- (4) There are usually fewer books, magazines etc., in working-class homes.

All these reasons add up to one conclusion - working-class kids are socially handicapped as far as academic learning goes.

Because this is so, any kind of academic selection or streaming will tend to work against them. And as kids do better when taught by the best teachers, the middle-class kids who go into comprehensive school "A" and "B" streams at the age of 11 or 12 will get better teaching and increase their academic "load" over working-class kids.

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 "THANKS TO teachers and examinations, competitiveness now begins at five."  
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Another fault of the system is that the authority relations are not different in most comprehensives from other schools. There is the same emphasis on discipline, uniforms, "nice" middle-class behaviour, that working class kids resent. There is also the same teaching of the same irrelevant rubbish, like history, which is really the history of kings, and the same formal methods of teaching most English, most maths, which kids tend to find boring (quite rightly). In "A" and "B" streams you are more likely to get pupil-led discussions; whereas most "C", "D" and "E" streams are taught to accept and learn what the teacher says.

The country needs to churn out 60-70 % of the population as working-class people who know enough



to do their job, but not enough to think for themselves. Whilst this is so, workers' kids will continue to be taught the same claptrap in the same way, taught to be obedient, taught to get the spirit of jolly sporting competition, whilst learning their place in life.

So instead of Tory aristocracy, we'll have Labour meritocracy, to the greatest benefit of the middle-class. Bolton is faced with the situation of a Tory fraud which will deliberately keep down working-class kids, or a Labour sham, that will look fairer but will have the same effect.

Bolton has a group of people organised to fight for comprehensives. They say it isn't a political issue. But it is! As long as the class nature of our society remains the same the workers will get nowhere, nor will their kids. The solution in the long run is the complete abolition of the class division of society and its replacement by a socialist system of workers' control.

Until then, what can Bolton parents do?

1. Do you want your kids "streamed" so that working-class kids end up at the bottom? If not - fight for comprehensives with no streaming, equal teaching for all, co-operation between kids and not competition.
2. Do you want the old system of teaching, and the old subjects to continue, to the harm of your kids? If not - organise, demand to get involved in running the school, support the kids who want more democracy and less conformity in schools, help them to be taught the truth about life, and not brainwashed.

Fight for your kids against Tory and Labour "Educationists" who both want to keep the working-class kid at the bottom of society.

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#### Autonomous Solidarity Groups.

Aberdeen: c/o P. Roy,  
138 Walker Rd. Aberdeen.  
Glydeside: c/o D. Kane,  
43 Valeview Terrace, Dumbarton.  
London (North) H. Russell  
53a Westmoreland Rd. Bromley  
Kent.  
London (South) A. Mann,  
79 Balfour St. SE17.  
London (West) M. Duncan  
15 Taylors Green W3



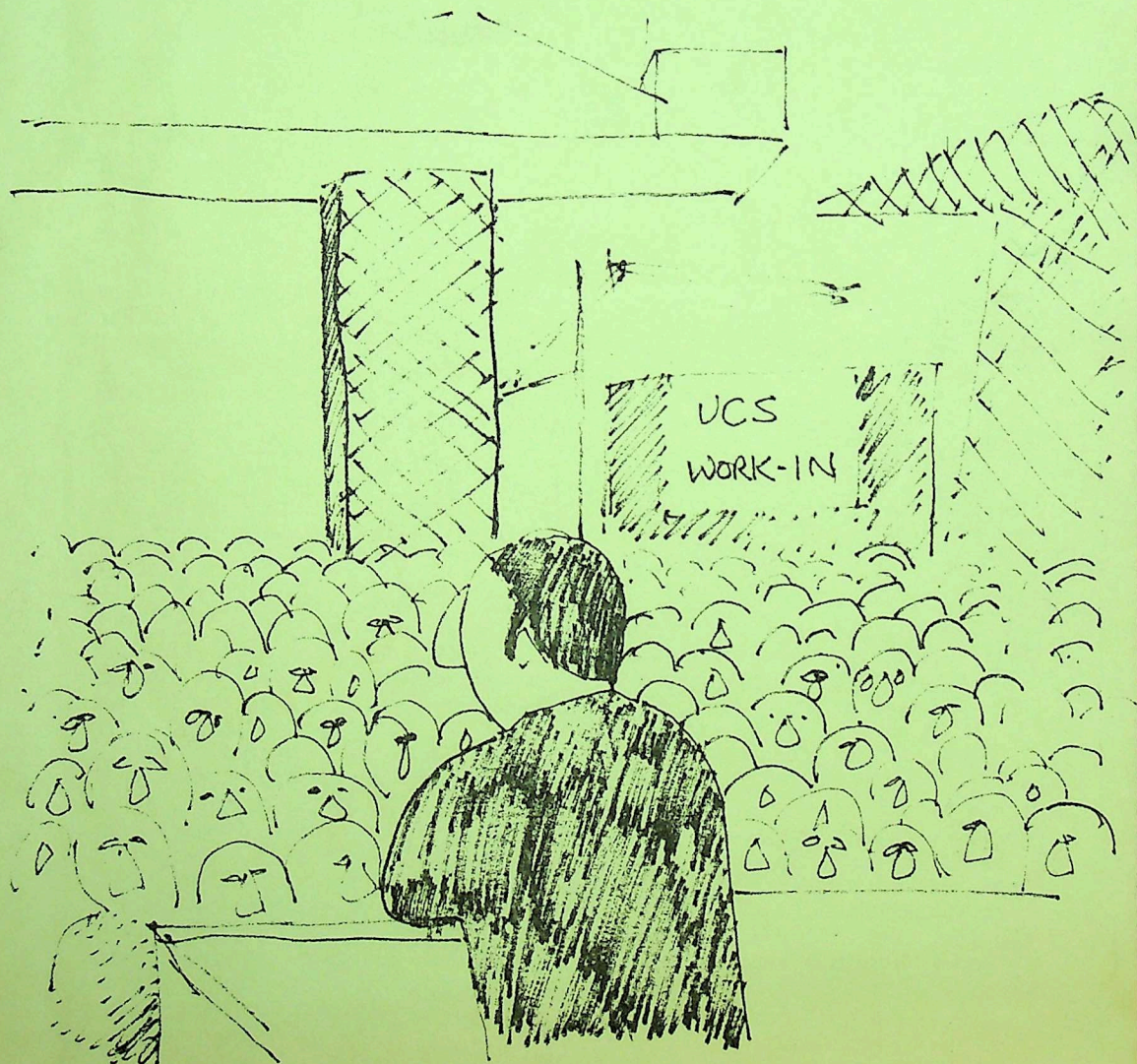
# Solidarity

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FOR WORKERS' POWER

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"BROTHERS ! IF THE BOSSES WONT EXPLOIT US WE'LL HAVE TO DO IT OURSELVES ..."



# UCS AND PLESSEY

The current struggles in west-central Scotland at the UCS yards on Clydeside and the Plessey factory at Alexandria in Dumbartonshire are not merely struggles to keep jobs, but for the survival of whole communities. In this article we wish to examine both of these situations to see how these two groups of workers are choosing to fight and, since the methods chosen are obviously different, to understand why they are different and why these differences are significant.

We felt that some of the reports in the capitalist (and even the Left) press were just not telling the whole story, particularly in the case of UCS, and so to find out what was happening we went to the west of Scotland ourselves. It was important to meet and talk to workers who were taking part in the struggles but who did not have any "vested" interest in the situation other than as working men, and so we took care to find workers who were neither shop stewards nor members of political parties trying to make political capital out of the situation. Consequently a large part of this article is re-telling what we have been told by workers who knew what they were talking about.

## UCS : THE REAL SITUATION

The press has been full of coverage and comment about this "experiment in workers' democracy", and since the general background to the work-in has been extensively documented we don't propose to go over the same ground again.

One point which has not been given a great deal of coverage in the press, however, concerns the "Ridley letter". This was a memo written in December, 1969, by Nicholas Ridley (now an Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Trade and Industry) when the Tories were in opposition. In this letter he recommended that the Tories, on assuming power, should 'butcher' (his word) the UCS yards "irrespective of their financial position at that time". One motive for this he explicitly stated, was to reduce the shipbuilding industry's wage bill by making the lower rates in the Lower Clyde yards the norm. In other words, a clear-cut declaration of class warfare. These intentions are worth bearing in mind when considering the various "solutions" being proposed from all directions.



There has been much which has not been reported which shows that there is a great deal of insidious politicking going on, making expert use of the emotions of the workers for purposes which are not in their interests and which can only, in the long term, cause disunity.

When we considered the impressions we had gained from the media about the situation at UCS, all we saw was a fantastic show of solidarity behind the shop stewards committee in charge of this work-in. Yet, as we saw it, there was still the same managerial system carrying out the same managerial functions over the same (but officially shrinking) work force, all concerned with completing ships. Ships which will only put more money into the liquidator's pocket before the yards fold up. All, seemingly, with the approval of the workers!

Was there really no significant dissension among the rank-and-file? Did they really see this, out of all the options open to them, as the best way to fight?

The short answer is NO! But because the workers are continually being exhorted by appeals for UNITY behind the shop stewards, they are inhibited from carrying out any meaningful discussions, either among themselves or with "outsiders". It has been difficult until now, when discontent among the men has reached massive proportions, to piece some of the story together.

## BEHIND THE SCENES.

The second batch of redundant workers finished on Friday, 3rd September, and brought the total to nearly 800. Some of these workers reported to us that there was in fact massive discontent among the rank-and-file with opposition to the leaders growing. The best way to get some feel for what has been happening in the yards is to hear some of their stories. With additional information from other sources which we will refer to later, we can get some insight into what is really going on.

At a meeting prior to the third, the committee was almost defeated in a vote which included a large number of abstentions. The issue on which the vote was taken was one of those small administrative blunders which happened to find its way to the shop floor, but which angered many workers by its high-handedness. One of the redundant workers had asked for his cards so he could look for another job, simply because he couldn't manage to continue the work-in on the payment he was getting out of the fighting fund. (He had to put in a full day's work for a fraction of the pay of those not yet made redundant. The committee wanted to withhold two hours' pay (when he was absent enquiring about a job) out of the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  days he had worked since being made redundant! This exemplified the bureaucratic pettiness to which many of the workers objected.

At the same meeting, the platform appealed for better work discipline as the management were complaining that the redundant workers were not pulling their weight on the job!

(One case which did not reach the floor at the mass meeting concerned a redundant worker who had been looking for another job and who was sacked for absenteeism. In fact, this decision was later reversed.)

It has become clear that many don't agree with the policy of paying redundant workers from the fighting fund to help complete ships for the liquidator; they realise that asking people to work for a means-tested payment will divide the redundant workers from the others and be a constant source of grievance. However, any expression of dissension is almost impossible. The meetings with the rank-and-file are taking place less frequently, sometimes less than once a week, and, consequently, most of the time is taken up with reports from the platform; in the short time left, it is impossible for anyone to be heard by more than a few people around him, especially against the stewards' PA system. If the platform recognises the would-be speaker as one of the "opposition", he is immediately denounced as a disruptive element trying to undermine the unity of the workers.

At one mass meeting, when someone attempted to raise a point from the floor, one of the stewards on the platform threw down a copy of an I.S. Clydebank Bulletin, shouting "These are the wreckers", and so implicating the speaker on the floor. (Is it only a coincidence that those redundancies mentioned happened to include several men who have voiced criticism of the stewards? One would suspect that the redundancies would occur first among workers in those sections of the production processes already completed, but this does not always seem to have happened.)

Why are the leadership behaving in this way? Well, probably because the interests of the leadership are not the same as those of the majority of the work-force. (They very rarely are, of course.) They know that, at the end of the day, if the government's policy of mass redundancies is successful, maybe 2,000 - 3,000 jobs will be left. Some may think that if they go along with the shop stewards' policy of working with management, they will stand a better chance of not being among those to be made redundant later. And so these appeals for unity are in fact sowing the seeds of a terrible future disunity among the men by playing on their (quite understandable) fears.

However, the motives for all this go much deeper. Airlie and Reid, the two most powerful members of the committee, are well-known to be members of the Communist Party, although despite this they were making a lot of militant noises at the beginning of the work-in. A very reliable source has informed us that the C.P. leadership quickly told Airlie that he was not supposed to be leading a revolution! It soon became apparent that, as Airlie, Reid and Co. were entering into all kinds of negotiations with management, they were certainly NOT leading a revolution. In fact, it is becoming clear that the C.P., among others, would accept suggestions for



solving the UCS problem if the number of redundancies can be reduced from the original figure of 6,000 in order to claim a "partial victory". In this event, we are told that the C.P. see in Reid\* a future head of the Scottish District of the Communist Party (a post he has held before) and possibly a communist M.P. in Clydeside. In Airlie's case, he could well become an important contender for Hugh Scanlon's job in the A.E.U. If this could be brought about, it could be a means of revitalising the flagging support in a declining Communist Party throughout Britain.

This prospect, we have been told, is closely linked to the C.P.'s change of policy in connection with the future development of the Morning Star, which is required to widen its base of support as the voice of the Labour Left in keeping with the policy of "The Parliamentary Road to Socialism".

## PLESSEY

The struggle at Alexandria has not received as much coverage as UCS, so we'll describe the background in more detail. We include stories workers told us to describe the situation.

The Alexandria factory, formerly the Argyle Motor Factory, then the Navy Torpedo Factory, was to be used to produce the Mk. 24 torpedo, the main armament for £300m. worth of hunter-killer submarines. In December, 1969, despite reassurances a year earlier that the plant would be producing until 1972, the government decided that the Mk. 24 was too complicated to produce, so G.E.C. was brought in to redesign the torpedo. The Alexandria factory, employing 1,300 workers, was to close. In March, 1970, it was announced that Plessey were to take over the factory which was then to become one of the main centres of its electronics group; 500 people were to be employed by the end of that year, and some staff were even to be transferred there from Dalkeith. About the same time, the IRC gave nearly £3m. to Plessey to invest in numerical controlled machine tools. (Significantly, perhaps, the most important of the machinery in the plant is of this type.) At the end of July the Mk. 24 was announced to be the best in the world; everything was improving and the jobs were secure. Plessey were getting quite a bargain, what with the IRC money as well as the plant (a 23-acre site with a 400,000 sq. ft. factory) and machinery worth several £m. for the (estimated) rock-bottom price of £640,000. In addition, about the time that Plessey took control of the plant (in January of this year) it was announced that Plessey had been given the contract to manufacture the Mk. 24 torpedo.

\* Reid is already a C.P. city councillor, and the Clydebank area is the Communist Party's greatest hope for electoral success.

Under the surface, however, things weren't quite all that they appeared to be. Office staff found it difficult to get any new equipment, even to replace ancient typewriters. After a while, machinery started to be moved out to other Plessey factories, mainly in the south of England. Soon the workers' suspicions were aroused and proved to be well-founded when, in the middle of May this year, Plessey announced that the machine shop was to be closed down (making 440 redundant). The numerical controls section was to be kept open, employing 250. Early in July it was announced that the whole factory was to close, and on Friday, 3rd September, the management paid off the remainder of the work force. Plessey's say that they had decided to manufacture the torpedo at Ilford, and because of lack of work it was necessary to shut the Alexandria factory. The shop stewards say they have irrefutable proof that Plessey have enough work subcontracted which could keep the plant going for an indefinite period. The Alexandria workers reckon that Plessey had never intended to keep the plant going for long, and that the main reason for buying it was for the obvious profit they would get from the deal.

## OCCUPATION

Long before they got their cards, the Plessey workers had been moving; they had been making representations to the Plessey management and the Ministry of Defense. They had also been in touch with workers in other Plessey plants; Poole and Ilford shop stewards had agreed to black machinery taken out of Alexandria. Immediately they were given their books, the workers held a mass meeting, and decided not to leave their factory. They went to the main gate, giving the departing management the sort of farewell to which they were entitled under the circumstances, locked themselves in, and have remained in control ever since.

Immediately support poured in from the townspeople, passers-by, and other workers. This included food, money and moral support. Shifts for the gate picket were organised, in addition to feeding and sleeping arrangements. That Sunday morning a mass meeting was held and it was decided to continue the occupation and control the movement of men and machinery in and out of the factory. The main objective was to ensure that the machinery which Plessey needed to manufacture the torpedo in Ilford was not to be moved from Alexandria.

When the district secretary of the AEF, McKee, was asked what the official union line was, he stated that the Union was right behind the men but nothing could be done over the weekend to confirm that there would be official union support until the offices opened on the Monday morning. (We wonder if the management were sitting on their arses and waiting for Monday morning before considering their position.) McKee said that the UCS shop stewards committee were 100% behind the Plessey workers.

On the Monday morning there was a really good turnout - almost the whole of the Plessey work-force were inside the gate. Outside, over 50 workers from local factories had turned up and everyone waited to greet the



management. First, the few workers who were still employed by Plessey to help run down the plant turned up. They were told at the gate that they would not be denied access and would not be interfered with, as long as they did not try to touch any machinery - in which case there would be trouble. They left, and were cheered away by the pickets. When the management turned up in cars, they were told the same thing. There were several amusing incidents. At one point, a car with four people in it stopped outside the gate; the driver got out, agreed not to touch the machinery and went back to his car. The gates remained shut. He got out again, went to the gate and said "Well". Back came the answer, "You agreed, but the others didn't". So everyone in the car trooped out to personally agree to the terms, return to the car, and then enter the factory amid shouts of "Say please" from those with cameras, slow hand-claps and some drumming on the car roof. In all, between 12 and 15 of the management eventually went in. Later the tea ladies came along - to make tea for the pickets - a good sign of support. Everyone then settled down to wait, knowing it could be some time before any meaningful moves might be made.

A few days later, after a conference with the police, management informed the workers they intended bring in outside labour to maintain the equipment - the workers offered to do this, but were turned down. There was also a conference between the police and the workers. Although there is no law of trespass in Scotland, the workers were told that it was illegal to hinder free access to anyone entitled to it, and that they (the police) would have to provide protection for management, staff or outside workers if necessary. Continual discussions are being held by the workers to decide how to meet these threats.

Recently there was a demonstration in Alexandria in support of the Plessey workers at which 7,000 people took part. Among the demonstrators was a delegation from the Ilford plant. Their management had told them that the machinery at Alexandria was only old junk but a tour round the factory soon put the lie to that story. After demanding and getting a meeting with the Alexandria management, the Ilford men told them that they were going to report the facts to their own workers and their shop stewards' committee.

## UCS WORKERS! JOIN THE ARMY!

Is it coincidence that a mobile army recruiting office has appeared just up the road from the Clydebank gates?

## USE COMMON SENSE

On Monday, 6th September, we distributed a leaflet (reproduced here) to both Plessey and U.C.S. workers.

Consider the four comparisons made in the leaflet.

1. Where the workers stand in relation to their work-place is a very important factor. The Plessey workers see that their best course of action is to occupy the work-place and exert direct control over it - a clear-cut attack on the property rights of the bosses. They are thus held together and can discuss their situation, the methods they should continue to use and can know and feel each other's attitudes and arguments continuously. There is no possibility here of men being unaware of how their mates are feeling.

The U.C.S. workers are not at the moment threatening the property rights of their bosses over the yards in which they work - they come in the morning and leave in the afternoon; at weekends the yards are deserted, the gatehouse door is open and it is possible to walk in and out freely. There is no need for a show of presence by the workers because they are not in control of their workplace.

This difference is reflected in the relationships with the police. At U.C.S. the police can drive a conspicuous landrover freely in and out of the yards and can openly show their presence. The work-in does not constitute any threat to 'law and order' (in other words to the bosses, liquidator or the government). At Plessey's the police are keeping out of sight and are playing it cool. They have given advice to both management and workers, but although some of the 'advice' for the workers has really been 'warnings' they know that immediately they throw their weight around it means a direct confrontation.

2. Plessey workers are holding onto machinery which the company needs; the very equipment that it wanted when it bought the factory. The bosses need the machines but the workers are determined that they will only be used where and how they want. They have said that they don't want their livelihoods based on building weapons of war, but society being how it is, the torpedo will be built anyway and there is no reason why it cannot be built at Alexandria and at the same time give them work.

At U.C.S. the workers are continuing to build ships, and subsidising them out of the pockets of other workers, only to put more money into the liquidator's kitty. This form of action leaves the ships still in the bosses' hands - their property is still being recognised as such - and it won't even be to the financial advantage of the workers. On top of this, the more ships that are completed, the less there will be for the men to use as a lever to fight the government, should they wish to do so.

3. The Plessey workers are making policy and taking decisions themselves - democratically. They stand or fall by these decisions with everyone having the same available information and the same interest in the outcome.



# USE COMMON SENSE

## UCS.-PLESSEY A STEP FORWARD?

- PLESSEY - SIT-IN
- U.C.S. - WORK-IN
- PLESSEY - TAKING MACHINES FROM THE BOSSES
- U.C.S. - MAKING MACHINES FOR THE BOSSES
- PLESSEY - WORKERS' DEMOCRACY
- U.C.S. - SHOP-STEWARDS' BUREAUCRACY
- PLESSEY CONTROLS - WORKERS' CONTROL
- U.C.S. - DON'T ROCK THE BOAT

Is a Labour Government or Nationalisation the solution? - Ask the miners, the railwaymen, the steelworkers.

Can an official Trade Union leadership lead a militant struggle? - Ask the Postal Workers, the Power Workers, the Pilkingtons Workers, the Dustmen.

## HOURLY NOT AIRLIE

Is a weekly mass meeting enough, or should there be constant consultation?

Are only the leaders capable of expressing ideas and deciding policy and tactics?

Is the leadership beyond question?

The rank-and-file can do without the leadership.

The leadership can't do without the rank-and-file.

## PEOPLE BEFORE PROFITS

Is co-operation with the management putting people before profits?

Is co-operation with the liquidator putting people before profits?

Does finishing the ships with the help of the fighting fund put people before profits?

ITS THE PROFIT MOTIVE WHICH HAS CREATED THIS SITUATION.  
ITS THE PEOPLE WHO CAN SAVE IT.

This is in marked contrast to U.C.S. where, as we have pointed out earlier, the very structure of the mass meetings is such as to inhibit formulation of policy by the men who have been regarded more as rubber-stamps to pass the shop stewards' decisions. However, the U.C.S. workers are realising more and more what their role has been in this affair and may yet be able to put pressure on their leaders to bring control into their own hands.

4. During their struggle the Plessey workers are changing the normal methods of making decisions which determine the way their work lives are organised, in order to be able to face their present predicament. Here there is no distinction between who makes the decisions and who follows them. At U.C.S. the same old management structure prevails to control their daily work-in with the bonus of a shop steward management added to back it up - attempting to push the men yet further away from the decision-making process. Consequently, there is no change in the authority relationships which they have been used to for so long.

Perhaps we shall see the boat rocking in future. It would appear that pressure from the rank-and-file could democratize the U.C.S. fight and let's hope so. However, the Plessey workers have nothing to be complacent about - they will have to take very great care to ensure that their decision-making will not become bureaucratic; and they will have to watch the way that the unions choose to play their game - it is unlikely that they will readily back a group of potential law-breakers right up to the hilt. Their local branch official, McKee, has given them his full support, but at the time of writing we have not heard of any positive action from the union.

## UCS - PLESSEY SOLIDARITY?

It is interesting to look at the UCS shop stewards' attitudes towards the Plessey struggle. Here, some incidents which were brought to our notice are quite revealing.

For example, at the massive UCS demonstration in Glasgow on Wednesday, 18th September, in which 70,000 people took part, along with many from other industries the Plessey workers joined in. At one point the Plessey workers sat down and blocked the road. Immediately the march stewards moved in to guide the rest of the demonstrators round those who had sat down saying, "Avoid these trouble-makers, this is a disciplined march". The police moved in and seeing that the other demonstrators weren't going to support them, the sitters had to get up and carry on.

When the march reached the meeting place, some Plessey workers went to the rostrum and tried to set their banner up beside those of UCS to get some much-needed publicity on the television cameras. 'Twas not to be; Airlie leaned over and told them to move it, and when the Plessey workers tried to insist all they got was the treat of calling the police.



At a meeting in Chatham on Monday, 13th September, Ross, the UCS Boilermakers' shop steward convener, said that despite the better case the Plessey workers had, they were unlikely to win (as the UCS workers would) since 'they did not have a leadership with the correct political perspective'. He also announced that UCS were donating £250 out of the fighting fund to the Plessey men as well as sending the redundant UCS men to Alexandria to demonstrate their support. The Plessey workers have been asking for these men to come and picket the gate when the need arises. We shall see. Judging by previous indications, it is more likely that these gifts and gestures from the UCS shop stewards have come either as a result of pressure from the rank-and-file or from an idea that such a gesture would go down well with their own men rather than an action of solidarity. Those stewards are unlikely to give much more than qualified support to a group of men who have shown that democratic discussion and argument need not be equated with squabbling, disunity or weakness.

## SOME CONCLUSIONS

How should we regard the economic arguments going on about the possible viability of the UCS yards in the light of the Ridley report of almost two years' ago? Have the yards been deliberately run down in the period between December 1969 and the collapse of UCS in July 1971? (Eg. We hear that orders for more ships have been deliberately refused in the last nine months.)

At the time of writing there are many proposals for "solving" the UCS problem and it is difficult to visualize what the outcome will be. What is clear is that the rank-and-file have been unable to make their own proposals, they have only been asked to endorse the shop stewards' committee's recommendations.

The government has set up a company to run the Govan-Linthouse yards. The directors have now met the representatives of the unions and shop stewards, resulting in what appears to be a basis for discussion on a compromise solution.

Prior to the formation of this company, the stewards said that there would be no negotiations based on splitting the four yards or on issues which did not include the employment of the whole work force. Reid and Airlie then shifted their position by introducing a new term, "cumulative proposals". According to John Kerr (Guardian, 25.9.71) when questioned Reid agreed that these could be interpreted "as a combined operation involving separate solutions for different yards". This now appears to be the policy upon which future negotiations with the new company will proceed. Will the stewards now shift their position regarding "no redundancies" to a more flexible attitude leading to some unavoidable redundancies", i.e. something less than the original 6,000 proposed? A compromise solution could enable Reid and Airlie to claim a partial victory and the government could attain its main objective at the same time.

However, if things get too hot for Reid and Airlie due to rank-and-file pressure, we can expect to hear more from the T.U. leaders as negotiations get under way.

Is there no alternative to this kind of negotiation over the heads of the rank-and-file? The rank-and-file workers at UCS are not stupid - many see through what's going on. Can they withstand pressure from leaders like Reid and Airlie and those at the top of the Trade Unions, in addition to pressure from Press, T.V., Radio and the government? Individual workers have different individual problems, i.e. family circumstances, age, and future prospects for employment, etc., which may affect their actions.

Whatever the UCS workers decide to do, it should be with full cognisance of all the information available. The government is not going to hand out concessions which are not forced from them. The workers must surely use methods which will kick harder at the people who are destroying their communities.

Regarding the merits of the "work-in", the liquidator summed it up himself. When told of the work-in decision, he said, "Well, if all they're doing is working-in for the right to work, I've no quarrel with that". Of course he hasn't! He knows that in this society 'the right to work' really means 'the right to be exploited', and he certainly has no quarrel with that! One cynical newspaper reporter has commented "Concentrating all their frustrations and anger on a work-in will effectively take away their energy from other, more dangerous activities".

The situation at Plessey's is different. Here the workers are still in control and they can stay in control so long as they don't remain isolated. They need the support of people from other Plessey factories and from their communities. They need the support of all workers.

The Plessey bosses are playing it cool. They seem to be hoping that the workers can be starved into submission. If they are obliged to carry on without adequate support, it will not be long before they are under severe pressure through their unemployment and very low incomes with families to support.

The struggle can be extended to other Plessey plants to bring maximum pressure on the employers.

There is a danger that if they do not lead to victories the kind of struggles now going on at UCS and Plessey's will discredit the "Stay in", "Occupation", "Work to rule" type of tactic. This must not be allowed to happen. Whatever the outcome of these particular struggles, these tactics are needed now more than ever. The Industrial Relations Act may make traditional forms of strike action less effective in many situations.\* In these two cases the workers are faced with situations in which the factories are being closed down. The tactics referred to above are even more valid in disputes in factories which are not closing down.

\* For several examples where tactics other than just strike action have been used successfully, see Solidarity Pamphlet No. 37, Strategy for Industrial Struggle, by Mark Fore.



At a meeting in Chatham in support of UCS, representatives of UCS shop stewards and Communist Party spokesmen said, "no 'sit-in' had ever succeeded". We can tell them of many cases where they have. The Flint auto workers in U.S.A.\*, Renault workers in France, and Fiat workers in Italy\*\* can teach us a great deal about these tactics.

We in "Solidarity" think that workers can voice opinions, make proposals and criticisms, if they don't rely on leaders, whoever they are, to manipulate meetings and arrange things so that the rank-and-file are prevented from being. This means taking matters into their own hands, by forming their own organisations at shop-floor level and meeting as often as necessary, even every few hours when engaged in direct struggle.

We say that the workers themselves should decide on the objectives of their struggle and that control and organisation of these struggles should remain firmly in their own hands. The forms which this self-activity of the working class may take will vary considerably from country to country, and from industry to industry. Its basic content will not.

Meaningful action - for revolutionaries is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the egalitarian tendencies and self-activity of the masses, and whatever assists in their de-mystification.

Sterile and harmful action - is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them, and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others - even by those allegedly acting on their behalf.

People everywhere can act now without leaving it to leaders who, in the name of UNITY, make decisions over their heads. At the end of the day it will be useless to cry "We have been sold out".

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\* See Solidarity Pamphlet No. 31, The Great Flint Sit-Down Strike against G.M., 1936-67.

\*\* See Italy 1969, a pamphlet published by Big Flame.

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Anyone in the West of Scotland wishing to contact us should write to:  
Solidarity, c/o Dan Kane, 43 Valeview Terrace, Dumbarton.

## A WAR-TIME RECIPE

Take some venom ripe and mellow  
From the cobra-di-capello,  
The rattlesnake, the fer-de-lance, the scorpion as well;  
Add the courage of a rat,  
With the slyness of a cat,  
And the perfume of the martens, skunks, and other beasts that smell;

Take the vigour from a mouse  
And the brain waves of a louse;  
Add the mercy of a tiger and the pity of a shark,  
With the justice of a hawk,  
The parrot's gift of talk,  
And the wisdom of the troglodytes who lived in Noah's Ark.

Let it simmer in a pot  
Till it settles down to rot,  
Add the smile of a hyena and the belly of a cow,  
With the grimace of a seal,  
The wriggles of an eel,  
And the gourmand satisfaction of a marketable sow.

Boil it slowly on the fire,  
Get it stirred by every liar  
That your mother ingenuity can gather on the spot;  
Then add the wolfish wile  
Off the armoured crocodile,  
And the hide of any pachyderm that's safe to stop a shot.

Place the mixture on a tray,  
Cart it on a brewer's dray  
To the oven of a brickyard, with instructions to the baker  
To mould it to the shape  
Of an anthropoidal ape,  
And you'll have a perfect specimen of a Union Labour Fakir.

John S. Clarke  
in 'Satires, Lyrics and Poems',  
S.L. Press, 1919.



# U.P.W. : THE PARTY IS OVER

The honeymoon in the U.P.W. between the 'left' and the leadership of the union is now over. The trad 'left', having fulfilled its role as a cover for the union's reactionary leadership during the recent struggle,\* is now being thrown on the scrap heap.

A number of rank and file papers for postal workers have recently been circulating among the union's members. In the August 6 issue of the U.P.W.'s Branch Officials Bulletin the union leadership attacks some of its erstwhile 'allies' associated with these journals (such as the Communist Party, I.S., I.M.G. and S.L.L.). The Bulletin calls on its Branch Officials to report any radical activities to the General Secretary of the union.

Meanwhile there is every sign that grass roots opposition to the leadership remains. It is probably this which is the major factor in causing the current witch-hunt.

Dastardly acts have apparently been committed by subversive elements. We read for instance that some groups 'are circulating leaflets with no printing or publishing address, some of which have been placed in mail bags, thus finding their way to various offices throughout the country'.

Perhaps it is significant that the Postal Workers Alliance was singled out for attack in the Bulletin. This group continues to operate and has issued a leaflet on Merseyside calling on postmen to continue the struggle. The leaflet reads:

WHAT - NO 5%, TOM!  
7 weeks strike for sod all.  
Loads of talk about 5% and still sod all.  
What happens now? Nowt, mate, bloody nowt ... if we leave it to Tom.  
WAKE UP, COLLEAGUES!  
The only way for us to win anything is for us to fight for it ourselves. Why not start a rank and file group in your office?  
It's your office, you're a taxpayer, you work in it ... and die.  
If we want our 5% we must show that we are not sheep but human beings.  
BLACK BUSINESS MAIL  
BAN OVERTIME  
LIGHTNING STRIKES  
WORK TO RULE

- TRY IT !

\* See SOLIDARITY, vol.VI, nos. 9 and 10, and our 'Postal Strike' pamphlet by Joe Jacobs.

# REVIEWS/1

Work-Counterplanning on the Shop Floor, Bill Watson, Libertarian Bookshop, 95 West Green Road, London, N.15. 5P.

This excellent little pamphlet is a reprint of an article which appeared in Radical American, Vol. V, No. 3. It is based on the author's experiences in an un-named car engine plant in Detroit in the late 60's.

The pamphlet describes the resistance to the introduction of new types of engines, and how this resistance on a plant-wide scale, on both formal and informal level was planned and carried out. In one case there was systematic collaboration between production workers and inspectors to discover or manufacture faults in the new models. As a result:

"... Stacks upon stacks of motors awaiting rapair, piled up and down the aisles of the plant. This continued at an accelerating pace up to a night when the plant was forced to shut down, losing more than ten hours production time. At that point there were so many defective motors around the plant that it was almost impossible to move from one area to another."

The pamphlet brings out clearly the spirit of enjoyment with which the struggle was waged and the spirit of healthy competition which developed. Another quote:

"The inspectors organised a rod blowing contest which required the posting of lookouts at the entrances to the shop area and the making of deals with assembly, for example, to neglect the torquing of bolts on rods for a random number of motors so that there would be loose rods. When an inspector stepped up to a motor and felt the telltale knock on the water pump wheel, he would scream out to clear the shop, the men abandoning their work and running behind boxes and benches. Then he would arc himself away from the stand and ram the throttle up to first 4,000 and then 5,000 r.p.m. The motor would knock, clunk, and finally blow to a crunching halt with the rod blowing through the sink of the oil pan and across the shop. The men would then rise up from their cover, exploding with cheers and another point would be chalked up on the wall for that inspector. This particular contest went on for several weeks resulting in more than 150 blown motors. No small amount of money was exchanged in bets over the contest."

The pamphlet describes events in an American factory, but the phenomenon of workers not only resisting but imposing their own patterns on



production is a very widespread, if poorly documented, one\* (this is one of the main values of Watson's article). From the setting of piecework ceilings, to the 'carrying' of older workers in a shop, to the not collecting of fares from mothers with children, to not cutting off families' electricity for non-payment, the system in which we live is constantly being modified by workers doing things their way and operating their values instead of those of the system.

It would be a big mistake to go overboard in this area, but it is as well to remember that production is often a very different thing from what our masters, and many socialists think it is, and it is an area which needs a much more serious examination than it has received so far. This pamphlet is a valuable beginning.

M.F.

\* Solidarity pamphlet No. 38, Strategy for Industrial Struggle, by Mark Fore, LOP, discusses this resistance and puts it into context in a general socialist strategy.

### SOLIDARITY AUTONOMOUS GROUPS

- ABERDEEN : c/o Ian Mitchell, 3 Sinclair Rd., Aberdeen.  
CLYDESIDE : c/o Dan Kane, 43 Valeview Terrace, Dumbarton.  
DUNDEE : c/o F. Browne, 1st Floor, 42 Baldovan Terrace, Dundee.  
LONDON : c/o 53A Westmoreland Rd., Bromley, Kent.  
NORTH WEST: c/o R. Sumner, 23 Sewerby St., Manchester 16.  
SWANSEA : c/o D. Lamb, 66 Terrace Road, Swansea.

### ITALY 1969-70: New Tactics and Organisation

Obtainable from 122 Offord Road, London, N 1, or Big Flame, 78 Clarendon Road, Wallasey, Cheshire. 35P

Here is how the class struggle goes on in Italy today:

"In FIAT the managers took a long time to learn obedience, and were several times forced to run the gauntlet between two lines of furious workers. Onto their bald head, beaded with sweat and spattered with gobs of spit, the workers showered five-lire coins, which sparkled like confetti in the sun." \*

The bitter struggle that takes place daily the world over between workers and management, is at present at a peak in the Italian motor and allied industries. This sixty-page pamphlet is a number of articles from the Italian revolutionary papers La Classe and Lotta Continua strung together for English readers with a preface and various introductory notes, maps, etc. No contribution is signed, but there are some variations in the viewpoints expressed.

The first article, a long one, started life as a speech by a delegate to a rank-and-file workers' conference in July, 1969. He describes how he and his workmates at FIAT's Miraflore factory, Turin, began to take the initiative for struggles away from the union officials, onto the shop floor. They did this by a variety of tactics, based on the watchword "FIGHT WITHIN THE FACTORY". The unions sought to pervert and frustrate this move by imposing line delegates - individual union activists on the shop floor with whom the management could negotiate rather than face the united body of workers. The workers replied: "We are all delegates".

The article includes some recurrent demands at FIAT that could unite workers throughout Italy: equal rises all round (and no strings), less hours, no compulsory overtime, abolition of gradings, parity with office staff. "The workers have virtually expelled the union from the factory, and have begun to formulate their own demands, and carry them forward in a fight that is led entirely by themselves." \*\*

The next piece is on a Turin street battle in July, 1969, when workers and students fought the police for 24 hours: barricades, tear-gas, rifle butts, house-to-house "searches".

\* Italy 1969-70 page 38.

\*\* Ibid.



Next comes a lengthy discussion of the line delegate system. This shows how workers see through the way the unions try to penetrate autonomous shop-floor organisations and networks of contacts.

An article translated from Lotta Continua, the worker-student revolutionary paper, November 1970, is a very clear, convincing piece of analysis that also reaffirms the basic libertarian and humanist nature of the struggle against wage slavery. It shows, in effect, how once workers begin to shed their burden of fear and servility they see "society" merely as social conditions - not forever fixed or uncontrollable, but the product of human activity, to be changed, abolished, or rebuilt according to human needs - and begin to organise and act accordingly for themselves (but with whatever allies are sincerely willing to throw in their lot with the workers). The author lists several different sides to this process in present-day Italy that would repay careful consideration by all libertarians. (Read this article, "Cultural Revolution", if you read nothing else.

The last major piece is an interview with three FIAT workers that explains how the current industrial struggles link with the unrest in the south of Italy where so many younger FIAT workers come from.

There are many interesting things in this pamphlet, including some good cartoons (and lousy photographs). Unfortunately, some subjects are just skated over (eg. "The workers have attacked the school system directly, as the root of the divisions that weaken the working class . . ."), but the publishers do hope to bring out a bigger work on Italy later this year.

And in one or two places some residual Stone Age attitudes peep through: ". . . the political and mass organisation of the workers, guided by a revolutionary vanguard . . .", or "FIAT = VIETNAM = FIAT", but these are rare. The English editors have added rather a lot of fairly inept comments on how they see the Italian struggle affecting Britain, without really analysing the different set-up over here. They are also a bit obsessed with economics, and come close to attributing the course of the Italian events simply to full order books. Judging, though, by the new-found mutual assistance and joint actions of students and young workers, the world youth rebellion is a mighty big element. But you can make up your own mind: it is well worth reading this pamphlet just for the facts.

M.H.

## SUBSCRIBE TO SOLIDARITY

A paper for militants - in industry and elsewhere. Attempts a total critique of modern society, and a systematic 'demystification' of its values, ideas, and forms of organisation. Discusses what libertarian revolution is all about. Send £1 to SOLIDARITY, c/o 53A Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent, to receive forthcoming issues of the paper and pamphlets to that value.

# EALING COUNCIL AND THE HOUSING CRISIS

In the official view, as set out in the Greve Report, homelessness can be ended if immigration is curtailed, if cheaper mortgage and house modernisation programmes are speeded up, and if social work agencies concentrate on the various family problems - marital breakdown, too many children, rent arrears, unemployment, etc. - which are seen as the underlying causes. The overwhelming bias in favour of short-term welfare provisions greatly distorts the problem. Only the symptoms are treated.

The root cause of homelessness is of course the chronic shortage of adequate low-cost housing, in London especially and in Britain as a whole. Working class families and minority groups are the victims of the multi-million-pound property rackets. Public housing cannot compete with the building of offices and luxury flats.

Concentration on immediate family welfare not only ignores the cause and camouflages the inadequacy of present "solutions". It also involves vast expenditure in terms of money and other resources.

A good illustration is the way Welfare and Children's Departments in the London Boroughs spend huge amounts to keep homeless families in supervised hostel accommodation or take children into care. But even the deterrent threat of these policies cannot prevent people from becoming homeless. The Departments of Social Services have to resort to more elaborate piecemeal schemes.

In the Borough of Ealing (including Ealing, Acton, Southall), as in some other boroughs, a procedure has developed almost of its own accord. Families with absolutely nowhere to go, i.e. a small proportion of those in serious housing need, are temporarily accommodated in Bed and Breakfast establishments throughout the West London area\*.

Under this scheme, families are provided with only basic sleeping accommodation in single or double rooms, with or without access to kitchen or cooking facilities. After breakfast, depending on the rules and regulations in particular guest houses, they are expected to go out for the rest of the day or to stay quiet and bored in their rooms. Obviously life in such circumstances becomes extremely difficult and uncomfortable, especially where boisterous young children are involved.

\* Under Section 1 of the Children's and Young Persons' Act, 1963, Children's Departments are authorised to give whatever help, advice and guidance is necessary to prevent children being placed in care.



Families are scheduled to go through the system from bed-and-breakfast to hostel to intermediate council housing. But with the shortage of council housing and the stop on new building, they may have to stay in Bed-and-Breakfast for a year or 18 months until something is found for them or they make their own arrangements (back to overcrowded Southall or Acton).

Families are usually glad to have anywhere at all to stay together, and social workers are relieved of having to "persuade" people into allowing their children to go into care. However, in terms of a long-term plan to solve these families' housing problem the scheme is disastrous.

The cost of keeping them in this unsatisfactory situation is, unbelievably, at least £1.50 per person per night. Thus families with 3 or 4 children will take £52.50 to £60 per week to maintain. Even infants of a few months or weeks are charged at the full rate by landlords. At present Ealing Council has approximately 30 families in Bed-and-Breakfast accommodation at an annual cost of about £35,000 in payment to 15 or so guest houses.

Ealing's Conservative Council (recently deposed) tried to solve the housing problem by cutting the waiting lists for council houses. This was done not by building and allocations, but by throwing hundreds of families off the waiting list because they earn too much (over £30 per week) or because they lack the five-year-residence-in-the-London-area qualification. The net result is that the Social Services Dept. has to maintain in Bed-and-Breakfast several families refused rehousing by the Housing Dept. because of "high" earnings and refused council mortgages because income is "too low".

At the end of May the Labour Party swept into power in Ealing after promising far-reaching changes, particularly in relation to the housing situation. Since then the families in Bed-and-Breakfast have been documented and analysed to find out what proportions are immigrants, unsupported mothers, and unemployed. The Council, perhaps genuinely shocked at the scale of the mismanagement of the housing problem, promised to rehouse all suitable families in temporary accommodation. There were plans for reopening older houses which had been empty and boarded up for years in several streets near the centre of the borough.

However, just as the feasibility schemes were grinding through the bureaucracy, three families took direct action and squatted in houses in Western Road. Each of these families had been pushed around for months by the various Council departments. The squatters, helped by supporters from Lewisham Squatters and people from Shelter, held meetings in the Town Hall and demanded speedy action from the Council.

This really stampeded the Council into action. Top-level meetings directed the recently appointed Director of Social Services, whiz-kid Nick Stacey (ex Dartmouth College, Oxford, Olympics, Panorama, Woolwich, Oxfam, etc., etc.) to supervise the immediate opening up of 16 houses in Western Road, and the eventual reopening of some 40 more properties in the Borough. Within 10 days or so sixteen families had been moved into Western Road.

Far from forestalling any community action, this led to the squatters (having welcomed these families and helped with furniture and decoration) apparently recruiting most of them into their network. The Council is now being forced to hold joint meetings with the squatters and plans are well advanced for the Council to hand over 10-12 houses to the newly formed Squatters' Association for them to re-equip and allocate.

Ealing's housing situation is still appalling; there are still 25-30 families in guest houses in costly overcrowded unsuitable accommodation. The report in the Guardian, August 23, about the Atlantic Guest House in Kilburn, where 15 homeless families are maintained in unsanitary overcrowded conditions by Brent Borough Council at a cost of £250 per week, is an illustration of how the fragmented attempts by the various welfare and housing departments in each of the London Boroughs are failing even to sweep the problem under the carpet tidily.

In Ealing the direct action Squatters' Association is beginning to have concrete results beneficial in the long term - i.e. achieving re-housing.

If such associations can demolish the notion that homelessness is a network of immediate welfare crises to be dealt with by social workers, probation officers, marriage guidance counsellors, race relations officers, etc., then perhaps in the near future the real problem, the shortage of housing, will be recognised and dealt with.

S.W.

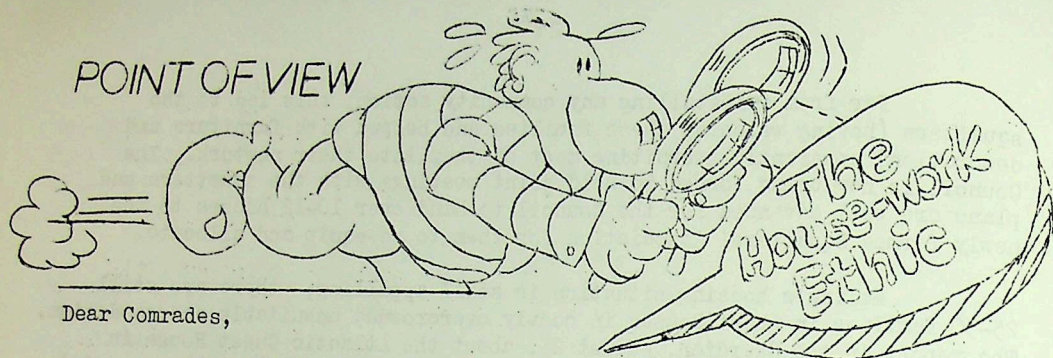
A NEW SOLIDARITY (LONDON) PAMPHLET :

## HISTORY and REVOLUTION (a revolutionary critique of historical materialism) by Paul Cardan.

Discusses the socio-centric and ethno-centric foundations of marxism. Shows how today's dominant 'revolutionary' system of ideas was itself a product of historical development, reflecting a typically capitalist vision of man. Suggests that, at a certain stage, historical materialism becomes an obstacle to the further development of critical thought about both history and revolution.

15p (plus 3p postage) from H. Russell, 53A Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.





Dear Comrades,

The article "Wife and Mother" in *Solidarity*, VI, 10, gave a good account of the type of alienation particularly affecting women in contemporary society - alienation which pervades not only our work, but our leisure activities, our closest relationships, our own bodies. It must have been quite mind-expanding, if they bothered to read it, for all those men who imagine it's a great life being a modern housewife, that motherhood is the ultimate fulfilment for a woman, and so on.

For too many males, revolutionary perspectives stop short at the threshold of their own homes. They ignore what is happening to the women they live with. They go on being looked after by a tame female as they have been all their lives, and they even have the nerve to criticise her methods if standards fall below the style to which they're accustomed! One wonders whether their attitude is due to a failure of consciousness; or to deliberate cynical exploitation of the conventions.

No one with any claim to be liberal or progressive would condone a social system in which domestic service is performed for one class by members of another or for one race by members of another. So why should one sex be served by the other? The daily household tasks forming the background to people's lives should not have to dominate anyone's existence.

Women's-liberation literature gives a great deal of attention to housework, its nature and effects. This is necessary at present, in the process of raising consciousness, exposing myths and working for change. But in the long term, the significance accorded to this area of activity must be drastically reduced. The domestic treadmill will cease to exist when it's accepted that everyone not physically or mentally incapacitated can "do for himself", either as an individual or on a co-operative basis.

Of course, change here must be linked with change in the relations of production, the function of production in society - in fact with our total perspective for general liberation.

Our perspective will not be total if it fails to consider the whole question of personal relationships, life outside production. This concerns everyone's life in its privatised sector; for a majority of women it is dominant over everything else, sometimes to the exclusion of everything else. The women's liberation movement has presented a conscious and in some ways effective challenge to existing norms, but a lot of its work has been internal, hardly known outside the groups directly involved. I hope *Solidarity* will continue to contribute, not only by reproducing articles like "Wife and Mother" but by developing its own critique.

Fraternally, E.A.S.

# IRELAND

## ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

The comments below are taken from a letter written by a reader in Northern Ireland to the author of "Occupied Ireland" (in *Solidarity*, VI, 9).

... To refuse to recognise the right to self-determination of the Northern Protestant nationality is in fact, in the real situation which exists in Ireland, to align oneself with Catholic Nationalism, Anti-Partitionism, under whatever new label and packaging it may come today. You would agree that there can never be socialism in Ireland (of a genuine kind, I mean, not just nationalised industry, etc.) without the creative, conscious action of ordinary workers, Protestant as well as R.C. Then you must recognise that, even after half a century, the Protestant community here still feels that it would be nationally oppressed within a 32-County state.

The I.C.O.\* Statement puts it very well: "The breaking down of the national barriers between the Catholic and Protestant communities would be of advantage to the socialist movement, provided that it happened by the mutual consent of the two communities. But an attempt to break down national barriers by the bigger nation over-coming the smaller would not be of advantage to the socialist movement. It would only foster national divisions in the working class."

Unfortunately, the Catholic working class in the North has been and still is under the domination of bourgeois nationalist political and religious organisations, whose function has been to act as the Northern wing of Southern Catholic nationalism. Partition was never imposed by England, but by a politico-military national movement in the North.

It is precisely because you don't accept this analysis, and thus don't recognise the rights of the Northern Protestant community, that you see the British troops through the tinted spectacles of traditional Catholic nationalism/republicanism - as the "army of occupation". The very phrase, of course, shows the contradiction in what you say - showing that the concept of nationality is by no means absent from your analysis, but that only one "Irish nation" is recognised.

\* Irish Communist Organisation.



To talk of occupation is to talk of one nation invading another, occupying its territory with its armed forces, etc. This is precisely the standpoint of the Provisional/Official Republican/Blaneyite F. Fail, etc. ideologies. But if the Northern Protestants form a national community, then there can be no talk of "Occupation", since the majority want the link with the U.K. maintained: the Six Counties are not retained within the U.K. against the will of their inhabitants by British troops, as the rhetoric about "occupation" seems to imply.

It is just this sort of logic about the nature of the State and the wrole of the Army which leads the P.D. into Houdini-like postures and frequent disappearances up its own arse. Thus Free Citizen (Vol. I, No. 27) condemns sectarian attacks by one group of workers on another (in this case, R.C.'s from Ballymurphy attacking Prods in New Barnsley estate), but says it does not condemn clashes with the Army - which in this case was standing between the two sets of workers to prevent sectarian conflict!

The same with the attacks by Shankill workers on Unity Flats - compounded by the fact in this case that these people are sometimes labelled "fascists" by the P.D. but Free Citizen could still say: "We do not rejoice when any section of the working class is beaten off the streets by the army" (no doubt including the Unionist mobs dispersed by the troops in August, 1969!).

- To explain the presence of the army here (as I would explain it) by saying that it came to protect the interests of British (including 6-county) capitalism does not preclude one from saying that its role is to prevent sectarian conflict - for British Imperialism and the Ulster ruling class no longer have an interest in provoking sectarian conflict - for reasons given in the I.C.O. Economics of Partition pamphlet.

And I think you would seriously misjude the situation here if you imagine that withdrawal of troops would not leave the working class areas open to grave danger. After all, August 1969 was not "inevitable" or "probable" either - it took most of us by surprise. Moreover, in the new situation today, with terrorism being widely employed by the Provisionals, and the sectarian gulf in the working class deepened by such means, the aggressive I.R.A. strategy in fact exposes the R.C. ghettos to real danger of retaliation by embittered Protestants . . . especially after bomb blasts when Protestant women and kids are injured (maybe soon fatalities will occur - - and remember that the number of guns in Protestant hands, i.e. the potential strength of a U.V.F.-type force which would inevitably spring up if the Army pulled out and the B-men were not reconstituted officially, runs into tens of thousands.

Even at present, the R.C.'s are suffering principally because of the so-called "defence" strategy - in fact a very aggressive strategy - of the I.R.A. Thus in July 1970, a minor arms search by the Army ended in the deaths of several civilians, because the I.R.A. escalated a minor stone-throwing incident into a major gun battle.

The P.D., as usual, carries the logic of its position from elbow to arse by its absurd demand, occasionally trumpeted in Free Citizen, that

the 'Peace Line' be dismantled, as it prevents working class unity between the R.C.'s and Prods - presumably the sort of unity which Shankill Prods keep wanting to have with their R.C. brothers in Unity Flats, but which the nasty soldiers keep preventing!

I do not believe, myself, that R.C. working class areas are 'harassed' and 'attacked' by the troops. How would that serve any bourgeois or imperialist interest, unless one assumes (as, for instance, Lysaght did in the debate with Conor Cruise O'Brien in Red Mole some time ago) that a revolutionary situation was developing in Ireland in August, 1969? And that the role of the army in intervening was (and is) to prevent social revolution, which seems to me to be patently absurd. Nor do I believe that 'resistance' in the R.C. ghettos, motivated as it is by the bourgeois nationalist illusions of a single Irish nation part of which is occupied by a 'foreign' force, is properly classifiable as 'defence'. (Remember, too, that it is one thing to throw bombs and bricks at soldiers to harass them, and quite another to fight off armed civilians intent on burning your home down.)

Of course, there are cases of army brutality, arrogant treatment of civilians, damage to people's property, looting, etc., by soldiers (in Prod and Mick areas), but this is the pattern of 'normal' undisciplined behaviour which one can expect from a bourgeois military force, because of its very nature and structure. To oppose such behaviour (as when a number of Scottish soldiers clearly ran amok recently on the New Lodge Road) is distinct from supporting demands for withdrawal...

In my view, it is nothing short of criminal for the I.R.A. to construe arms searches (and it is obvious that no ruling class is going to stand by while its opponents stockpile arms for use against it - any serious working class defence movement would be prepared for this and would not lay the whole community open to danger by adventurist Chicago-style shoot-outs in the streets) as general attacks on the R.C. ghettos by order of Stormont and Westminster (as R.C. politicians alleged in July, 1970) and so deflect blame from themselves when ordinary working class people get gassed or killed for fuck all.

It looks as if we must be prepared for a new I.R.A. 'campaign' here, starting soon. The Provos learned nothing from the 1956-62 debacle, and it looks like the chance of any meaningful class politics is out for about 10 years after they have played their physical force card. It's very disheartening to see English left-wing papers like Red Mole giving such uncritical support to the I.R.A., even the Provos. All the English groups seem to be united in calling for troops to be withdrawn (L.P.Y.S., C.P., S.L.L., I.S., I.M.G., Solidarity) and I don't know of any who show sympathy for, or recognition of the democratic rights of the Protestant community here.

Against the current stream of opinion on the Left, I would strongly maintain that recognition of these rights is a precondition for working class unity, and thus for Socialism, in Ireland. While the 6-county state is under continual threat from R.C. nationalism, especially its internal 'Fifth Column', Protestant workers will defend it. Only when this



threat has been removed, will it be at all possible to win large sections of the Protestant working class to opposition to the 6-county state on a class basis - on the basis of their own interests as workers, not the interests of the Southern middle class (whose interests Catholic Nationalist ideology reflects and serves).

Of course, from our point of view, nation-states as such are obsolete, barriers in the path of human development and the rational use of the earth's resources by men acting in common. But it is a spurious kind of "internationalism" which refuses to recognise that the fusion of present nationalities, which are real existents and not "ideas" of any kind, can only be called progressive if based on mutual consent - and this is a meaningless phrase without the right of nationalities to secede from or refuse to join larger units which include or wish to include them.

Thus Marx, although he wanted to see larger political-economic units and not smaller ones, supported Irish independence and right to secession, hoping afterwards for eventual voluntary federation of the two nations by free consent of each. But Marx, like Lenin, Connolly et al., never recognised the national character of the Ulster protestant community, a mistake which led to the sort of absurdities and ill-fated "predictions" seen in Lenin's articles on Home Rule (cf. Lenin on Ireland). They held to the myth of a single Irish Nation, in which the Protestant Ulstermen were a religious-political minority . . .

Co. Armagh  
13-6-71.

B.D.

L.W. replies:

B.D.'s letter makes a number of valid points. The view of a politically conscious person (from a Protestant background) who can see more than the Catholic/Republican side of the picture is not often heard over here. He describes in some depth the complexities of the situation, at a time when many of the analyses we read are superficial and simplistic.

However, part of his criticism of the "Occupied Ireland" article is based on misunderstanding. Evidently the article gave rise to false interpretation by not being explicit enough about some of the terms used, which have particular connotations in the context of Irish politics. "Occupied" Ireland was meant to denote the areas subject to military interference, regardless of the nationality of the troops or the affiliations of the people around them. I would apply it to military action in both Protestant and Catholic areas, and indeed to patrols in the more or less neutral city centres.

When I found rifles being levelled at me and other passers-by, my resentment was not based on any sense of national identity with any section of the community. B.D. admits the obnoxious ways in which military forces are likely to behave when confronted with civilians. If we support

the demand for their withdrawal, it is not because they are "foreign" troops in Ireland, but because they are the armed forces of the State acting, in effect, if not expressly intentionally, to the detriment of people's lives.

I think B.D. plays down the extent to which the military have sinned rather than being sinned against in the matter of initiating and escalating confrontation. And recent developments seem to indicate that even if they were at the outset impartial or uninterested, the soldiers are now adopting sectarian attitudes. From the commanding heights of the military and political establishments they have been told they are at war with the I.R.A., and definite anti-Catholic bias has been observed in the ranks. Of course this is easily explained: resistance has come most consistently and effectively from the I.R.A. and the Catholic community around them - and army mentality encourages an image of the enemy as a completely alien sub-species.

Because of the nature and function of a state army, it is not revolutionary to advocate its use in any circumstances. At the same time, the demand for the withdrawal of troops from N. Ireland should not be made glibly or light-heartedly. I would like to think that the choice between the employment of British troops or civil war is a false alternative, based on the self-interested exaggerations of politicians. But the observations of people like B.D. cannot be dismissed so easily.

#### IRRATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY ATTITUDES

What is a false alternative is the choice between the British army and the I.R.A. The behaviour and attitudes of both are far from being acceptable to libertarian socialists. In fact, another reason for supporting the troops' withdrawal is the apparent fact that their presence tends to strengthen the I.R.A., and the most reactionary, authoritarian and mindless elements within it, inside the Catholic community.

The "Official" faction seems to be more class-conscious and to have a better grounding in socialist theory, but even so its structure is authoritarian and it can hardly be counted an ally of libertarians. We can appreciate B.D.'s dislike of phenomena like the front page of "Red Mole" devoted to the slogan "Victory to the I.R.A.", and the same chant echoed endlessly by International Socialists and others at the anti-internment demo on August 15.

British revolutionaries who take this line do little service to the "People's Democracy" comrades in the Crumlin gaol in Belfast. Uncritical support for the I.R.A. means ignoring some of the most significant work done by P.D., including all its propaganda against sectarianism and terrorism. It will be a great pity if P.D. members as well as their so-called supporters are driven into the arms of the "Provos" by the viciousness of government repression.

The "analysis" which sees British Imperialism, pure and simple as the end as well as the beginning of trouble in Ireland, and describes the struggle as one of National Liberation certainly fails to take account



of the realities of N. Ireland as it is, and as it has been for decades. Whether those who put it forward are being naive, misguided, romantic or just opportunist is not clear.

Salvation does not lie behind the guns of the I.R.A., U.V.F. or British Army. Nor, it must be said, can it be seen coming from the working class of N. Ireland. Both sections of the class are "backward" in the sense that the false, divisive consciousness of quasi-religion and crude nationalism has an amazingly strong hold. The process of demystification will take a long time yet. I do not see nationalism, any more than religion, as forming any real part of that process.

#### AGAINST INTERNMENT

It should go without saying, but let's say it anyway as loudly and as often as we can, that the vicious repressive policies of the state, particularly the horrible system of internment under the incredible Special Powers Act, must be opposed. We know that "they" can do anything we can't prevent them from doing, but it's always a bit of a shock when they really get down to it and lock up our friends and comrades.

Of the 300 men dragged in by the military net on August 9, only victims of "mistaken identity", taken to make up the numbers, seem to have got out at the time of going to press. The situation is quite aberrational even by bourgeois-democratic standards, and the policy has not even succeeded according to the rationalisations of Faulkner and his gang. It led to bloodshed on a scale unprecedented in the present troubles, and many of those "inside", far from being I.R.A. gunmen, have consistently opposed terrorism.

This letter came from the wife of a P.D. comrade who is one of the victims of internment.

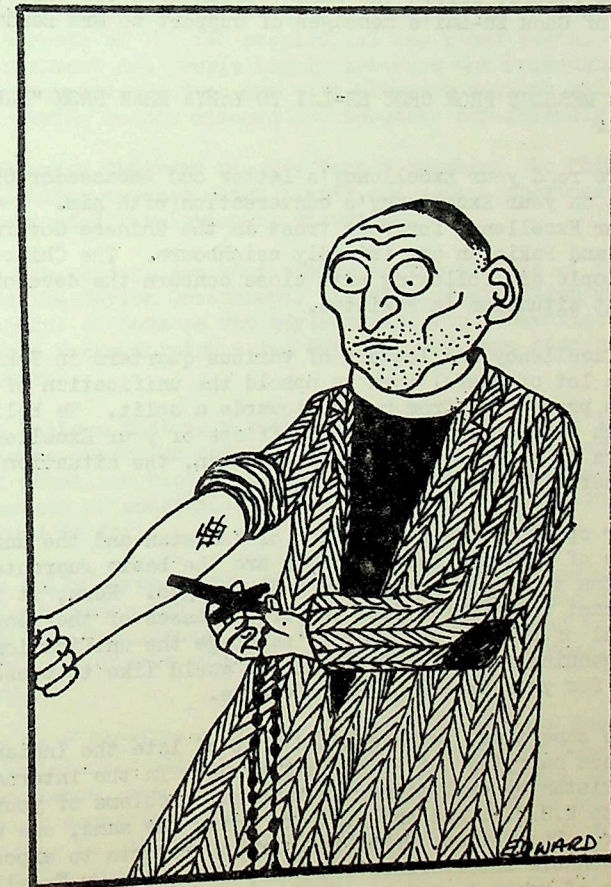
... This whole period has been a ghastly nightmare but I was allowed to visit John yesterday afternoon for 15 minutes, and he was amazingly cheerful in the circumstances. Once out of the horrors of Paratrooper tactics in Girdwood Barracks, Grumlin Road Prison seems almost humane.

Doubtless you have read the brutality reports in the papers - ... was taken in mistake ... and released on Tuesday evening. He was thrown out of a helicopter to the chant of "There'll be no inquest here" - Mike Farrell was beaten etc., and savaged by a dog (his coat is torn and bitten) and put in solitary for two days. John was luckier, i.e. he was made to run the gauntlet of soldiers but he had his shoes on over the broken glass. They tried to annoy John by making him sing "The Queen", but this only encouraged him to yell it out (he is tone deaf) and this drove

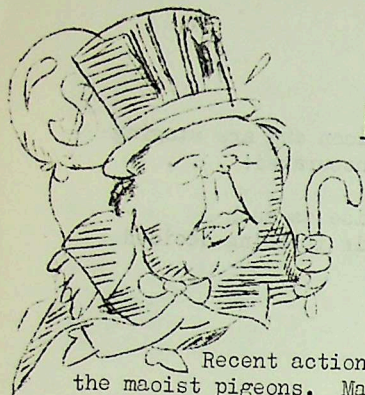
them wild! They have taken over their wing in the prison and are staging a trial of the Stormont M.P.'s - long sentences are encouraged! . . .

. . . The best thing you can do is to organise as much propaganda against internment as possible, because this is being decided on over these 28 days.

18.8.71.







# MAOISTS OF THE WORLD UNITE!!



Recent actions by the Chinese Government have set the cat amongst the maoist pigeons. Many have discovered they were never maoists at all or conversely that Mao wasn't. Others have interpreted events to show that China is really behaving in the interests of Proletarian internationalism after all. It is enough to make a horse laugh.

For the record, before the smoke screen gets too thick, we print below the texts of Chou En-Lai's messages of support to Mrs Bandaranaike and Yahya Khan.

FULL TEXT OF THE MESSAGE FROM CHOU EN-LAI TO YAHYA KHAN FROM "PAKISTAN TIMES". 13.4.71.

"I have read your Excellency's letter and Ambassador Chang Tung's report on your Excellency's conversation with him. I am grateful to your Excellency for your trust in the Chinese Government, China and Pakistan are friendly neighbours. The Chinese Government and people are following with close concern the development of the present situation in Pakistan.

Your Excellency and leaders of various quarters in Pakistan have done a lot of useful work to uphold the unification of Pakistan and to prevent it from moving towards a split. We believe that through wise consultations and efforts of your Excellency and leaders of various quarters in Pakistan, the situation in Pakistan will certainly be restored to normal.

In our opinion, the unification of Pakistan and the unity of the people of East and West Pakistan are the basic guarantees for Pakistan to attain prosperity and strength. Here, it is most important to differentiate the broad masses of the people from a handful of persons who want to sabotage the unification of Pakistan. As a genuine friend of Pakistan, we would like to present these views for your Excellency's reference.

At the same time, we have noted that of late the Indian Government has been carrying out gross interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan by exploiting the internal problems of your country. And the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. are doing the same, one after the other. The Chinese Press is carrying reports to expose such unreasonable interference and has published your Excellency's letter of reply to Podgorny.

The Chinese Government holds that what is happening in Pakistan at present is purely the internal affair of Pakistan, which can only be settled by the Pakistan people themselves and which brooks no foreign interference whatsoever. Your Excellency may rest assured that should Indian expansionists dare to launch aggression against Pakistan, the Chinese Government and people will, as always, firmly support the Pakistan Government and people in their just struggle to safeguard State sovereignty and national independence."

FOLLOWING IS THE FULL TEXT OF PRIME MINISTER CHOU EN-LAI'S LETTER TO MRS BANDARANAIKE WHICH WAS DELIVERED BY THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR IN CEYLON:

"I am grateful to Your Excellency and the Ceylon Government for your trust in the Chinese Government and your friendly sentiments towards the Chinese people.

The friendship between China and Ceylon is in the fundamental interests of the two peoples and can stand tests. The Chinese Government and people highly treasure the friendship between our two countries and no one with ulterior motives will ever succeed in trying to sow discord and sabotage our friendly relations.

Following Chairman Mao Tse Tung's teaching the Chinese people have all along opposed ultra 'left' and right opportunism in their protracted revolutionary struggles.

We are glad to see that thanks to the efforts of Your Excellency and the Ceylon Government, the chaotic situation created by a handful of persons who style themselves "Guevarists" and into whose ranks foreign spies have sneaked have been brought under control.

We believe that as a result of Your Excellency's leadership and the co-operation and support of the Ceylonese people these acts of rebellion plotted by reactionaries at home and abroad for the purpose of undermining the interests of the Ceylonese people are bound to fail.

We fully agree to the correct position of defending state sovereignty and guarding against foreign interference as referred to by Your Excellency. The Chinese Government and people admire this and firmly support Ceylon in her just struggle towards this end.

As Your Excellency is deeply aware the Chinese Government has consistently abided by the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, has never interfered in the internal affairs of other countries, and is also firmly opposed to any country interfering in other countries internal affairs, and particularly to foreign reactionaries taking advantage of the opportunity to carry out armed intervention.



I would like once again to reaffirm this unshakable stand of the Chinese Government.

In the interests of the friendship between China and Ceylon and in consideration of the needs of the Ceylon Government, the Chinese Government in compliance with the request of the Ceylon Government, agrees to provide it with a long-term interest free loan of 150 million rupees in convertible foreign exchange.

We would like to hear any views which Your Excellency might have on this matter.

We are prepared to deliver a portion of the loan in May and sign a document on it.

As for other material assistance, please let us know if it is needed."

Thursday, May 27, 1971.

From THORNY NETTLES, No. 2.

