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WOMEN & SOCIALISM RESISTANCE & CONTROL

This issue of *Socialist Review* has as its central theme the relationship between socialism and women's liberation and was co-edited with Anna Paczusca. Considerations of space prevented us from publishing as much of the material on this subject as we had hoped. With any luck there will be room for the rest in coming issues.

A couple of apologies are due for our more glaring errors in recent issues. *Robyn Dacey* wrote the article on the German socialist women's movement in our April issue. And Thatcher's election may have turned the clock back, but that was no excuse for dating our last issue May-June 1978!

Finally, *Socialist Review* has had to join in the present inflationary upsurge situation. We are lifting our price to 40p. Unfortunately small socialist magazines are *not* free from the pressures of the capitalist market and our costs have increased frighteningly. Hopefully we will be able to avoid a further price increase for some time to come.

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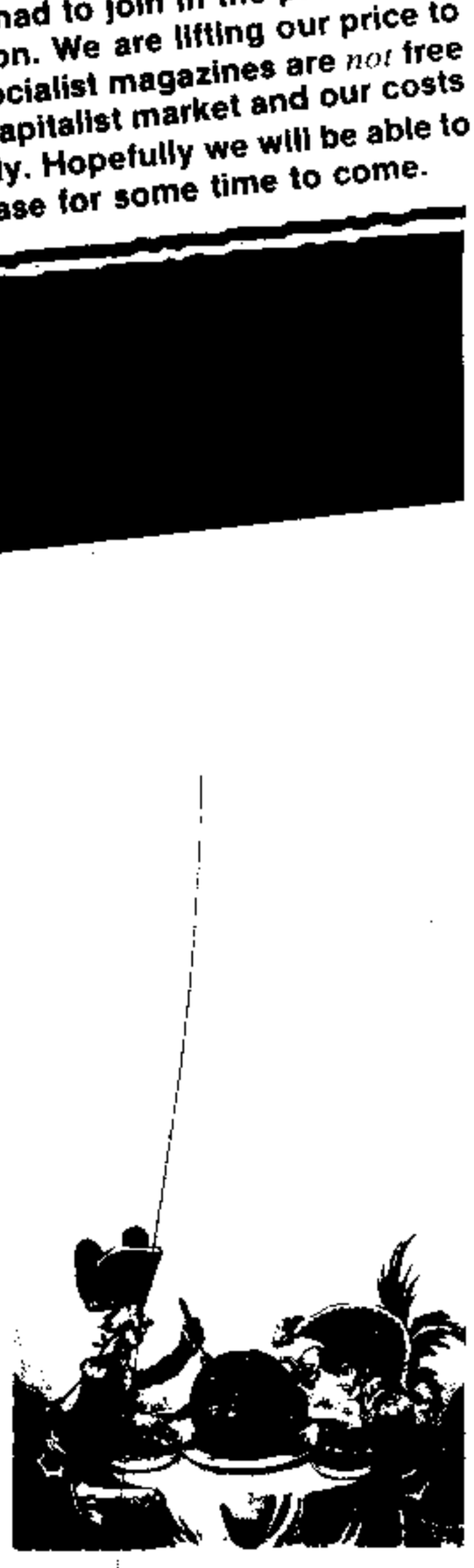

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The plum pudding (see back page)

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NEWS

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Economy

The Canute summit

The leaders of the western capitalist world are, at the time of writing, assembling in Tokyo. Like King Canute they will tell the waves to go back, issuing communiques on the need for 'decisive action' to prevent another international recession. They are likely to have as much success as their illustrious predecessor.

To quote the *Economist:* 'In four of these big seven economies (represented at Tokyo—AC), inflation over the past year is in double figures, and in a fifth (Canada) it is teetering on the brink.

Economists are competitively shaving down their growth forecasts to figures lower than the rich world has scored since

the dog days of 1975. A middle-of-the-road forecast for the developed world in 1980 would be a sober three per cent growth, which is too low to stop dole queues lengthening or take the steam out of protectionist pressure'.

The most serious case is that of the US economy, whose amazing strength (industry is working at 86 per cent of capacity) has provided much of the momentum of the recovery from the world recession of 1974-5.

US price increases are now running at an annual rate of 13 per cent, much the highest since 1974, while one economic research team is predicting a fall in gross national product of 2½-3 per cent.

It is the fear of a burst of inflation like that in the early 1970s which frightens industrialists and financiers most. The rate of inflation in the OECD area was 8.8 per cent in April 1979, compared to 7.6 per cent a year earlier. And this is without taking into account the effect of zooming oil prices.

Nor is oil (to which we will come in a minute) the only commodity whose price has been rising fast. Base metal prices, after years in the doldrums, rose fast in 1978-9: at the beginning of April lead was up 80 per cent on a year before, copper nearly 45 per cent, zinc, tin and nickel 20-25 per cent.

The *Economist* commodity price index showed at the same time industrial commodity prices up 44.8 per cent (in dollars), 31.4 per cent (in sterling) on April 1978. The cost of raw materials purchased by western companies has risen sharply.

Oil

And then there is oil. The price increases being mooted in Opec at the present time are much less drastic than those in 1973-4, when the price quadrupled.

This time the talk is of lifting the basic price of oil from 14.55 dollars per barrel to around 20 dollars. But the weak state of the world economy means that even this increase may be too much for it to take.

The sources of the oil crisis are partly economic and partly political. The effect of the 1973-4 increase was, paradoxically, to cause a fall in real price of oil in the four years to 1978.

A number of factors were responsible for this: slower world economic growth, the continued rise in price of manufactured goods imported from the west, the oil producers' failure to cut production in response to falling real prices. In autumn 1978 oil product prices were seven per cent below their real value in 1974.

The effect has been to reduce the incentive for western oil-importing countries to make serious economies in energy use. To quote the *Economist:*
"The sharp rise in gasoline consumption in the United States and Europe in 1978 and early 1979, which has contributed greatly to the fierce impact of Iran's production cutbacks and helped to push light low-sulphur crudes into a price category of their own, is due to the rational behaviour of consumers. In many countries real gasoline prices in 1978 were no higher than they had been for most of the past two decades'!

Then came the events of 1978-9: a cold winter ran down oil stocks at the same time as the Iranian revolution reduced the supply of oil. The stage was set for the surge in the oil price this spring—a nine per cent official increase from 1 April, plus additional surcharges imposed by many producing countries, while the tiny amount of oil sold on the spot market (the bulk is marketed through western oil companies) went for anything up to 40 dollars a barrel.

As always, the crucial variable in the oil equation is Saudi Arabia. Its massive reserves mean that Saudi Arabia could lift its production above its official ceiling of 8.5 barrels a day to an ultimate limit of 16 million barrels.

In the past the Saudi regime has used the threat that it will increase production to prevent Opec from lifting the price of oil too drastically. It is not clear that it is prepared to do so any longer.

In part this is because of the technical and financial problems involved in increasing Saudi production beyond its present capacity of 9.8 million barrels a day. But political reasons are also involved.

Traditionally the Saudi regime has been the United States' closest ally in the Arab east. Loyalty to Washington and concern for its investments in the advanced capitalist countries underlay the regime's opposition to increases in the price of oil which would damage the world economy.

But the Saudi rulers have over the last year distanced themselves from the US. In part they are angry because of the American government's failure to make real economies in energy use. They feel that any increase in oil-producing capacity would soon be outstripped by rising western demand.

Why should they continue to bail the west out? Saudi oil minister Sheikh Yamani now predicts that supply oil will by 1988 have permanently outstripped demand unless the west makes drastic economies in energy consumption.

Moreover, the Carter administration's policies—in particular its support for the Sadat-Begin treaty—have forced the Saudi regime to align itself with Arab states like Syria and Iraq which are (rhetorically at least) bitterly opposed to US interests in the Arab world.

At the same time, the Iranian revolution has both shown what can happen to Washington's friends (and how much help they can expect from the US) and has made Iraq the biggest military power in the Gulf. To avoid dangerous isolation even the rulers of Saudi Arabia can no longer afford to be seen to be too close to the Americans.

The changed military and political balance in the Gulf may explain why there is now more talk in Washington about the possibility that one day the Marines will have to be sent there. In March the US energy secretary, James Schlesinger, said:
'The United States must move in such a way that it protects those (oil) interests, even if that involves the use of military strength or of military presence'.

And the retiring US army chief of staff recently announced plans for the creation of a special mobile force designed precisely for military intervention in the Gulf.

Not even the US Marines can now prevent a recession. The EEC commission now expects economic growth of around 2.8 per cent in the Common Market countries next year, while, as we have seen, the US economy was already expected to slow down.

Of course there will be beneficiaries. Even before the oil price increases at the beginning of April, oil companies were making a profit of 40 dollars on every tonne of oil products they sell in Europe — an overall profit of 500 million dollars a week!

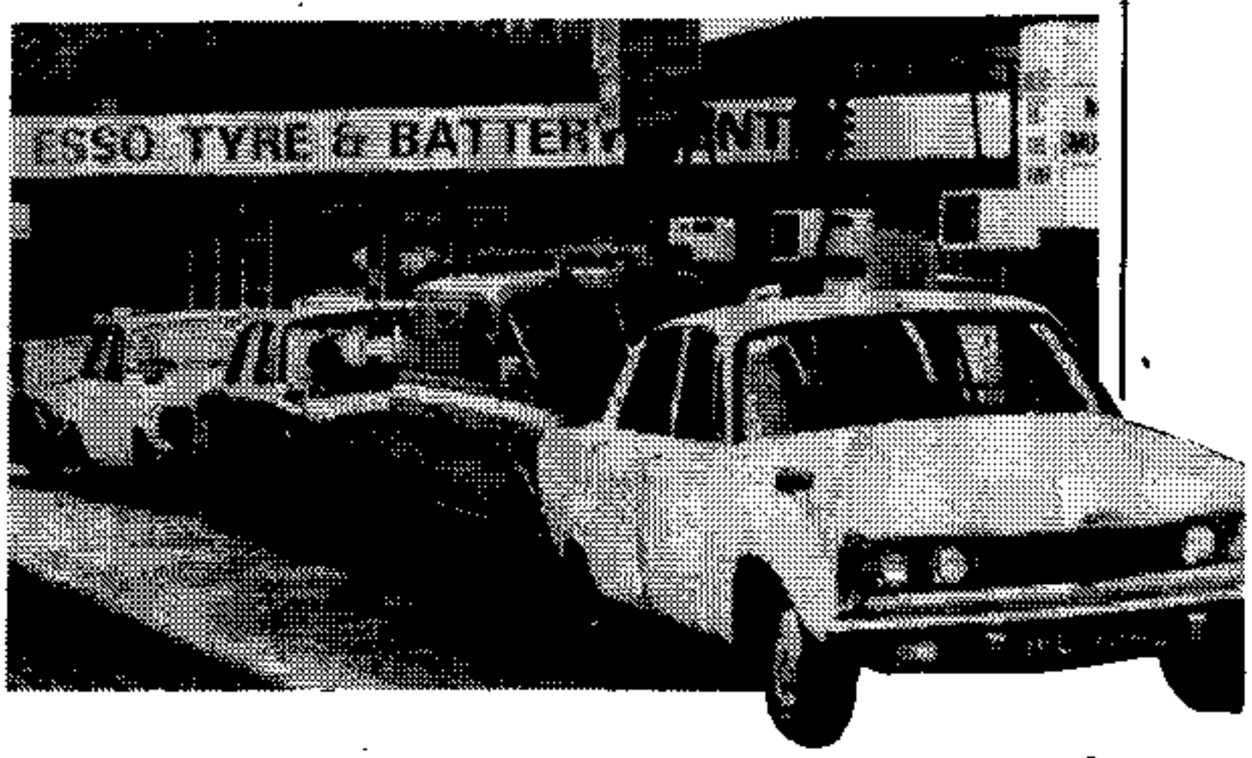
Money

Another force driving the world economy towards recession is the upward trend in interest rates, which is making credit more expensive in most of the major industrial countries. A major factor here has been the changing fortunes of the dollar.

Until late last year the dollar was falling fast. Demand in the US economy rose faster than its competitors (domestic demand up 5 per cent in the US, 2¼ per cent in the rest of the OECD in the 18 months to mid-1978) sucking in imports, while the declining competitiveness of American industry made it more difficult to sell goods abroad to pay for these imports. So the dollar fell.

Since the emergency package introduced by Carter last November the dollar has been climbing on the international exchanges. This has been achieved at a price: tight-money policies and rising interest rates which threatened to strangle economic growth before the oil price rises (real money supply in the US fell in the first quarter of 1979, presaging a fall in industrial production).

Meanwhile, the international economic balance shifted. West Germany and Japan, both with huge balance of payments surpluses and ultra-strong



currencies, boosted domestic demand (projected to rise by only 3-3½ per cent in the US, and 4-5 per cent in the rest of the OECD in the 18 months to early 1980).

The devaluation of the dollar (still lower than in 1977) has made American goods cheaper when valued in foreign currencies and therefore easier to export, cutting the US trade deficit from 13.2 billion dollars in the first third of 1978 to 7.4 billion in the same period of 1979. Both the mark and the yen found themselves under pressure on the international exchanges.

West Germany and Japan have responded by lifting interest rates to prevent their currencies from falling. They have been encouraged to do so by fears of inflation.

The West German Bundesbank is especially worried about the rise in the money supply. Domestic credit rose between February and April at an annual rate of 15 per cent—the fastest since 1973.

The US balance of payments deficit has played an important part in bosting the world money supply and therefore pushing up prices. Since American companies have not been exporting enough goods to cover the value of US imports, someone outside the US is left holding the dollars used to cover the difference.

In effect, the American government has been printing dollars and pumping them into the world economy. Many of these dollars end up in the international market in currencies held outside their country of origin—the Eurocurrency market.

At the end of 1978 there were estimated to be 540 billion dollars in Eurocurrencies (110 billion of which had been added that year), a massive wedge of money outside the control of national governments. The Bundesbank is especially worried about this money, and has introduced a fierce credit squeeze to prevent any further growth in the money supply.

Thus quite independently of the oil crisis, hard-money policies adopted by the major capitalist powers make a recession late this year or sometime next year quite likely. It will be, as the *Financial Times* acknowledged, 'a consequence of the worldwide failure in the past five years to find effective solutions to the related problems of energy and inflation'.

In other words, western capitalism is still faced with the same difficulties which precipitated the economic crisis of 1973 in the first place. It is up to socialists to draw the right conclusion. *Alex Callinicos*

West Germany

The economic miracle

The German 'economic miracle' may not have ended yet, but there are signs, as with all western countries, that problems are developing.

The employers, acutely aware of the possible difficulties ahead, have managed to foist 15-month wage agreements on both the print and steel workers—despite the tremendous struggle waged by the latter—as against the normal 12-month contracts.

In vitually identical agreements made in both industries, the employers have succeeded in burying any discussion of the 35-hour week until 1984 --the small price they had to pay being an extra weeks holiday!

In some industries they obviously fear that their room to manoeuvre is even less, and two current strikes in Lower Saxony are the result of an employers 'offer' ~~of per~~ cent! Perhaps more important in the long term though is the attempt by some large firms where the union organisation is weak, completely to swallow up any vestige of independent trade unionism,—an issue we'll take up later.

And how have the unions reated to all this? The problem for the bureaucracies (you can't call them 'leaderships') is that the 'crisis' will destroy their cosy relationship with the employers.

If the struggle in Steel is anything to go by, much of the membership are increasingly willing to fight (although, unlike in Britain, Steel tends to be one of the leaders in the 'militancy league'), and certainly the hierarchy in IG Metall, the Union involved had to pull out every stop to get some areas back to work.

Even at the final ballot, having struggled through Christmas etc, some of the massive plants were voting 70:30 (Mannesmann-Huckingen 8,500 members) and 60:40 (Thyssen-Hamborn 12,500 members) to stay out, and it was only because the final ballot included **all** steel plants even those that had worked all through the strike—that the vote was lost!

The complexities of the reactions of the triangle of employers/union /hierarchy /membership to the beginnings of a crisis are perhaps best illustrated by some recent events in the Chemical-Paper-Ceramic workers union, IG Chemie, the third largest DGB (TUC)-affiliated union.

German workers have two types of workplace representative. The Vertrauensleute (VL) are the shop floor union reps elected by union members within the particular shop, although their job doesn't involve negotiating with the management, since this is done by the Betriebsrate, the Works Council members elected by **all** employees, union and non-union alike, on a slate basis within the whole plant.

Now some of the large employers in the chemical industry, like Bayer or Hoeschst, where union organisation is weak, decided they weren't happy even with this system. Perhaps because of worries as to what the future might bring, they wanted to undermine the union shop reps even more.

They wanted to introduce a new type of shop rep, elected by *both* union and non-union, to work alongside the existing VLs. Known as BetrieblicheVL (BVL) their job would be to communicate shop problems to management, and help in their solving!

Not surprisingly, the Works Councils in Bayer and Hoechst agreed to this, ... but so also did IG Chemie! Not only that, but the Union leadership said that where BLVs happened to be Union members, then the union would appoint them as the VLs as well!

The result? the only real democratic representative of the Union members on the shop floor would disappear. To top it all, the person responsible for appointing the VL would be the local full-time official—who is himself elected by those same VLs! It's the sort of utopian control over your membership that some of *our* right-wing union leaders still only dream about.

Unfortunately for the IG Chemie executive, the union rulebook stood in their way—it stated quite clearly that VLs were supposed to be elected. Not to be thwarted, the leadership proposed a rule change to incorporate 'either

"This plant's on strike"

elected or appointed'

Now none of this had as yet reached the ears of the membership. Eventually, a copy of the full text of the proposed rule-change fell into the hands of the particularly good full-time official for the Hann-Munden District, who circulated it with his own comments, and a critical article highlighting the corruptness of the Union manoeuvre appeared in a 'liberal' Frankfurt newspaper. (The union newspaper hadn't breathed a word!)

Once the cat was out of the bag, the leadership had to react. One of them, Hauenschild, was standing for the European parliament, and could hardly afford the loss of votes that protests would bring!

Cleverly the rule-change was changed again. Appointment of VLs would only be an 'exception'. But this alteration fooled no one. The FTO's would be able to decide what was an exception; an exception would be when an election would be difficult to organise; suddenly all elections would become *very* difficult to organise. QED!

By this time organised protest was beginning. The Hann.-Munden District called a conference of VLs plus reps. from other districts. The intention was to drum up support to demand an emergency conference of the union. (union conferences are once every four years, and you need 200,000 signatures to call an emergency one—union membership is about 700,000!)

The reaction of IG Chemie to this rank-and-file hostility was not to scrap the rule-change, but to sack (without notice) the person they blamed for causing the protest—the local (good) FTO.

Hot on procedures for their members, they broke every rule in the book—such as getting the agreement of the local district executive—in their haste to sack him They even ignored the decision of reinstatement arrived at by the Appeals Committee.

The response in the Hann.-Munden District was to organise a variety of actions. Another VL meeting was convened to gain support, and a demonstration was held outside the Hanover house of Hauenschild. Thousands of badges were produced bearing the inscription:

'European Parliament . . . YES;
Hauenschild . . . NO.'

The result was reinstatement! The organised protest also managed to secure 120,000 signatures for the emergency conference (short of the mark, but no mean achievement), and the proposed rule-change has been altered yet again. This time appointment is still an exception, but if five members disagree, an election has to be held.

Obviously, IG Chemie members still have much to do. Their conference is in 1980, and much organising is required before then to ensure the rule-change is thrown out once and for all.

But we in Britain should not underestimate the magnitude of what has already been achieved. Reinstatement by a union after rank-and file pressure is unheard of in Germany, and this didn't take place in the industrial Ruhr area, but in the agricultural backwaters of Lower Saxony.

Of course, in this case the action was directed against the union itself, but clearly, in the coming months, employers are not going to have everything their own way, as Hoechst and Bayer have discovered.

If inflation continues to crawl steadily upwards, then when wage agreements come up for renewal in a years time, the dormant unionism of West Germany that we have all come to expect may well begin to be transformed.

Paul Lutener

Economic

Budget 1

'Deindustrialisation' is a long word much favoured by economists at the present time. They use it to refer to the steady decline of Britain as a producer and exporter of manufactured goods. The ostensible aim of the new Tory government's first budget introduced on 12 June was to reverse this process.

The *Economist* (which, for some reason best known to itself, welcomed the budget) outlined the Tory strategy as follows:

'It involves the abandonment of the public sector as the prime engine of Britain's economic growth and its replacement by private initiative achieved through a progressive reduction in personal (and ultimately capital) taxation.

'Sir Geoffrey (Howe, the Tory chancellor) thus depends on those who will gain most from his proposals—those in work and paying higher rates of income tax—to increase their output dramatically'.

The net effects of the budget tax changes are skewed sharply in favour of the rich. Cuts in income tax—three per cent off the standard rate, the top rate cut by 23 per cent, the threshold for investment income surcharge lifted to £5,000—are to be financed by raising VAT to 15 per cent, cutting public expenditure by £2½ billion and selling off £1 billion of public assets. You don't need a pocket calculator to work out who benefits from these changes.

The idea is that by putting more money into people's (especially top people's) pockets they will be encouraged to work harder, save more, invest more, and somehow drag Britain back into the good old days some time before 1870 when she was the unchallenged workshop of the world. In fact, the effect of the budget will, most probably, be to **accelerate** the process of 'deindustrialisation'.

The treasury forecasts accompanying the budget paint a grim picture. Real gross domestic product is expected to fall by one per cent in the year to 30 June 1980, while the retail price index will rise by 16 per cent between the third quarters of 1978 and 1979.

The VAT increases alone will add three to four per cent to the RPI. And the pressures building up in the world economy (see accompanying article) could push prices even higher and output even lower.

The effect of a stable, even rising, pound has been to make British exports less competitive on the world market. Moreover, it cheapens imports.

The consumer boom the British economy has enjoyed over the last year as a result of earnings temporarily outpacing prices has sucked in large quantities of imports, so that the balance of payments is in deficit despite the strength of sterling and the growing importance of North Sea oil.

The depressed state of British manufacturing industry is reflected in the fact that the real post-tax rate of return on capital in 1978 was 4.7 per cent, compared to 10-12 per cent in the 1960s. In the first three months of 1979 the trading profits of industrial and commercial companies fell by 13½ per cent. The fall would have been steeper were it not for a sharp rise in North Sea oil profits.

The budget is likely to make matters worse. Howe lifted the minimum lending rate to 14 per cent, thus making loans to industry considerably more expensive.

The sale of public sector assets, while it will enable the Tories' claim to keep the public spending borrowing requirement this year within the limit of £8½ billion inherited from Denis Healey and while it will allow some of their supporters in the City to get their hands on profitable BP shares, will also have the effect of taking out of the market funds which might otherwise have been invested in industry. The Tories' decision to keep the pound high means that Britain's competitive position will continue to weaken.

We look set for a re-run of the early 1970s. The money transferred from working people to the rich by the budget will be spent, not on industrial investment, but on more profitable speculative activities like the property market and fringe banking.

Looking across the Channel at Giscard d'Estaing's 'liberal economic policy' introduced after the March 1978 legislative elections, we see that the abolition of price controls, aimed at 'setting industry free', led to a stock market boom which pushed share prices through the ceiling, but to no significant increase in industrial investment.

The British economy is now faced with the prospect of a recession in the near future. One has simply to compare the target for growth in the money supply—nine per cent—with the projected inflation figure of 16 per cent.

The real money supply will fall sharply. Firms will run short of cash and either close down or cut back on their workforce. The Tory government will almost certainly defy its free-market ideology and intervene to save the bigger lame ducks.

It will also come under heavy pressure to introduce a wage freeze. The 'monetarist' economics which provides Thatcher and her ministers with their few ideas places great emphasis on the importance of 'inflationary expectations'.

Keep the money supply stable, so the theory goes, and people will stop demanding excessive wages because they will know that prices will not rise further and that they will risk bankrupting their employer. But the budget, by pushing the rate of price increases up towards 20 per cent, has given 'inflationary expectations' a tremendous boost.

Shopfloor reactions to the budget are discussed elsewhere in this issue. It is possible that workers will accept the fall in their living standards implied in the budget, thereby taking some of the pressure off profits. Possible, but unlikely.

Thatcher may soon find herself caught between a world recession and wage militancy at home.

Perhaps history does repeat itself after all. *Alex Callinicos.*

Political

Budget 2

The day after the Budget, GKN chairman Sir Barrie Heath must have been feeling pretty good. With around £10,500 a year extra in his pocket from the Tories tax bonanza (compared with about £150 for most of his employees) and the promise of anti-union legislation to come, it was a good day to be a rich company director.

GKN's personnel director a leading member of the Economic League—can't have been so happy. Because the immediate euphoria of the Budget has not fooled industrial relations management. They at least are aware that for all the talk of incentives and 'more money in the pocket' there is a head of steam behind some wage claims already which is likely to be overwhelming once 18½ to 20 per cent inflation becomes a reality in November/December this year.

Those 'experts' who have praised the Tory stategy argue along the following lines: union leaders are wary of militancy after the winter's strikes; sections of the rank and file are demoralised: certain powerful private sector groups of workers can be allowed to keep up with inflation; others can be fought through employer solidarity and the police; we can force through anti-picketing laws if the time is right; 2 million plus on the dole will loosen the militants' control.

There is something in these arguments. The Rank and File Conference on 23 June echoed to stories of recent defeats. There was a general recognition of the weakening of shopfloor organisation during the time of the Labour government. The experience of 1976 showed that unemployment could have a serious –though temporary– effect on the wages struggle.

The **whole** of the national press is commited to tighter curbs on picketing –legal (*Mail, Express, Sun etc*) or 'voluntary' (*Mirror, Guardian*). There's little doubt that even a moderately well-orchestrated campaign would produce a 'public demand' for changes in the law.

That arch-clown Paul Johnson may have been right when he suggested in the London *Evening Standard* that the Budget was deliberately provocative, to enable the Tories to force through the changes they want in a climate of hysteria.

The propaganda offensive against political industrial action which is now being taken up throughout the press bears directly on this. And as usual the most insidious attack comes from the Labour right in the shape of 'keep politics out of politics' James Callaghan.

It is almost as though the type has already been set, the 'in-depth' interviews already recorded in preparation for the attack on: strikes to keep shipyards open, to prevent the sell-out of British Aerospace, to keep civil service jobs, to keep hospitals open . . . and even to push wages up in line with inflation.

It is this last element which the Tories seem least worried about and is causing most personnel managers sleepless nights. After the last two years' experience, the British Oxygen pay deal is the one most feared to start the ball rolling towards £20/20 per cent settlements.

And it's worth noting that BOC management are trying to do their damndest to shift the pay deal from October 1979 to May 1980!

Metal Box, ICI and the Birmingham lorry drivers (again!) are some of the other claims that are worrying the bosses. The question is: this time round, employers have got away with pay increases of eight per cent in one plant, 13 per cent in another and 20 per cent somewhere else.

The fragmentation has been enormous. Productivity deals have eaten away at workers' strength. In the coming months the toughest employers will be looking to get more and more concessions on productivity/line speeds/manning/control of the job in return for simple cost-of-living increases.

This is where the rank-and-file seven-point plan could prove crucial in support of those coming out or shut out— in defence of their living standards, jobs and organisation.

Indexation

Danger: UXB

'Unions are planning to demand automatic pay rises linked with the monthly cost of living' according to the *Sunday Mirror* on 24 June. It has taken a long time for 'index-linking' of wages to come up again.

The employers remember what happened to Heath's threshold policy in 1974 (wages went up 40p for each one per cent rise in prices above seven per cent), it coincided with the oil price boom and fuelled wage demands of 40 to 50 per cent. How curious TUC leaders should think of it now . . .

But it ought to be remembered also that it was the TUC which first brought up the idea. In 1971 the TUC had a conference proposing limiting wage rises to the cost-of-living increase and TUC general secretary Victor 'White' Feather declared that 'cost of living threshold clauses lend themselves particularly well to company corporate planning of loner-term agreements . . .

If I were the head of a large business corporation, I would be very interested in the idea of getting a degree of forward planning so far as wages and labour costs were concerned.' (TUC press release, 4th February 1971).

This time round there is a real danger on this front—not so much from the Tories, who are at the moment committed to staying out of collective bargaining, but from union leaders, right and left. The idea is even supported in a modified form—by some of the revolutionary groups, largely because Trotsky said it was a good idea in 1938.

However it's disguised, wage indexation at the moment represents a slide into defeatism. It would encourage employers to go for two or three-year agreements—some of them are already on to the idea. It reduces arguments over wages to arguments over statistics. And most important of all it opens the door for employers to say 'You've got your cost-of-living clause; now we'll talk about jobs and work practices.'

Indexation is as yet an unexploded device—it will need to be opposed whether it comes from Terry Duffy or from revolutionaries with a sliding-scale of stupid demands.

Rank & File

7 steps to heaven

...or something like it. The seven-point code of practice agreed by the Rank and File Defend Our Unions conference on 23 June may be a crucial step in rebuilding basic trade union principles at the grassroots over the coming few months.

The fact that the commitments called for are so elementary—solidarity, respect for picket lines, collecting money, organising blacking—shouldn't disguise the point that to get such a code widely approved by branches, districts, stewards committees and union membership would represent a real shift of emphasis from some of the more disgraceful episodes of recent years.

Many of the defeats—and much of the detail of shopfloor weakness were spelled out to the conference's 1,100 delegates. It may have been a subject of debate inside the left but the consensus of the conference was that workplace organisation is now much weaker and more flabby than it was when Labour took office back in 1974.

But the conference itself represents easily the highest point so far reached for the idea of rank-and-file unity of the activists across all industry and services. In fact the attendance means it was the second largest genuine national rank-and-file gathering since the early days of the Liaison Committee for Defence of Trade Unions in 1970.

More important the spectrum of workers represented was far wider than before. Far more of the experienced industrial militants than before, more women and more realism.

The depth of experience—and breadth of representation—from the public sector also really reflected for the first time the actual changes which have been taking place in the health service, local authorities and civil service.

So a gathering that was far bigger than might have been expected now faces the task of winning the trade union rank and file to a programme of practical unity.

One of the main tasks will be to convince those organisations still wedded to the idea of the Liaison Committee and the Liaison Committee itself that a very widespread agreement can be reached on the basis of the Code of Practice. At the same moment that the conference was taking place, a 250-strong meeting in London heard Tony Benn, Bob Wright and Ron Todd call for resistance to the Tories.

The real test of the strength of rank and file politics is not in calling a very successful conference but in getting the re-emergent broad left and its leaders to agree on practical action for rank and file unity rather than a simple repetition of the 'need for alternative policies.'

Unions

Conferences

GMWU

This year's GMWU conference was notable for three reasons. First, general secretary David Basnett's defence of the social contract and the concordat; second, national officer for local government and the health service Charlie Donnet's attack on NUPE and Alan Fisher; and third, the outrageous fact that the executive was outvoted three times, prompting one delegate to remark, 'this union is getting too democratic'.

David Basnett's defence of Labour's record was to be expected. What was interesting was the stress he laid on the TUC's role when Labour was last in opposition under Ted Health.

Between 1972 and 1974 Basnett was a leading member of the TUC/Labour Party liaison committee, during which time the basis of the social contract was worked out, ready to sell to the membership once Labour regained power.

At this year's conference Basnett made it quite clear that he wanted to lead the TUC into manoeuvrings with the Labour leaders to produce something similar, ready for the return of a Labour government in a few years time.

The bitterness that exists between the leaders of the public sector unions cannot be overestimated, and probably the worst friction exists between the GMWU and NUPE. When the NUPE members voted to stay on strike last winter the other union's officials compalined that Fisher could not control his members.

At the GMWU conference Donnet described Alan Fisher as 'a wide-boy who had been run over by his own barrow'. Hearing Donnet's speech was like listening to a Labour cabinet minister.

He sad Fisher 'lost control of his officers and his officers abdicated to the militants As a result, there were instances of abuse which were the daily diet of the gutter press. They brought the whole movement into disrepute . . .

'They forced further unneccessary hardship on the sick and the elderly and the children for another three weeks in the health service while they looked for a face-saver . . . I want to say categorically now that the general and municipal workers will never be led by the nose by the NUPE militants to advance far-left politics.' Thankfully Donnet didn't get the level of applause he was seeking from the delegates.

It is not all bad news. On three occasions the normally monolithic executive of the GMWU was outvoted by the delegates. Despite executive opposition the conference resolved to campaign for a target figure of £65 basic pay for a basic week.

Sadly, the standing orders committee ruled out of order a polite motion from the Edgware branch. It read, 'Congress is appalled by the statement made by the prime minister regarding workers crossing the picket line. This is advocating a scabs' charter. Congress demands that the minister withdraws his statement, and if he refuses, he shall be expelled from his association with the GMWU.'

ASTMS

There was good and bad news waiting for militants who went to Blackpool this year for the ASTMS national conference. The bad news was a significant move to the right by the leadership.

While delegates were expecting a clear fighting response to the new Tory government, expecting hard opposition to any incomes policy or any attempt to attack the labour movement, they were presented with a package that agreed to talks with Thatcher and which only opposed **unilaterally** imposed pay policies.

Even before the conference had ended, Clive Jenkins rushed off to join his TUC pals in meeting with Thatcher. Following closely after Jenkins' sponsorship of the concordat, this leaves members wondering where the tough, 'left-wing' public image of the union has gone.

The good news was the 'revolt' of the delegates against the hopelessly undemocratic agenda of rule-change proposals. The very first decision conference made was to throw out the entire two-day agenda for the rulebook debate; 24 hours later delegates agreed to revert to this programme of business, mainly because they were offered no alternative.

But the mood was set—90 per cent of the resolutions sent in from the rank and file had been manoeuvred off the order paper and delegates were hopping mad.

Many of the agenda items were presented to conference as 'tidying-up' amendments, but in fact would have significantly

changed the power structure of the union so as to favour the divisional councils—bodies on which the broad left had most influence.

Most of these motions were defeated, not because delegates favoured the rule of the national executive to that of the divisional councils, but because they did not want yet another level of bureaucratic control over them: the members have had enough of the political power games going on over their heads.

A further pleasant surprise was the way this anger found an outlet in the increased support for the *Red Collar* rank-and-file group: the conference bulletins grew more popular each day and, despite some wild opposition from NEC members, evening meetings drew over 60 supporters.

Things are stirring at the bottom of the ASTMS pool, however still it is up top. Big fish beware. *Colin Brown*

USDAW

This year's conference of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers brought out into the open signs of change inside this traditionally right-wing union which have been taking place over the past few years.

Traditionally dominated by old style Labour Party moderates, USDAW's enormous conference has seemed more like an extended works outing than anything else—particularly with the bevy of management men and women always in the visitors' gallery.

This year the platform also had things largely its own way—though the new deputy general secretary, Flood, was defeated on three out of the four items he spoke to. With USDAW's equivalent of Jack Jones, Lord Allen, now departing to retirement, the union's right wing is by no means the confident force it has recently been.

Meanwhile, despite a defeat for the broad left candidate for the union's general secretaryship the recent USDAW branch ballotting also pointed to a weakening of the right-wing hold.

John Dilks, the left's candidate, in fact 'withdrew' from any campaign right in the middle of the election after losing his Midlands executive position. Despite this he secured some 40 per cent of the votes cast in a ballot where right-wing branch block votes still dominate.

At the same time, two SWP members polled well in recent elections, particularly in the North West division which is the right's strongest base (and the union's headquarters).

Behind this change is a new militancy inside the unions, chiefly from the recently organised private retail trade Tesco, Fine Fare, Woolworth, Littlewoods etc—where shopworkers have had to fight for their rights for the first time in years.

Even the Co-ops, traditionally passive on the retail side, with management cronies in control, this year voted heavily to reject a 'strongly recommended' pay deal—the first time this has ever happened. On the Co-op warehousing and wholesale side there have been several recent bitter disputes.

There is now a likelihood of a special recall conference of the union taking place this year. The union's wages policy has been outdated by the fall of the Callaghan government and the union's Eastern division (which includes London) has just agreed a resolution for a recall.

The union's consititution demands a motion passed by 100 branches before a special conference is held.

Quote of the year (so far):
'Of course, I never advocated industrial action for political ends.' Lord Hugh Scanlon, while playing golf with Peter Alliss (BBC2, 22 June).

Equal pay

At the tribunals

Fewer than one in ten of women taking equal pay claims to industrial tribunals last year finally won their cases at hearings. Nearly half the 343 cases were settled out of court for reasons 'not known' by the Department of Employment.

Three-quarters of the women trying to gain redress earned less than £50 a week: and the largest groups of applicants came, not surprisingly, from shops and the clothing and textile trades. With sex discrimination the operation of the 'equality laws' was even more pathetic—just 13 out of 130 women won their cases at tribunals.

As with equal pay easily the largest number of women workers at the tribunals were in clerical jobs.

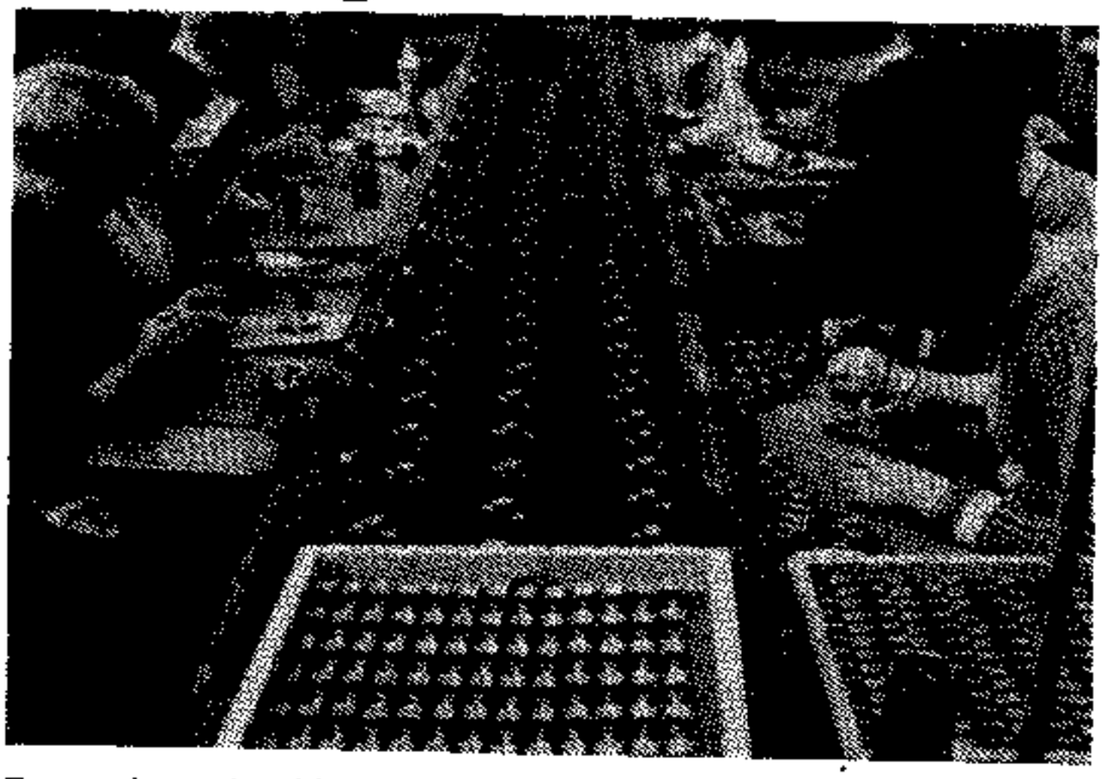
Results: Equal Pay and Discrimination*

Conciliated cases	51
Cases withdrawn	248
Tribunal victories	36
Tribunal defeats	87
TOTAL	**422**

*excluding men

Equal opportunities

Shifting women



Exemptions shouldn't be the rule, said an Equal Opportunities Commission report recently recommending the abolition of legislation preventing women being made to work nights, double day shifts, Sundays etc. Prominent on the team making the recommendation was a director of Joseph Lucas and a Mr Fuller, last seen championing women's rights as director of the South-East Lancs engineering employers which fought long battles and issued secret circulars against equal pay as long ago as 1971-72.

Meanwhile the numbers of employers seeking exemption orders from health and saftey laws seems to be growing. Out of more than 4,000 such orders in 1978, over 1,000 were new ones, almost all for the maximum period of a year. Just over 200,000 women are currently affected, including:

59,874 on night shifts
39,562 on double days
44,085 working Sundays
21,805 working 'extended hours'.

Of course huge numbers of women outside factories—in hospitals, catering and other services have to work these hours without any exemption possibilities and frequently without a shift payment. And some companies, for example Vauxhall and Electrolux, have made it a condition of equal pay that women agree to work at night.

The race against time

SASA, the major producers of polyester in Turkey, recently had to stop production, due to the unavailability of imported raw materials. As a result numerous textile firms which use polyester had to curtail their operations, lay off workers and put their prices up.

Several, including some large and well-established ones, went out of business altogether. Mensucat Santral, Turkey's fourth largest firm and largest textile company, can stand the crisis better than most:its production is down by about 50 per cent.

Oyak-Renault which assembles automobiles in Turkey closed its plant in Bursa in January, die to power cuts and shortages of raw-materials, fuel oil and spare parts. 4,500 partly completed cars, in need of imported parts, were waiting in the depots. Turkey's largest tyre factory, Lassa, had to cut production by 25 per cent for similar reasons.

These two examples draw a picture which is presented by every branch of Turkish industry. Overall manufacturing production is around 50 per cent of capacity and hardly a day passes without news of another small or medium scale company going bust.

Each bankruptcy and closure means that another commodity becomes scarce, another shortage is created or aggravated, a new blackmarket springs up, another firm has to close down or cut back production, more workers are made redundant. The circle is vicious: the capitalist finds he cannot produce and therefore hikes up the price of what he can produce.

On the other hand, with a wage freeze and more and more workers losing their jobs and income, demand for several commodities does not even meet the reduced level of output.

The result of this situation has been that while Prime Minister Ecevit tours the West in search of foreign aid and hopes to entice foreign capital into Turkey, hardly a Lira of Turkish capital was invested in Turkish industry over the past year.

Quite the opposite: the usual trickle of Turkish money which flows to Switzerland has become a steady stream. The Turkish ruling class is no longer confident that it can rule firmly or produce profitably.

In February a German diplomat was quoted as saying that unless Turkey was economically bailed out soon 'we would then have a solid headache from the Bosphorus to Afghanistan'.

And indeed at the recent Guadaloupe Conference Western leaders agreed to give Turkey a loan of $1.5 billions. The magnitude of the crisis, however, is illustrated by this figure itself: 1.5 billion dollars do not even meet Turkey's short term debts which are up for repayment and are currently being rescheduled.

Alternatively, this amount could possibly just buy Turkey's oil imports for one year, hardly scratching the surface of the 16 billion dollar foreign debt or the 4 billion dollar balance of payments deficit!

The roots of Turkey's economic problems lie in the very structure of the economy. While agriculture accounts for only 21 per cent of GNP and industry for 25 per cent and the population is almost equally divided between rural and urban areas, exports are still predominantly agricultural.

Cotton, hazelnuts, tobacco and raisins constitute 40 per cent of the country's exports. 40 oer cent of inports, on the other hand, are investment goods, mainly machinery and equipment. In spite of repeated effort to cut back imports and raise exports, Turkey's foreign trade deficit was 3.3 billion dollars in 1975, 3.2 billions in 1976 and 4.1 billions in 1971.

With foreign echange reserves of 410 million dollars in 1977, it was not even possible to service the foreign debt.

The effects of this foreign exchange bottleneck on the domestic economy have been disastrous. Only 3.7 per cent of total imports are consumption goods. The rest are investment goods and raw-materials necessary for both industrial and agricultural peoduction.

Apart from machinery and equipment, such imports as crude oil, fuel oil, fertilizers, cement, iron and steel, etc, are clearly absolutely crucial. And the reduction of imports over the past year has inevitably had to be in such commodities. There was very little room for manoeuvre: first there were no substantial imports of consumption goods to be cut.

Second, there is a limit to how much the production and export of nuts and raisins can be increased. The deficits have thus persisted, imports have progressively been curtailed and industry has consequently been starved of vital imported inputs.

The results of industry being half inoperative are twofold: inflation and unemployment. In both these fields Turkey leads Europe. Both have direct and unbearable effects on the population. In early 1979 inflation had reached 70 per cent. In mid-March the prices of several state-produced goods (tobacco, cement, coal, sugar, iron and steel) were increased by an average of 20 per cent. Petrol went up by 90 per cent.

The rising prices are accompanied by shortages of a whole number of basic commodities: petrol, coffee, fuel oil, sugar, cigarettes, tea, etc.

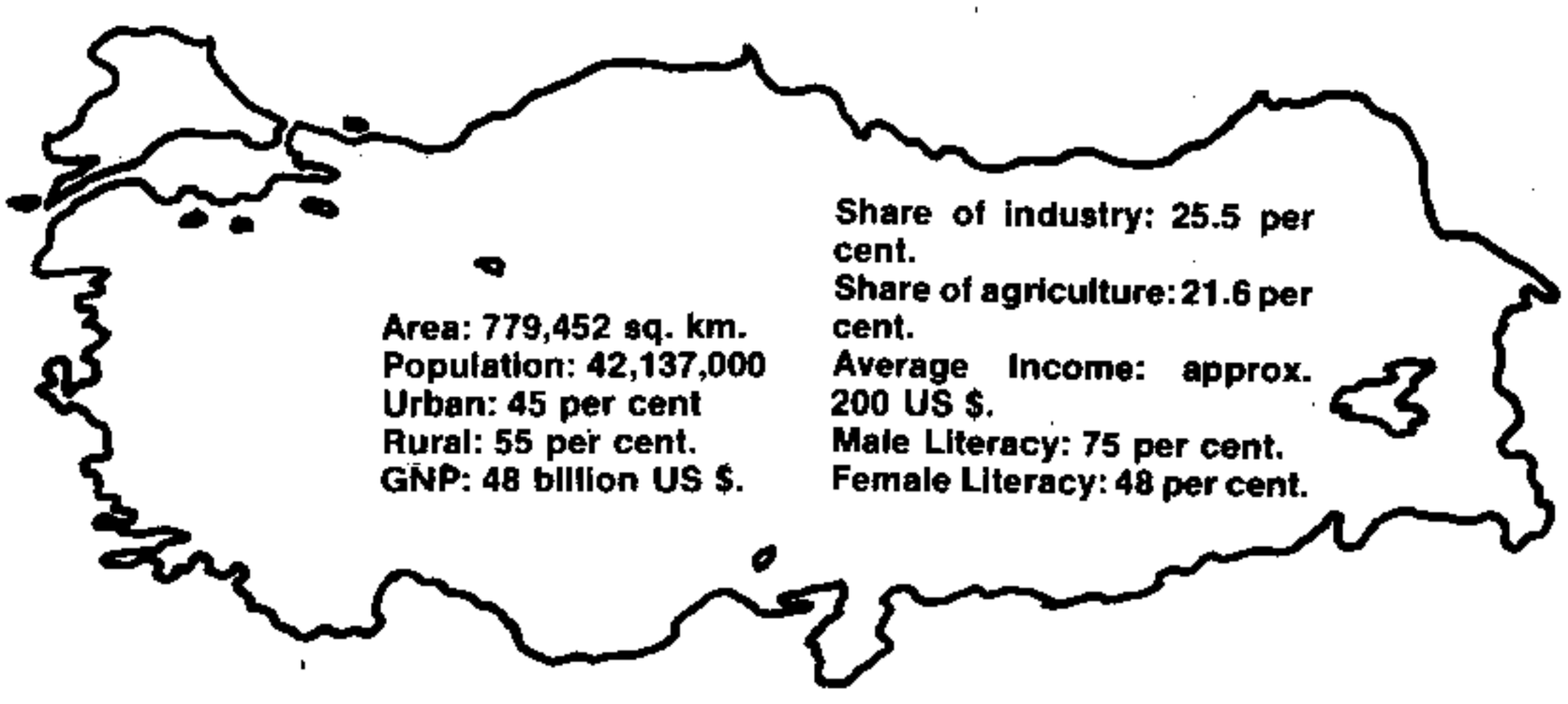
Unemployment has now reached a figure above 20 per cent. That means something between 3 to 4 million people, two-thirds of them in urban areas. And there is no system of social security in Turkey. The frightening rise in non-political street violence in the big cities is hardly surprising.

Apart from seeking foreign aid and attempting to reduce the foreign trade deficit (both with very little success), the government has tried two other IMF-suggested solutions. To devalue the Turkish currency repeatedly and to load the burden of the crisis onto the working-class.

The first of these has very little chance of success. A devaluation aims to increase exports and reduce imports: how can exports be increase when production is half-crippled, and how can imports be reduced when industry is already half-starving?

As for further squeezing the working-class, this brings us to the ruling class' crisis of social and political control.

The ability to make workers pay for economic crises necessitates one of several



preconditions. A weak, unorganised working-class without organizations and traditions of self-defence would enable capitalists to act as they please, to slash wages, make working conditions unbearable, extend the working day, etc. Similarly with workers suffering the demoralization of recent defeat.

Alternatively, the existence of organizations within the working-class which are willing and able to convince workers of the necessity or restraint and sacrifice, might allow the system to weather the crisis.

The Turkish working-class is neither weak and unorganised nor does it suffer from a long tradition of reformism.

While Turkey is one of those countires which conjure up images of a vast peasantry slaving away on the land, this is fast ceasing to be a realistic picture. Like in numerous other Middle-Eastern countries, the 1960s witnessed massive attempts at planned industrialization and development in Turkey.

In 1963-67, the First Five-Year Plan, growth averaged 5.8 per cent annually. This figure rose to 7.1 per cent in 1968-72, and was 6.7 per cent in 1973-77. Regardless of how well planned the process was, whether plan targets were met or not, the result was that the structure of society and its class formations were changed rapidly and irreversibly.

45 per cent of the population is now urban-based. A similar percentage of the economically active population is employed in industry and services.

Today the industrial working-class numbers around 4 million. It is therefore still small, and it is young. Its level of militancy and organization, however, belie these facts.

The Turkish working-class boasts the only independent trade unions in the whole of the Middle-East. There are two Confederations, TURK-IS, originally a yellow union, now independent, with a membership of about 1.5 million, and DISK, the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions, a militant break-away from TURK-IS, with a membership nearing 1 million.

In addition, white-collar workers, legally barred from unionization, are organized in professional associations, which are often even more militant and vociferous than the unions.

These organizations, DISK in particular, have successfully fended off several direct attacks on the working class in recent years. In 1970, an attempt was made to legislate against trade unions. Hundreds of thousands of workers rioted in the streets of Istanbul, fighting pitched battle with the police and troops for two days in June. The bill was killed stone dead.

In 1976, it was attempted to extend the lifetime of State Security Courts which were established in the preceding period of martial law. 2 of the 3 judges of these courts were appointed by the military.

Nearly half a million workers responded to DISK's call for a general strike. The courts were shelved. Numeous epic struggles of the past ten years indicate that open attacks on the working-class do not represent an option the ruling class can contemplate lightly.

The left in Turkey presents a rather less encouraging picture. While working-class organisation survivied the military coup of 1971 more or less intact, the left did not. It was throughly smashed and still carries the scars.

There exists 5 or more parliamentary socialist parties, mostly pro-Moscow; innumerable Maoist groups of both Chinese and Albanian varieties, and numerous other groups of undefinable politics. The two significant forces on the left are the Communist Party (which together with its Greek and Cypriot counterparts is the last of Moscow's henchmen in Europe) and a loosely structured organization, Revolutionary Youth, which masterfully combine Mao, Stalin and Guevara!

One thing shared by almost all groups is the concept of revolution in two stages, with the Democratic revolution carried out by all sections of society which are anti-imperialist, preceding socialist revolution. While all pay their daily respects to to the working class, hope seems to lie with national democratic fronts, or armed men of steel. 'Socialist revolution or caricature revolution' has yet to be accepted.

Ebullient Ecevit

Turkey's present government, Ecevit's Republican People's Party, is a social-democratic party along traditional lines. However, it is operating under conditions where social democracy has little chance of success. It cannot afford to grant the smallest reforms.

It therefore cannot hope to retain its working class base. It cannot provide a smoothly-running economy with a contented working class. As we would expect, after 18 months in power Ecevit is steadily losing support among both workers and capitalists.

The most visible indication of social democracy's inability to rule came in December last year, when martial law was declared for a period of 2 months in 13 of Turkey's 67 provinces.

There can be no clearer admission of defeat by a liberal 'People's Party' than calling the troops in to do the dirty work. Martial law has already been twice extended for further 2 month periods. At the end of April it was also geographically extended to cover the 6 Kurdish provinces in South-Eastern Turkey, following a visit by the Turkish Chief of Staff to Iraq.

Any revival of the struggle for autonomy among Turkey's 8 million Kurds will clearly be met in the traditional fashion: brutal repression.

The period since the announcement of martial law has witnessed the gradual transfer of power from the government to the military. On Mayday (which for the past 3 years has seen half a million workers in the streets of Istanbul) control by the military was total.

The march was banned, a 30 hour curfew was declared, Istanbul was sealed off, widespread searches were carried out, over 3000 were arrested, including the leaders of DISK. All this was ordered and implemented by the military, with the government silently watching.

In short, Ecevit has failed. He was unable to satisfy the ruling class: the economy is still in a rut, with little chance of recovery. Profit rates are still low, political violence is still

rife. He was also unable to satisfy the working class: reforms are not forthcoming, living standards are still appalling.

The failure of social democracy leaves the ruling class with two alternatives: miliatry dictatorship and fascism.

The rise of the fascist movement in Turkey since the early 1970s, its militancy and growing strength, indicate that it has long been seen and fostered as a reserve option by the ruling class.

While it has not yet been able to create a mass base for itself, its forces are substantial. The longer the present situation lasts the more fascism will be seen as the only effective solution by all sections of capital.

In the meantime, the military solution is the easier one. The tradition of military involvement in politics is a long and well-established one in Turkey. It is thus not too wild a prediction to expect the Ecevit government to fall in the near future, leaving its place to the military.

The struggle for socialism in Turkey is a race against time. The time to build 'democratic fronts' is past. It is time for revolutionaries to single-mindedly root themselves in the working-class and build the party which will fight against fascism and for socialism. The two struggles are one and the same. *Ali Saffet.*

France

23rd Congress of the Communist Party

Not surprisingly the 23rd Congress of the French Communist Party—which was held in St Ouen, near Paris, from 9-13 May—has confirmed the turn taken since the end of 1977: violent attacks against the Socialist Party (which was accused of being an 'accomplice' of the right wing), proclamation of the need for a 'new unity' of the left.

But, this time, not only based on an alliance with the SP leadership but with the Socialist rank and file militants as well, and a call for the defence of the national interests of the French bourgeoisie inside the Common Market.

The proposals for the 'new unity' are very vague and completely unrealistic since the SP rank and filers have no reason to ally themselves with the CP against the will of their own leadership. 'New, rank and file unity' was an empty slogan used by the CP leaders to hide their lack of political or electoral perspectives. However, the Congress was very careful not to rule out the possibility of a new agreement with the SP leadership in the future.

At this Congress it was not possible to hear the voice of the opponents who, since the defeat of the 'Union of the Left' in the March 1978 Parliamentary election, have regularly accused the CP leadership of being too radical, too 'anti-SP' and too workerist.

During the preparations for the Congress the bureaucrats intervened to ban all representation by the opponents. In at least one place, Arcueil (a small town in Southern Paris and one of the strongholds of Georges Marchais, the CP general secretary) an opponent was beaten up by CP full timers during a local conference of the party.

All of the Congress preparations showed further that the CP was no more democratic than before and that its stalinist methods were not dead and buried. As far as its membership was concerned, the CP claimed a total of 700,000 organised in 28,000 cells.

But a small proportion of its membership participated in the pre-Congress conferences at every level. It seems in fact that since March 1979 many members decided to withdraw from any activity, not only within the Party but within the CP-led CGT trade union as well.

For the moment the CP leadership is at a dead end. On the one hand, as a reformist party, its only hope to take part in a government is through an electoral alliance with the SP; but, on the other hand, it has clearly been shown since 1972 that such an alliance is more profitable to the SP than to the CP.

The results of some elections held over the last few years help to illustrate the CP's dilemma.

In fact over the last seven years, the SP has regularly increased its electoral influence while the CP has, at best kept its votes without making any advance, at worst, has lost ground to the SP from its own voters.

For a party which, during its 23rd Congress in 1976, kept its distance from Moscow and dropped all references to the dictatorship of the proletariat from its programme, these results were very disappointing.

Faced with a choice between two reformist working class parties with the same programme (the 'Common Programme of the Left'), the 'moderate' electorate of the left combined to choose the SP at the CP's expense. As for the CP leadership, there was a danger in seeing the gap between it and the SP widen and the possibility of the SP coming to power without the CP.

This possibility was made more likely by the fact that, due to the French electoral system and the gerrymandering of the constituencies, many more votes are needed to elect a CP member of Parliament than an SP one.

So, in 1977 after the huge progress made by the SP in a dozen or so by-elections, the CP made every effort to convince its own membership and electorate that the CP and the SP were different parties with different goals . . . in spite of the fact that their programmes were absolutely identical.

The CP leadership started to attack Mitterrand and ended the honeymoon with its own intellectuals who, up to then, were considered to be the forerunners in the alliance with the Social-Democrats (in particular Jean Elleinstein).

In order to get the support of the old-type stalinist militants against the Eurocommunist intellectuals, Marchais at the Congress stepped down his criticisms of the Eastern Europe countries and of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile he decided the departure of Roland Leroy the editor of the daily *L'Humanite* and one of the most well-known hard-liners against the SP from the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

County Council Elections (Cantonnales) per cent of the vote

	SP	CP
1973	21.9	22.7
1976	26.5.9	23.8
1979		22.4

General Elections for Parliament Per cent of the vote

	SP	CP
1973	19.20	22.7
1978	24.8	20.6

This means in practice that Marchais is now in position to decide either a new agreement with the SP or to continue his attacks against Mitterrand without meeting any internal opposition inside the leadership.

In the future Marchais' policies will depend very much upon the electoral results of his

party compared with those of the SP.

It was difficult for the CP to explain to its members why the leadership has supported Francois Mitterrand for such a long period (to be precise since 1965) without any criticism.

And then to discover suddenly that Mitterrand was a bourgeois politician, a minister in a dozen of openly anti-communist governments during the Fourth Republic (1945-58) and someone who took an active role, as a Minister of Interior, against the Algerian people fighting for their independence.

In order to justify both its past and its present positions the CP invented a non-existent 'right turn' of the SP. According to the CP theoreticians, Mitterrand was an acceptable ally from 1965 to the last months of 1977: he then suddenly turned right and started to plot with Giscard d'Estaing and other right wingers.

This explanation was not particularly convincing since the SP did not change its policies at all over the last few years. But it was the only explanation the CP found to sell its new policies to its membership.

The new line created some trouble among the CP's intellectuals almost immediately. With the rebirth of the SP (at least as an electoral party) many CP fellow travellers particularly in the artistic and academic milieu—began to switch their sympathies from the CP to the SP.

Among the CP intellectuals themselves, the prospect of being in office with the Social Democrats became very popular and some of them have

(l to r) Maire of the CFDT, Seguy of the CGT, Marchais and Mitterrand...

...and a less docile demonstration

even proposed that the party drops its 'communist' name and label.

The CP's attacks against Mitterrand were considered by these people as sectarian madness. Intellectuals like Ellenstein, Fremontier, Parmelin or Louis Althusser (the latter wrongly considered in this country as a left-wing critic because he was in favour of keeping the dictatorship of the proletariat in the party programme) then accused the party of not having done enough for the victory of the Left, even if such victory would have meant a weakening of the CP.

They asked for more freedom of discussion (but were against the right of building tendencies) and claimed to be closer to the Italian and Spanish CP leaderships than to the French one.

However these opponents never criticised the CP's policy from the left, from the point of view of workers' interests. They came mainly from a right wing opposition which reproached the CP not to be one sufficiently Social Democratic.

For instance in a series of articles published in the daily *Le Monde* (21, 22, 23 February 1979) Elleinstein wrote:

'We must have the courage to tell the truth to the workers and to take the measures needed to improve the economic stiutation. This could sometimes mean, for some factories, some branches of the economy and some regional areas the adoption of 'salvation measures' for which sacrifices should be asked from everyone.'

Such a statement could have been signed by Callaghan, Murray or Healey. In fact, while the opposition inside the CP mourned the late 'Union of the Left' it had no revolutionary perspectives to offer to the CP rank and file militants.

The turn of the CP means that sometimes it is forced to appear more radical than the SP and to act accordingly. For instance, during the fight of the steelworkers in Northern and Eastern France, the CP leaders adopted a very militant stand locally.

Not only did they very often take the lead in demonstrations but *L'Humanite* proclaimed its solidarity with the workers who attacked police stations. This was in sharp contrast with May 1968 when any action against the police was then condemned by the CP as 'provocative' and 'irresponsible'.

However the CP's radical stand in Lorraine and the north is in no way related to any radical policy at a national level. The CP and the CP-led CGT trade union have been very careful to avoid spreading workers' struggles nationally and to keep them divided into regional areas, industrial branches and so on . . .

While the CP has supported the steel workers' fight, the only national action undertaken has been to associate itself with the Socialist and the Gaullist MPs in asking for . . . a special session of the Parliament, a session which took place with no result.

The CP's new policies are not a left turn in the sense that the Party proposes nothing more to the workers than the Social Democrats do. It's a turn imposed not by pressure from the workers but by the Party's own electoral interests.

Ray Whitleaf

RESISTANCE & CONTROL

Feminity on the shopfloor

Photo: Syd Shelton

Women at work bear the double burden of their exploitation as workers and their oppression as women. In the following article Anna Pollert shows some of the ways women are gaining confidence at work but how at the same time the system of gender relations in the workplace weakens their ability to fight. It is part of a wider study based on interviews and conversations with women working on the shop floor of a tobacco factory in Bristol.

The Grand Tobacco Company, of which Redcliffe's was one tiny segment, had the reputation of being 'a good employer' which 'looked after' its employees. It had a history of paternalism, organising welfare schemes, sports, entertainments and outings for its workers. Now, it had been brought up to date with the concepts of modern, progressive management, which recognised the benefits of 'union participation' and 'good communications' with the workers.

It had established a well oiled machine of joint consultations and collective bargaining with the unions involved in the tobacco industry, all centralised into a National Joint Negotiating Committee for the Tobacco Industry. It prided itself on good labour relations and a strike free record; conflicts and disagreements were officially blamed on 'communication breakdowns' or lack of information. It used the familiar language of modern corporate capitalism, and 'sensible' management 'participatory discussion', cooperation and compromise.

At the local factory, or branch level, management were given a fairly free hand to set up their own conciliatory arrangements. Redcliffe's had a 'factory council' at which worker representatives 'participated' with management. The main production union, in this case the Transport and General Workers' Union, was fully recognised, and while it did not operate a closed shop policy, women were encouraged to join, not just by shop stewards, but by management. Membership was facilitated by the check-off system, with union subscriptions deducted from the wage packet at source, so that it became an automatic, effortless part of being a worker.

At the same time, the relationship between the shop floor and supervisors, was encouraged to be as friendly as possible. Foremen and chargehands were trained not to 'talk down' to the girls, to avoid confrontations and aim for co-operation. The idea that everyone in the factory, manual workers, staff, supervisors, managers, were 'workers' was emphasised, with frequent shop floor visits by managers, who in their shirt sleeves showed both a 'personal interest' and a willingness to get their hands dirty—occasionally.

The close 'family' approach was particularly suited to a small factory like Redcliffes but it also fitted in well with the sophisticated running of the parts of a giant monopolistic corporation like the Grand Tobacco.

For the women having some trade union representation was undoubtedly better than none, but behind the 'friendly relations' the girls had little more organisation, or control over their lives than in the days of the iron-fisted boss. They did not need to be bossed, because they had their hands tied anyway. Tied by the incorporation of trade unionism into capital through a complex web of centralised procedures which were as distant as the stars, and filtered down their effects through an invisible, unknown bureaucracy. Power and decisions were somewhere 'out there', never in the factory, let alone the shop floor.

The women's impotence was exacerbated further

by their alienation from their shop stewards. A good part of this resulted directly from the check off system which removed all need for regular, personal contact with them. It made less likely that women could approach them, simply because the 'union', like everything else in the factory, was something was 'happened to them', from the outside; it was not something they thought about let alone fought for.

Another, more important wedge divided the women from their union. All their stewards—(not to mention the branch secretary and full time officials) were men. They had far more in common with male chargehands and foremen than the women who were their members and fellow workers. Many of them were hand-picked by management and went for the union post as a step up to foreman anyway. Which made the job of supervision that much easier, because women were held in check from both sides, management and union.

This is not to say that shop stewards actually gave orders about work, they were simply unsympathetic and patronising and even the most well-meaning and popular was so divorced from women's problems and experience, that he was unlikely and unwilling to represent their issues.

But women were ham-strung at another level too. For another aspect of management's strategy of control was the minute hold over the labour process itself perfected by the application of scientific management. This was the system, developed by Taylor and Gilbreth in the USA at the turn of the last century, of analysing and standardising the increasingly specialised motions of each job of the 'detail labourer', the product of the increasing division of labour of the capitalist mode of production.

In the Grand Tobacco Company, work study and measurement were gradually introduced into different factories as 'experiments' in the 1950s. Before this, most jobs were paid according to a simple piece-rate system, or time-rates with added bonus schemes, depending on the nature of the productive process. But this system was neither efficient, nor productive enough; it allowed workers too much freedom over how actually to perform the job, and too much discretion as to whether and when to work hard or not.

What the Proficiency Pay Scheme, or PPS, introduced in 1965 meant to the individual worker, was becoming tied to a particular grade which dictated the exact rate of doing a job. To keep up, demanded perfect 'economy' of movements; in other words, not using one nerve, muscle or limb which was not directly necessary to do the job. It meant keeping part of the body still, and turning arms, wrists, hands and fingers into a high-speed machine. Luxuries like turning the head to talk or having a stretch, were only permitted if you opted for a slower rate and lower pay grade, or if you were a super-efficient machine.

Like all incentive schemes, the PPS was more stick than carrot. A girl was allocated to or opted for a particular grade or rate within one job. If her output fell below the precise amount required over a periodof a month, she was downgraded, and received the lower grade of pay for the next month, regardless of any subsequent improvements. Only after she had 'proved herself' over another month, could she be reinstated to the higher grade; meanwhile working at a highly intensified rate of exploitation.

This threat of demotion hung over every girl and secured her more tightly to her job than the strictest supervision. PPS guaranteed stability of output to the company, stability of earnings to those who could keep up and stability of downgrading to those who could not. It was a brilliant device of super-exploitation, one which only the poorest union organisation would let slip through. It was the classic iron-fist beneath the velvet glove.

But in addition to these basic conditions of work, the every day lives of the Redcliffe women were circumscribed by other controls: the welter of elaborate small-print in the 'Rule Book' which affects the majority of factory workers, men or women. There were basic conditions of employment, like compulsory overtime, or flexibility agreements between departments and even branches of the Grand Tobacco group, which only trade union organisation could challenge.

Thus Rule 27: 'Any employee transferred from one Department to another or from one of the Factories of the Company to another (either temporarily or permanently) must conform to the Rules and the hours of work of the Department or Factory in which he or she is working for the time being.'

But there were other petty, personal rules. There was Rule 7, against moving between departments and 'loitering on the staircases, in the corridors, at the entrance doors or in the lavatories . . .' There was No 18: 'No employee is allowed to enter any lavatory or cloakroom except the one provided for his or her use'. There was No 15 the Right of Search: 'Every employee is liable to be searched at any time' –in case they smuggled out any tobacco. And then there was the, in the circumstances, ironic 'no smoking' rule, No 9.

It was in the context of their *general* powerlessness over the labour process, together with the minute constraints over 'how they went', that the Redcliffe women created their own shop-floor culture. Those elements of shop-floor life directed at asserting informal controls over the labour process, that 30 per cent of the day which previous to PPS had been spent in various strategies of restricting output, working to rule, or 'going backward and forward'—were now gone. But there were other formal controls which could be broken, and were. Regularly.

They replaced the Rule Book, as far as possible without conscious, deliberate organisation, with an informal code of resistance to being turned into machines, to boredom, to the humiliation of being ordered around. Only they did this within very tight limits, that is, without interfering with production. Whatever forms of diversion, entertainment, intransigence, assertions of dignity they adopted, tobacco rushed through their fingers, into the endless packets and cartons while the machines rattled on.

Among the younger girls, informal groups or 'crowds' were what gave shop floor life its distinctive flavour. There was a sharp contrast between departments in which the girls remained isolated or just in couples and those where they 'mucked in together'. Collective confidence completely transformed girls' approach to each other, their work and their supervisors. Far from the hushed cosiness of the couple, they could be as brash and daunting as wild school girls, while in some departments, notably the BUR, (Beating-Up Room, or machine-weighing room), the girls' cliques gave rise to non-conformism, to the regular practice of breaking and bending the rules.

Why the strong cliques developed among the girls at Redcliffes is not a simple or obvious matter. There were workplace traditions and practices

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If woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance: very various; heroic and mean, splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some think even greater.

But this is woman in fiction. In fact . . . she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room.

A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance, practically she is completely insigificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history.

She dominate the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband.

It was certainly an odd monster that one made up by reading the historians first and the poets afterwards- a worm winged like an eagle; the spirit of life and beauty in a kitchen chopping up suet. But these monsters, however amusing to the imagination, have no existence in fact.

What one must do to bring her to life was to think poetically and prosaically at one and the same moment, thus keeping in touch with fact -that she is this Martin aged thirty six, dressed in blue, wearing a black hat and brown shoes, but not losing sight of fiction either—that she is a vessel in which all sorts of spirits and forces are conversing and flashing perpetually.

Virginia Woolf
A Room of One's Own
Panther 60p

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weighing machine. It was the machines which dominated—great clattering metal boxes cutting across the room, each producing its never ending stream of little gold packs down the moving belt to the labeller and wrapper. The noise was deafening. You had to shout to be heard. And there was something hectic about the little red lights blinking on the scales, and the frenzy of hands to keep up, fill and refill the tiny weighing buckets which were always ready for more.

Yet partly because of this brutal, rowdy atmosphere, there was a certain status about working here. It was big. This was the place for bravado and laughs, because you had to put up a fight to survive. And there was also the skill and pay of being a 'straight line' weigher. It took three months training to 'pass out' as a machine weigher, and if a girl managed the top grade she could earn close to the best woman's wage.

Ironic as it sounds, the BUR had a certain 'machismo' about it: the girls were rougher and tougher than the others. Though as we shall see, only in a certain, peculiar, feminine way. For supervision was male, and all encounters with authority were mediated by openly patriarchal and implicitly sexual relations. So the intransigence of the 'non-conformists' had its own quality, a combination of female defiance and coquetry, which gave the BUR its distinctive shop floor 'style'.

The two hand-packing rooms were much smaller, each employing only ten girls. They were quieter, because the tobacco was weighed on hand scales, and then hand packed. Girls could actually talk in normal tones. They were less harassed, because, although they worked to a grade, they were not tyrannised by an incessant, unyielding machine. They set their own pace. And because they were up against less, there was less need to build up resistance.

At the same time, they felt cut off physically from the majority of girls in the BUR, and because they were few, turned inwards into a cosy, partly defensive intimacy. They worked quietly, 'sensibly', without aggression, teasing, laughs. But there was more to it than that. For, because they were 'easier' departments, and there was no machinery to superintend, they had women supervisors. There was none of the sexual innuendo and frolics of the BUR. Authority relations were more staid, rather like a classroom in an all-girls' school except there were fewer discipline problems.

But in addition to the physical work environment a vital influence was what happened outside work. For wider social alliances and interests fed inside groups, particularly as there was a traditional link between the factory and two local areas in Provincial. Many of the youngest girls came from the same schools, and carried on with their own old gangs, cliques and rivalries which overlapped with their work crowds. The stronger these all-female ties, the more collective spirited, self-assured, assertive and 'non-conformist' were the girls at work. Those who were isolated at home, were naturally quieter at work, and found it harder to gain entry into a gang.

But girls' non-conformity at work meant more than resistance to authority. It was also inspired by a general confidence with boys learned from their experience of female group solidarity. In groups, they did things that a girl on her own or with a friend would never dare; going to their own youth clubs and disc's together were the least exceptional. But they also went to pubs, independently of boys, and what is more, chatted them up. This is how one sixteen year old described a Saturday night:

Jenny: 'At weekends, we go drinking, and when we're a bit pissed like, we let ourselves go —go up to the blokes, pinch their sandwiches, tease them like. Then they do the same to us. We end up dancing on the tables and things. It's a laugh.'

While girls could be quite a daunting, spectacle together, in intimate relationships with boys, they acted differently; more passively. 'This kind of fooling was the privilege of the group, and disappeared when the crowd dispersed. Yet it did leave its mark, and taught the girls they could, by strength of numbers, subvert docile, acquiescent feminity into frank boldness. Which at work turned into what the older women described as being 'generally defiant': messing around, shouting across the department, talking back at their supervisors, being generally intransigent. This was undoubtedly infectious for others who, because they were 'courting' or 'married' were outside the age of girl gangs, joined in the collective spirit of the BUR.

The girls' resistance to authority ranged from sullen indifference to active provocation of authority. Living up to their reputation as dumb creatures of kids was the girls' best means of defiance, and succeeded in infuriating their supervisors, male and female. Quite often this was just to relieve boredom messing around with the 'rag' (tobacco) or anything available like trollies or boxes, teasing, playing on each other's weak spots- anything that could produce a 'laugh'.

Val (BUR): 'When we don't talk for two hours, I

starts tormenting them, pulling the rag about, much about, sort of thing. I starts a row, with the Irish, you know, I picks on them, only mucking about like, I don't mean it. But I get so bored, I got to do something.'

'Having a laugh' is the way people survive work. Of course, it should not be idealised or exaggerated either. While the most serious at Redcliffes fooled around least of all, the others did not exactly rollick around day. The overwhelming feature of factory life is drudgery, monotony and boredom, laughs only standing out as welcome exceptions.

But humour was important, among older women as much as younger girls. One of the favourite tactics of fun was subtly pushing *unwritten* factory rules to their limits, or exploiting the policy of permissive supervision. This happened in many different versions. Singing was supposedly forbidden. So the older women in the stripping room would have a sing-song, inviting their chargehand to join in and sing as loudly as possible. They had dirty songs—not as vulgar perhaps as men--but lascivious enough to make the male chargehand look very uneasy.

If laughs were rare in the hand-packing rooms, they did occur, especially when a 'non-conformist' from the BUR 'stirred things up'. Great satisfaction was derived from being as rude and shocking as possible, provoking each other, and the female supervisor as far as she would go.

Cheryl: (giggles). 'What do you think about polo?'
Anna: 'Polo'
Cheryl (giggles up a pitch): 'Yeh! The mint with the hole!' (Uproar all round).
Jane: 'Want a banana?'
(Shrieks).
Cheryl: 'Oh--a banana!'
Jane: 'Can I have it peeled please?' (Fits of laughter).

They then turn to Cheryl, whose face is burnt red by a sun lamp).

Irene: 'You've got radiation.'

(They repeat this timelessly, in an uproar of hysterics). 'Radiation! Only three weeks to live! Never mind, aye. What are you going to do?
Cheryl: 'I don't want to be a virgin all my life.' (A good minute's uninterrupted ribaldry).
Joan: (the supervisor, calling from her desk): 'I hope you're talking in a proper manner up there, not being rude or anything.'

However, this was not nearly such good entertainment as flirting with men. Older women recalled how much more fun they had in the factory during the war, when they worked with the men.
Grace: 'I worked with the young fellows then. We used to have more fun - they chased us, we chased them, used to gang up on each other, all sorts.'

Now there were only a few men who came up to the BUR from the dispatch departments, the machine operators and mechanics, and the supervisors. Men, especially young men, were a rarity. So girls took every opportunity to flirt, giggle, tease and get into playful pranks. But the men they were in most frequent contact with were their supervisors. And here was the catch. For sexual banter became something more than a laugh; it became the language of discipline.
Derek Brown (section chargehand, BUR) 'You see, I believe in a friendly basis. I believe in saying, "You help me and I'll help you." But the environment of the girls has changed. This permissive society—now these girls are changing with it. Well I'm afraid they're not so mature, not so reliable as they used to be. That makes our job harder.'

The peculiar struggle over rules between supervisors and girls, was a complex, tense balance between confrontation and collaboration. Complex, because class control was mediated by patriarchal control, and neither side of the relationship could separate them. Tense because if either side went too far in the sexy word play, if the girls' flirtatious repartee turned to disrespect or the chargehand's cajolery turned to obscene sexism, the rules of the game could snap.

As we shall see, supervision was a much more subtle exercise than it had been twenty years earlier. For, in addition to the swing to a more dpilomatic approach, management had to contend with the fact that girls and women had become more confident at work. Times had changed.

The experience of the second world war was largely responsible. While we cannot analyse in any detail here the changes in working women's consciousness from this period, four factors stand out clearly. First the enormous demand for female labour during the war brought married women into the labour force on a large scale, and gave them the confidence of being indispensible to the economy and the war effort. Secondly, this very movement, together with ongoing concern over the birth rate, health and welfare since the 1930s, focused public attention and government policy on the family and womens' role in reproduction, again, emphasising women's importance. Thirdly, the post-war boom increased the demand for women workers and put them in a much stronger position in terms of labour scarcity than before. And fourthly, because of this they became organised in trade unions on an unprecedented scale.

The relationship between such movements, and different sections of the working class, women in particular, is obviously complicated and uneven. While, for instance, some sectors became more organised than others, many remained backward in terms of trade union consciousness, like the Redcliffe women. Nevertheless, the changes had percolated through here too, and the women themselves recalled the contrasts between the days of old-style heavy-handed domination, and the subtler techniques of the 1970s. In those pre-war days, it made little difference if a supervisor was male or female, because a dragon was a dragon whatever sex. There was the case of 'Black Bess'.

Grace: 'Years and years ago, the forewoman, they used to call her Black Bess she wore a black overall. Everybody was frightened of the forewoman, and then some married women came back (after the war), and they cowed her down, and frightened *her to* death in the end. They used to shout out, "Here's Black Bess coming" wouldn't have dreamt of saying that a few years before. But she had you right down, the forewoman. You couldn't do this, do that, you couldn't turn round. Well the married women got back and she couldn't do that to them, so they turned round and told *her* to keep her head round the right way.'

Anna: 'Weren't they frightened to lose their jobs saying that?'

Grace: 'Well, not really. Because they had their husbands, or they'd just get another job. And they were older, I suppose. They'd been out in the world and they came back and weren't frightened. They'd stick up for themselves.'

At Redcliffes there were severe limits to the degree they could 'stick up for themselves' in an organised way. But on the shop floor, they

demanded the same standards of politeness from their male supervisors, as they did from their husbands at home. Indeed, they had greater collective strength here, than at home.

As for the younger girls, the comments of older women, both as parents of daughters and as co-workers, suggested that younger girls were more confident than they had been.

Grace: 'They're as good as you are, sort of thing.'

Edna: 'The younger generation, well, they're not defiant, but they used to be more cowed down. The younger lot got together, collective. Good thing you've only got one life, but it can go too far sometimes.'

What was important to shop floor life, was the cross-fertilisation between these two types of confidence, the married women's and the 'youthful intransigents'. For whatever doubts and criticisms they held about the girls, the older women respected their pride, and even admitted they had learned from them:

Edna: 'I've got a married daughter of twenty five. I talk to her more freely than I did to my own mother. I used to be told to be "seen and not heard". Now *I'm* more independent than I used to be.'

It was certainly the young girls, particularly those of the BUR, who were hardest to handle 'successfully'.

Derek Brown (supervisor): 'You can talk to a mature woman. She accepts responsibility, talks more sense. Now these kids of today, they've got no sense of responsibility in themselves. I don't think you could hold them responsible.'

So it was in this context of the 'permissive society' and 'acting like children' that appealing to the girls' sexuality was the most effective form of control if they fell for it. Which, to a large extent, they did. The relationships between the men and the young girls on the shop floor were sexist, the manner cajoling, friendly laced with sexy, often personal jokes, freely putting hands on the girls' shoulders or hands as they worked, combining insult with flattery. And the girls colluded. It was so much part of everyday shop floor life, it was had to pin down.

One example will serve to illustrate. On one occasion, one of the BUR girls was 'messing around' and was wheeled off to a lift on a trolly by a young man. Everybody joined in the joke.

Geraldine: 'It weren't my fault (shriek!)'

Derek Brown: 'What are you up to? It's your sexy looks that always does it.'

Husky laughter all round.

There was no way he could have broken up the general 'laugh' without antagonising the girls. So he diffused it with similar flattery, never even approaching the young man who was responsible. The girl returned to work, put in her place: but instead of sheepishly acknowledging his authority, she went on giggling, as if to demonstrate she did not feel humiliated.

But it did not always work this way. Brown could sometimes fall victim to his own game, when the girls took advantage of the sexual innuendo, and used it as their own weapon. I was once politely reprimanded for chewing on the factory premises (no confectionery of any kind, Rule 16!) in front of the girls. It was a case of the supervisor demonstrating his authority. But up came one of the girls, and loudly telling me not to take any notice, gave him a half motherly half sexy hug. He was stunned. Utterly undermined. And yet, he still chose self control in favour of confrontation, making a shrewd assessment of long term diplomacy and success. No risks could be taken with a group.

Calculation and manipulation were the currency of patriarchal control. Brown had each individual and each 'crew' measured up. His strain came from occasionally 'forgetting himself'. The girls likewise knew their strength and how far they could go. The Number 7 crew were a particularly bold and 'defiant' lot and if Brown interfered when they thought it was none of his business, they just shouted at him—'Get off'—'leave us alone' (always half joking).

He would reply 'now don't be cocky' but they would all laugh. Some genuinely liked him: 'He's as good as gold don't tell him, mind or he'll get big headed.' Others more cynically thought him 'soft', 'pliable', 'you can do what you want with him'. Others sensed their weakness with him, thought him 'a two faced bastard' and kept quiet.

Because girls derived some enjoyment from these skirmishes, it was, a successful way of keeping them in line. Their use of female sex appeal as a way of getting round their supervisors, or even retaliating against authority, was always a double edged weapon, which, in the long term, hurt them and nobody else.

For if they won momentary victories of self assertion, it was only by colluding with the conventional role of female sex object, and laid them open to sexist advances whether they were in the mood or not. And some clearly resented it, and had no means of expressing it, it, if they did they could be labelled humourless, as 'women's libbers', and got little support from the girls. Those who resented the whole manoeuvring approach of supervision knew from experience its seamy side.

Val: 'You've got to be blue eyes in a factory, you know what I mean? Your face has got to fit or else that's it.'

Because they would not or could not join the repartee and fit the parts of both workers and sex objects, they fell prey to arbitrary victimisation, not only for breaches of discipline or work standards but for failing to please.

Val: 'Well my face don't fit that's for sure. Like when you goes in the office to Ray Carter (the senior foreman), well, he looks at you as though you were nothing. As though he could spit on you. He says to me, "We could do without girls like you!" I hates he.'

Anna: 'Are you scared of him?'

Val: 'I aint scared of him, *but you can't do nothing much, can you?* I don't want to lose me job yet. Waits till I leave. Tell him right off what I think then.' (my emphasis).

The ultimate perniciousness of feminity as a weapon of shop floor resistance was its individualism and competitiveness. It worked only in the isolated occasion. Because it took the sting out of conflicts, its very success detracted from developing collective, organised strategies of struggle, which left the individual and the group helpless if it came to a crunch—like arbitrary victimisation, or redundancies. This, the management knew too well.

Many of the 'non conformists' fell into the trap of becoming the new type ideal female worker. The docile mouse was an anachronism. The new teeny-bopper and disco girl made equally amenable wage slaves.

In spite of the constant references to the 'more relaxed atmosphere' and 'free and easy managers', the older women, who remembered the crudely authoritarian days of the factory, expressed uneasiness about the present. The young girls who

knew no different lacked this historical vantage from which to compare and evaluate what they took for granted. But what was wrong? It was hard to put a finger on it.

On one hand they were proud of the gains made by married women, their greater freedom and status. And they backed the younger girls' 'defiance' and spirit. Yet, ironically, they felt they had more fun in the past.

Grace: 'I don't think the youngsters are getting the fun we did.'

Maggie: 'I used to like it better before – there was a better atmosphere, more fun.'

When the older women tried to argue that the younger generation were 'having a better time than they had', they never referred to this much flaunted 'defiance', or freedom. It was always in terms of consumer spending.

Grace: 'These youngsters today are getting a much nicer time than we had, really. With their clothes and cars and pocket money.'

These confusions and apparent contradictions were the resilt of genuine conflicts between beliefs and experience. They had partly swallowed the managerial propaganda that things were better than before. It fitted in with their view of the world as a happy partnership between capital and labour and everyone, from the company, to their own union magazines were telling them they were getting a better deal, more freedom and security than before. To this extent, they were incorporated in management ideology and its strategy of control.

Yet daily experience told them otherwise. They recalled the comparative flexibility of doing their jobs before Job Assessment and grading, and knew that they now worked far harder. They knew in every nerve and muscle the exhaustion of being tied to a machine rate or a grade. If they were told it was 'a holiday camp' by their supervisors, it felt more like a prison. And as for their improved status as workers, it was a change from slaves to children. They were told to be responsible and treated like second-class citizens. As women, they had to contend with a more sophisticated but no less powerful and patronising system of patriarchal control, than before.

What did they really believe then? Most knew quite clearly how they were being used at one level. They knew that they were workers, and bosses were bosses. They knew who had money and power. They were also conscious of their position regarding men, both in the factory and in the family. Did they push this into the background or reconcile it with their daily experience, because they were satisfied with it? Did they forget about it if they didn't? Why did they not work out a coherent view of how they were controlled and manipulated now, and why it was more oppressive than before?

The question has no easy answer, because it is an old riddle. For those who are most successfully controlled and manipulated are, by definition the least conscious of how it happens. If the women knew they had less freedom than before, in spite of the tyrants like Black Bess, they could not point to any one event or change and say—'that was the moment things began going wrong.' For the whole skill of successful management and worker incorporation is the smooth, invisible operation.

Things happened to the women: new agreements between company and union, job assessment, grading, new machines, factory re-organisations, new supervisors, new treatment – they all happened. They were cut off so entirely from their union that they knew nothing of the details of negotiation which led to these changes.

Lacking this experience, they could articulate the effects the changes had on them, but not map out what had led to them. They lacked a casual explanation of their experience which could begin to connect one 'symptom' with another. Their lack of a coherent picture of what was happening, their piece-meal experience of 'unfair grading' and 'having to be blue-eyes' meant no links were made between the two.

Control issues remained individual, personalised. This was not because nobody had stood up and delivered a lecture on the theory of Scientific Management, The Human Relations Approach, Patriarchy and Incorporation. It was because they had no concrete experience of organisation and personal involvement in collective struggle. This was why resistance to control remained at the level of shop floor *culture* and bore no relation to shop floor *organisation*. On its own, it posed no threat.

They know, whether love last but one brief span of time or for eternity, it is the only creative, inspiring, elevating basis for a new race, a new world.

In our present pygmy state love is indeed a stranger to most people. Misunderstood and shunned, it rarely takes root; or if it does, it soon withers and dies. Its delicate fibre cannot endure the stress and strain of the daily grind.

Its soul is too complex to adjust itself to the slimy woof of our social fabric. It weeps and moans and suffers with those who have need of it, yet lack the capacity to rise to love's summit.

Some day, some day men and women will rise, they will reach the mountain peak, they will meet big and strong and free, ready to receive, ready to partake, and to bask in the gold rays of love.

What fancy, what imagination, what poetic genius can foresee even approximately the potentialities of such a force in the life of men and women. If the world is ever to give birth to true companionship and oneness, not marriage but love will be the parent.

Emma Goldmann
Red Emma Speaks: Selected Writings and Speeches
Vintage Books

WOMEN & SOCIALISM

By Anna Paczuska

Photo: Linda Piper

'Where then is that general "women question"? Where is that unity of tasks and aspirations about which the feminists have so much to say? A sober glance at reality shows us thtat such unity does not and cannot exist. In vain the feminists try to assure themselves that the 'woman question' has nothing to do with that of the political party and that its solution is only possible with the participation of all parties and of all women; but as one of the German feminists has said, the logic of the facts forces us to reject this comforting delusion of the feminists . . .'

Alexandra Kollontai, a leading Bolshevik woman had that to say of the Russian feminist movement over 70 years ago. It has been said by contemporary feminists that the criticisms that Alexandra Kollontai made of the feminist movement then cannot be applied today: Alix Holt has written 'Some of the polemics in which Kollontai was involved may now seem irrelevant; bourgeois feminism is, for example no longer an influential organised force'. But the attempt to dismiss Kollontai's arguments as being of historical interest only is mistaken.

Today ten years after the modern womens liberation movement began, many different feminist ideals have emerged. There are some differences between those who call themselves radical feminists and the socialist feminists. although there are also many trends between. But there are some questions on which almost all women in the movement are agreed. Their views bear similarity to those criticised by the Bolshevik women 50 years ago: revolutionary socialist organisations are male dominated and therefore uninhabitable for women; socialism on its own cannot bring womens liberation; women will achieve their liberation only through independent self activity and by building an autonomous womens movement across class boundaries. These are views of which socialist feminists of the tradition represented by the Socialist Workers Party are as critical today, as the Bolshevik women were at the beginning of the century.

It is not difficult to agree with feminists who say that socialist organisations are male-dominated. It is also true that those countries which today call themselves socialist are blantantly male-dominated and treat women in an unequal and unliberated way. It is equally true that the womens liberation movement has shown us in practice that developing and discussing feminist ideas along with other women can be infinitely more inspiring and fulfilling than fighting to wedge a feminist contribution into the agenda of the socialist party.

But to extend all this into a full-blown theory which denies the revolutionary party a central role in the struggle for womens' liberation and to claim that socialism on its own cannot bring womens liberation, is both illogical and mistaken. Such views stem from a fundamental misunderstanding about what socialism is and hence about the relationship between party, the working class and the struggle for womens' liberation and socialism.

Socialism, the emancipation of the working class, is the act of the working class. In a society divided into those who sell their labour-power, and those who exploit that labour power, only the working class itself has both the economic power and the need to change society and run it in its own interests. No one else can do that for us, however well-intentioned they may be.

Many reformist thinkers believe in what they call 'socialism' which is something that they give to workers. This kind of socialism handed down from

above is not really socialism at all because it depends on good intentions, not on working-class power.

The SWP belief that the working class is the *only* agency for socialist change is a belief in socialism which comes from below, from the rank and file. It is a socialism in which workers control every aspect of their lives. It is not dependent on kind hearts or liberal representations in parliament It is based on working-class power. It is an extensive as well as a powerful concept of socialism.

The emancipation of the working class means the emancipation of the whole working class, of women as well as men, of gays and blacks and children too. Socialism is not socialism unless it is womens' liberation too. To talk of socialism without womens' liberation is to deny socialism.

Our view of socialism is incompatible with the belief that there is socialism in countries like Russia and China where women clearly are not liberated. The contradiction of 'socialist' countries where women are oppressed has led those feminists in the Communist Party, and from socialist traditions other than our own, to develop dual or two-stage theories of women's liberation—first socialism, then women's liberation. These theories separate the struggle for socialism from the fight for womens liberation.

But if you believe that what the Red Army brought into Poland is socialism, or what Castro gave Cuba is socialism, you are obliged to develop such two stage and separatist theories of womens liberation.

If however, you believe that socialism is workers control, and that it is womens liberation too, then it is clear that neither Poland nor Russia, nor Cuba, nor China are socialist. In all these countries workers are the fodder for production and economic competition with other countries. They control nothing. And women there are treated in a disgusting way, forced to be workers, breeding machines or both, as the needs of the economy dictate.

Women's position in these societies, as in our own, depends on the way the whole working class is exploited. The class situation is the important one. Whilst public morality may appear to treat women of all classes in a similar way, practise is about the way workers are treated. The royal family is there for us to emulate, its example disciplining and oppressing working-class people whilst upper-class women themselves avoid the worst effects of that morality. Society may be anti-abortion, but rich women can always pay for discreet operations.

Divorce and sexual freedom may be disapproved of, but the upper class always have them. Society's ideas about women are used to discipline working-class people and working class women in particular. Women's liberation is a struggle to break the morality that oppresses the working class as a whole. It will only be achieved by a strategy that integrates the struggle of women with the struggle of the whole working class for its own emancipation.

Socialist history is full of struggles that have been fired and led by women who gained independence through the struggles they led for their class. The women of the Paris Commune led the action even at a time when some socialist theoreticians like Proudhon denied women's equality. Russian women textile workers sparked the first workers' revolution in 1917 with their determination to celebrate International Womens Day on the streets of Petrograd. The marxist women in Germany led a womens movement over 200,000 strong. The movement grew out of the struggle for the vote and went on to lead opposition to the first world war. Its leaders were among the founder members of the German Communist Party.

Early socialist literature considered and developed theories about the role of women under capitalism. Marx and Engels linked the development of the family to the way economic relations evolved in a society. Bebel's book on *Women and Socialism* was so popular it ran into several editions and was to be found in almost every working class home in Germany.

Women like Alexandra Kollontai in Russia, and Clara Zetkin in Germany were leaders in the socialist movement. They campaigned for the women question to be central to the socialist struggle. They built and urged all socialists to build, womens organisations to bring socialism to women. And in their writings and their activities these early socialists always fought for the women question to be taken up as a class issue. They battled furiously with those feminists who arged that women's liberation could be gained by organisation across the classes. They believed the struggle for womens liberation was part of the class war.

But this tradition of socialist feminism has largely been lost. Like the whole of the independent sociaist movement it was smothered by the rise of stalinism. For 50 years, as the Communist Parties held hegemony on the left in the west, socialism became the image of a happy worker in Russia struggling cheerfully to meet a production norm imposed from above, and womens liberation was what happened to Russian women. It was typified by the women in dungarees driving a tractor into the sunset on a collective farm.

This stalinist image of liberated womanhood was not a picture of emancipation at all. It was a picture of the women forcibly drawn into production outside the home in order to meet the needs of an expanding economy. The Right to Work is a necessary precondition for emancipation, but it is not in itself emancipation. That is illustrated well by what happened to Russian women.

When a shortage of skilled labour became apparent in the late 1920s there were no colonies from which Russia could draw extra labour. Workers had to be found within the existing population. So women had to become workers in the factories and the collective farms.

'On instructions from the Central Committee of the Party and the USSR Council of People's Commissars, a five year plan to bring 1,600,000 women into industry was drawn up in 1930. The plan was overfulfilled. Between 1929 and 1936 the number of women workers and employees rose by more than five million' (From *Soviet Women*, in Progress Publishers, Moscow 1975)

But this work did not emancipate women. At the same time as they went out from the homes to work individual housework was glorified rather than socialized. Abortion was made illegal. So was homosexuality. Parents were made responsible for the behaviour of their children. And the sexual liberation of the revolutionary period was wiped aside with theories of sexuality that claimed too much sex detracted energy from the revolution.

But Russia stood for socialism in people's heads for well over 50 years, until, in the 50s the image was shattered. The building workers in East Berlin in 1954, the Hungarian workers in 1956, the Polish workers in 1970 poured onto the streets fighting

against the 'workers states'. In western Europe thousands of the disillusioned streamed out of the Communist Parties. Others joined new left organisations which while critical of Russia still defended its socialist nature. A very few dared to go further and say that Russia was not socialist at all, but a society that oppressed and exploited workers in much the same way as western society. The theory of state capitalism, first developed in the late 1940s, explained why this was so.

It was not just a neat intellectual argument. It had enormous implications for political activity. the motion that socialism was something built by the workers themselves led to a theory and a practice orientated on workers self-organisation. It meant the development of a rank-and-file perspective based on workers' democracy and shopfloor power. It was a powerful anti-reformist ideal which did not rely on the good offices of MPs or left trade union leaders, but rather placed reliance on workers' collective strength.

But women were left out of this perspeetive competely, except in so far as they were part of the working class. There was no attempt to deal with the specific problems of women's oppression and women's particular relationship to production in the way the early socialists (including Marx and Engels) had done. There was certainly no attempt to organise women for socialism.

It is difficult to explain exactly why. Undoubtedly it was in large part due to the male chauvinism of the small band of males who developed the ideas. There was no independent struggle by women in eastern Europe to jolt their chauvinism. But it may also have been due to reconciling the traditional socialist ideal with reality at the time.

The classics had argued for women's economic emancipation. That was what women in Russia appeared to have, and it contrasted bleakly with the swinging London of the 1960s, where women were freer than they had ever been. Mini skirts and contraceptives combined to move fantasy into reality. The Beatles sang about sex, the film stars did it on the screen. For a miniscule socialist grouping to counterpose this novel fun with dusty socialist traditions would have been difficult.

Immense changes were going on in women's lives. These were leading into changes inside womens heads. Technology developed many gadgets which cut down the amount of time women spent in housework. Contraceptives were available readily to women of all classes. Better health meant that women spent fewer years in childbirth and child minding. And at the same time capitalist boom was sucking women out of their homes, and their traditional roles as reproducers, whisking them into the factories.

Black workers, white workers, women and men were needed to fuel the boom. Recruiting vans from Plessey and Ultra toured the working-class housing estates recruiting women to the factories. Day shift, evening shift, double day shift, part time, full time, anything so long as women would work. So women began to think of themselves as producers at work as well as producers of children. The increase of women in the labour force was to be a permanent one. In 1961 8,064,000 women were in the workforce. By 1968 that number had risen to 9,141,000, an increase of 45 per cent. Over 52 per cent of married women went out to work.

The boom affected women of all classes. The increased demand for skilled labour put more women onto the university production line than ever before as the Robbins Report on higher education was implemented. It led to new aspirations, to conflicts with traditional roles. These conflicts were expressed in different ways by different classes.

As working class women at Fords, Dagenham exploded into a strike for equal pay in 1968, students and middle class women began to organise womens groups, discuss sexuality, and demand an end to discrimination based on sex. The different classes expressed their ideas with different actions. But the actions reinforced each other across the classes into a consciousness that women of all classes wanted change.

Socialist women went to womens liberation conferences and blew their minds. Socialist men tagged the embryonic womens movement as diversionary, or sniggered boring jokes about bras and lesbians. But the movement survived the jeers of the media and of the left. And many left-wing women were among the movement's early participants. It was perhaps the presence of these very women which led the movement to an early emphasis on demands for equality at work, and for the need to involve working class women.

We were conscious of our middle class backgrounds and because we were of the left we had a strong, although sometimes confused, notion of the need to involve working-class women. The struggles of women workers were viewed as important and inspiring. Women strikers were invited to speak at conferences and were warmly received. The theme of the womens movement was the struggle against oppression, but as well as picketing Miss World and trying to stop the show that degraded all women, we also tried to bring trade unionism to unorganised women workers.

The Night Cleaners Campaign, a saga of several years duration, was carried by socialists in the womens liberation movement. We went night after night into London's office blocks signing up women into the union, organising pickets and strikes. Determination kept us going when the wise men of the left asserted that it was a hopeless task. We proved the wise men wrong when the women were finally organised into a union.

But women's liberation remained by and large isolated and separate from the struggles of working-class women. Ideas about equality were being raised by all classes of women, but only a few individual women workers joined the movement. Feminism supported the struggles of working class women with messages of solidarity and money for the strike funds. But it had no strategy for winning the strikes, or for effectively combatting the day-to-day pressures in the lives of working class women.

It was only when feminism and rank-and-filism came together that an effective intervention could be organised in the struggle of women workers. Feminism on its own could not do that because the women's movement had never had such a class-oriented perspective.

Two equal pay strikes in 1974 really illustrate the difference. One was a strike by women engineering workers at the SEI factory in Oldham, the other a strike by a similar group of women engineering workers at Wingrove Rogers in Merseyside. The Oldham women gained great support from the womens movement. Publicity, collections and large support meetings were organised. But the women's movement, like the local trade union official, regarded the strike as a separate women's struggle. No effective support was organised from other workers. There was little pressure to stop the men workers from scabbing on the strike. Blacking was promised but never organised. There never effective rank and file organisation at picket line

level. The strike lost.

But in Merseyside events took a different turn. Those who visited the picket line believed in womens liberation, but they were active rank-and-file trade unionists as well. They advised the women to make a call for blacking. Support was organised from other workers to successfully prevent the men workers from scabbing on the

Only as we neared big market towns, in which silk filatures (silk factories) belched forth the stench of cocoons, did we come upon better homes and fewer careworn faces. The daughters of such families were spinners. It was then I began to see what industrialism, bad as it had seemed elsewhere, meant to the working girls.

These were the only places in the whole country where the birth of a baby girl was an occasion for joy, for here girls were the main support of their families. Consciousness of their worth was reflected in their dignified independent bearing.

I began to understand the charges that they were lesbians. They could not but compare the dignity of their positions with the low position of married women. Their independence seemed a personal affront to officialdom.

The hatred of the escort for these girls became more marked when we visited the filatures. Long lines of them clad in glossy black jackets and trousers, sat before boiling vats of cocoons, their parboiled fingers twinkling among the spinning filaments. Sometimes a remark passed along their lines set a whole mill laughing. The face of my escort would grow livid.

"They call me a running dog of the capitalists, and you a foreign devil of an imperialist! They are laughing at your clothing and your hair and your eyes!" he explained.

One evening the two of us sat at the entrance of an old family temple in the empty stone halls of which we had pitched our netted camp cots. On the other side of the canal rose the high walls of a filature, which soon began pouring forth black-clad girl workers, each with her tin dinner pail.

All wore wooden sandals which were fastened by a single leather strap across the toes and which clattered as they walked. Their glossy black hair was combed back and hung in a heavy braid to the waist. At the nape of the neck the braid was caught in red yarn, making a band two or three inches wide—a lovely splash of colour.

As they streamed in long lines over the bridge arching the canal and past the temple entrance, I felt I had never seen more handsome women.

Agnes Smedley
Portraits of Women in the Chinese Revolution
Feminist Press

strike. The Merseyside district of the AUEW promised a one-day strike in support of the women. They won their claim for equal pay.

The difference in the outcome of the strikes was due not to the difference between the air, or even the trade union officials in Merseyside and Manchester. It was due to the way the rank and file organised themselves and their fellow workers. Self-organisation not feminist demands alone won the day.

The overall lack of a perspective for women's liberation which could draw working class women into the womens movement began to demoralise those who were concerned about women workers, but failed to understand their absence in the movement. Demoralisation led to some changes of emphasis and activity in the women's movement. At the same time developments in the economy itself were leading to changes in ideology about women in society at large.

By the mid 1970s the boom was over. The ideological weapons with which the ruling class divide workers one from the other were brought out of the bosses' armoury, as is the custom during economic downturns. Racialism increased. Simultaneously there was a resurgence of the ideas that treated women in their traditional role of producers of children tied to the home.

The tendency of capitalism to employ the cheapest labour possible meant that women remained in the labour force. But the change in ideology encouraged them to think of themselves as reproducers rather than producers.

The women's movement's initial reaction was to go on the offensive. So when the ideological attack manifested itself in a proposal to reverse the 1967 Abortion Act, the women's movement called on women and trade unionists of all classes to defend their rights. Thousands turned out on the streets to defeat the Benyon Bill. Other responses to the ideological attack led to the growth of Womens Aid and Rape Crisis, defending and helping women to be independent and unmolested.

But an undercurrent was already developing which rejected the early agressive stance of the womens liberation movement with regard to equal rights with men. Calling itself 'radical' it in fact represented a concession to the pressure to regard women as reproducers rather than producers.

It is represented here by a statement from a recent article in *Spare Rib* by a radical feminist: 'In the past five years there's been a change in my head, and seemingly among feminists generally incoming to see women's functions as fine and good and wanting to reclaim them—to find out how they would be in a women loving environment'. This brand of feminism's verbal 'radicalism' conceals a belief that women should remain in their traditional role the bearers and carers of children.

The rhetoric of this position rejects the socialist alternative by alleging that men are inherently oppressive of women. But it caters only for those women who have the money and the leisure to work at enjoying being mothers. It is elitist as well as reactionary.

Many socialist feminists, although they reject this current, have been influenced by it. The belief that socialism and the socialist party are too male dominated to bring women's liberation stems from the same belief about the basic nature of men. Using the same ideas, but marxist jargon, some socialist feminists (notably Sheila Rowbotham) have rejected a class perspective in favour of reformist feminist separatism.

Right across the feminist movement observers have pointed to the way that women are being driven back into the home by the downturn, and have condemned the unwillingness of the traditionally male-dominated trade union movement to do anything about this.

The picture is not as simple as that. Unemployment *is* rising among women, but so too is he overall number of women in employment. In fact there is an overall increase in the number of women in the permanent labour force, employed and unemployed. In 1968 the number of women in employment was 8,484,000 and had risen to 9,149,000 by 1978, an increase of 7.99 per cent. Unemployment rose among women by seven per cent between 1968 and 1978. Women are now 30 per cent of all the unemployed.

So while women are under ideological pressure to think of themselves as reproducers, more of them are out at work as producers than ever before. Strikes for union recognition, Grunwick most well known among them, show that women are still on the offensive as workers despite the increased influence of the ideas that encourage them to think

individually about their problems in isolation from the rest of ther class.

But much of women workers' potential has been undermined by the tendency to regard womens struggles as sectional rather than as part of the general working class fight against the boss. In 1976 women at Trico's went out on strike for equal pay. When they won after 19 weeks on strike in the face of scabbing by male workers, many hailed it as a victory. The strike gave Trico women equal pay, but it undermined the confidence of other women. Five months at the factory gate was a tremendous price to have to pay for equal pay, and it undoubtedly made tribunals a more attractive prospect than shop floor action for other women aspiring to equal pay.

At the same time Trico's was being fought another strike for equal pay was being won which shows how women united within the rank and file can win and encourage others. In April 1976 women at Dubiliers engineering factory in Kirkby came out for six per cent and equal pay. The men continued working apart from the convenor who found himself the only man on the picket line. He want back into work crossing the picket line for three days until he persuaded his workmates to support the women. Together they won the claim for equal pay. The men's action had not led to an increase in their own pay, but it had pointed the way for a feminist rank-and-file perspective, cutting across the divisions within the working class.

Where struggles by working-class women are isolated and separated from the rest of the rank and file, they are weakened. But where they are united they are strenghtened. This applies ot only to those those struggles by women at work, but to those women at home too.

The women who organised against the high cost of heating on the Glantaff estate in Pontypridd enlisted the support of the local mineworkers branch in their attempts to force the council to change the heating installations. The experience was revolutionary in that as one of them told *Socialist Worker* it made them feel not like isolated housewives, but as part of a wider movement and therefore stronger. Rank-and-filism is not just for those with work. It is a way of using the economic power of organised workers for all sections of the class.

Women are being attacked ideologically and economically. These attacks must be fought in an integrated way because they affect the whole of women's lives—both at work and in the home. This requires a perspective which sees the necessity of fighting both womens oppression, organising events like Reclaim the Night marches, *and* of organising against the attacks on women as workers. One is not more important than the other. They are both part of the same struggle.

To be effective these struggles must be fought in the context of a class perspective which understands the system as a whole and the divisions within it. The separation of womens issues from a wider perspective only weakens the fight. Women united with the rest of rank and file are strong. We organise to build women's self-confidence and aspirations. We also organise for an understandng of our oppression as women and its problems. We founded and developed *Womens Voice* to this end. But this is not a separate struggle. It is a struggle that will enrich and broaden the struggle for socialism with womens experiences.

We are fighting to extend those basic principles of socialism, of workers self-organisation, to all sections of the rank and file. This will best be done by an organised political leadership which sees the need to organise and extend the organisation and experience of the class as a whole. It cannot be done spontaneously. To win, all the struggles and all the aspirations of the working class must be integrated into a theory and an organisation that will cut across the divisions within the class. Women must be a part of that organisation.

To support it is not enough. We must work to integrate our demands into the centre of that movement. Not to do that is to condemn ourselves to the fate of our Iranian sisters who fought alongside men for the Shah to leave, but then had to lobby their own movement for womens rights, because these had never been a vital and central part of the overall movement.

The struggle to integrate womens demands is a struggle from within the movement. It cannot be won from the outside, by organising women alone. The male chauvinism of socialist men and of the working class will only be defeated by joint political debate and joint political action. It will not be defeated by moralism from the side lines. It's not an easy battle - but then what revolution ever was?

As Rosa Luxemburg said at the founding meeting of the German Communist Party in 1918, 'Socialism will not be created by decrees; nor will it be accomplished by any government however socialistic. Socialism must be created by the masses, by every proletarian. Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there they must be broken'.

Photo: Syd Shelton

15 years ago, beyond discussion around a few feminist books imported from America, an Italian womens movement hardly existed. Today, it has become the expression of a radicalism that has permeated the whole of the Italian left. In its short history, it has challenged the structures of the political organisations from which it originated. It has left them self-critical and, in some cases, torn apart. It has pushed to the forefront the slogan 'the personal is political' and with it, a whole new reappraisal of political orientation and organisation.

It has radically questioned the family and the couple, and vociferously asserted a woman's right to self-determination, about her body and her role in society. 'Women, we have to change *everything*' was the slogan shouted on the abortion demonstration in Rome in 1975, the high point of the movement, and this radicalisation has characterised the movement from then on.

However, now, the movement is begining to realise that it is not enough to unite women in order to be strong. More often than not, consisting of students, intellectuals and only some white-collar workers, the movement has remained closed to wider layers of working women. 'Instead of women's liberation, we have obtained the emancipation of ourselves, of only a few of us', admitted even *Effe* (a woman's liberation magazine something like *Spare Rib*) and certainly this feeling of isolation from 'the real struggle' is leading many of the feminist collectives to question their political role.

Furthermore, when last year, the movement was criticised for its incapacity to mobilise around the restrictive abortion law passed in May, it is clear that it was not only a problem of relating to wider social layers of women, but also one of incapacity to intervene effectively in trade unions and political organisations, even on women's questions. This 'ghettoisation' threatening the Italian women's movement springs partly from the specific political situation of the Italian left, from which it was born. But it is also the result of a more general, conscious, political orientation, which we, socialist feminists in Britiain, should draw the lessons from.

First, it is important to point out that the specific oppression confronting Italian women is qualitatively worse than that in Britain, and remains one of the most backward in Europe. Feudal and patriarchal customs continue to exist, with the law, in some cases, looking kindly on men who beat their wives—or even kill them in the case of adultery! As in most Catholic countries, there is a tendency for men to regard women either as the 'madonna', to be married, made mother and respected, or as the 'prostitute', to be desired but despised.

In the case of Italy, 20 years of fascist dictatorship left the family rigidly authoritarian and the father with the unquestioned right to assert within it his control over the other members. Also, the comparatively recent urbanisation in Italy has meant that the peasant traditions of the primacy of the family have very much persisted; very often fathers and grandfathers of young women today are themselves peasants. This petty bourgeois emphasis on the household-haven has meant that even today, the proportion of Italian women working in regular jobs is one of the lowest in Europe.

It was against this heavily patriarchal background that, in the 1960s, Italian women, as elsewhere in the developed countries, entered the boom of higher education. In Italy, however, despite the growing restriction of job openings, the intake of students (university in Italy is nowhere near as selective as British universities are) continued at a rate comparable only to France, and even as unemployment increased.

With practically no grants offered to students, women entered university while trying to find jobs; thus they were experiencing not only the world outside the protected Italian home but also the economic hardship of being a proletarian. Large numbers of them were being given the aceess to education and culture; at the same time they were being denied the material privileges, at university and after, that would have tied them to the values of the ruling class.

The struggles of the workers and students in 1968-69 saw, therefore, women entering the

political arena in large numbers for the first time. Although some feminist groups had been set up previously (as for example the Milanese group Demau –Demistification of Authoritarianism founded in 1966), it was largely into the growing groups to the left of the Communist Party that many of the women students flowed.

In fact, even after 1969—unlike in other countries where an independent, politicall non-aligned women's liberation movement was developing the women's movement in Italy was still in embryo, with many Italian women entering political struggle first and foremost as militants of the various far left groups. This fact is important since it explains the virulence with which the feminists would later attack these organisations for their disregard of womens questions and the women's subsequent total disillusionment with male-dominated structured organisations of any kind.

It was only really the divorce referendum in 1974 that propelled the movement forward towards an identity of its own. Although the Right's attempt to abolish the law was quickly and opportunistically seized upon by the reformists it was also the occasion for the feminists to push women's issues to the fore and raise sexual politics within the circles of the left. In fact, so quickly did the confidence of the movement grow that, by December 1975, the women were calling for their first big national demonstration 'for women only'.

This, however, was to mark not only the height of the confidence of the womens movement, but also the beginning of a long and bitter battle between the womens movement and the organisations of the revolutionary left. For, at this women-only demonstration, Lotta Continua (LC, with 40,000 militants, one of the biggest organisations on the left) refused to accept to be excluded and physically attacked the women in an attempt to join themarch.

This incident was to have far-reaching effects for the whole of the revolutionary left. In the case of Lotta Continua, it resulted in a mass exodus of its female members, and a year later, the collapse of the organisation itself, at the conference of Rimini.

How, in such a short space of time, had this antagonism between male and female comrades reached such a pitch? Why was it that it that the women felt that the organisations they had joined post-68 no longer represented their interests as women? Why did the only solution seem to be a separation of women's politics from the organisations concerned? The answers to these questions, I believe, lie, first, in the political nature of the organisations concerned and, second, the subsequent political orientation that the women, formed politically by these organisations, chose to adopt.

The events of the abortion demonstration, and the subsequent storming of Lotta Continua's national committee meeting by 300 furious LC feminists, was the expression of a conflict that had prevailed for some time in the organisation. It also reflected the degree to which LC arbitrarily imposed the 'line' on its members. The traditional fragmentation of the organisation into groups, coming together only once a year for conferences which consisted mainly of monologues from the national secretary, resulted in a growing gulf between the leadership and the members. While this had mattered little during the explosive and successful struggles of 1968-69, in the mid-1970s, as the struggles subsided, militants began to lose confidence in the leadership and started to rebel against the demands being put upon them.

This took a dramatic form in Lotta Continua. It is said the general secretary, Adrino Sofri, burst into tears and lamely admitted that he had in fact enjoyed being a powerful leader-figure! But, politically, the organisation, rather than questioning its role as a revolutionary party, and how it should adapt to the downturn in struggle, simply shelved the argument and dissolved itself into the 'movement'. (The 'movement', as the word is used in the left in Italy, includes not only women but also factory workers, voluntary and involuntary drop-outs, part-time workers, workers dispersed in the service sector and students; it is also referred to, equally vaguely, as the antipcapitalist bloc.)

This mood of resignation or the 'flight to the margins' as it has been called, was not confined to Lotta Continua. The other large revolutionary organisation, Avanguardia Operaia, (AO), suffered similar attacks from its female members and, while it did not dissolve, it did, after 1976, undergo a series of fusions and splits, and emerge considerably weaker. Again, in the case of AO, instead of taking on the debate of the women's question, and shifting its orientation away from an exclusively male, skilled working class to the *whole* of the class, it simply handed over 'women's work' to its former women militants and told them to get on with their new newspaper *Donna*. So much has Democrazia Proletaria (the old AO fused with another group PDUP) wanted to wash their hands of the women's question that they even claimed that *Donna* was 'a' paper of the women's movement, and in no way connected to DP, even though the paper was originally financed and printed by them.

The women militants decision to set up an 'autonomous' movement was then, not only done with the tacit approval of the organisations concerned, but seems also to flow directly from the politics of the organisations themselves. The AO leaders stated it themselves in 1975: 'the historical role given to the working classes by Marx are functions, today, developed in other social groups'. In other words, other social groups, whether it be women or other groups of the 'movement', are seen to have the same revolutionary potential as the working class, and as such should organise independently.

'Dissolving in the movement' becomes thus the recognition of the non-centrality of the working class and a conscious political choice. In the case of AO and LC, the origins of this politics spring largely from the maoist tradition of these groups, where the revolutionary class is seen, not as the workers, but as a vague entity—the 'masses', or the 'movement'.

Thus the Italian women's overriding claim to autonomy becomes not only the justifiable recognition of the need to organise independently because of the specific nature of women's oppression, but also, with their inherited 'populism', a political analysis that advocated their independence as a social bloc. Of course populist politics alone, do not explain fully the emergence of an autonomous women's movement in Italy; they are however an important factor and one to be remembered when attempts are made to slot the 'autonomous' argument into a British context. Certainly, it is this that has led the women's movement in Italy to reject leninism as being too worker-orientated (as, indeed, have revolutionary organisations) and to move towards radical feminist positions which deny the centrality of the working class.

This fact is reflected in the forms of organisation

that the Italian women's movement has predominantly adopted up to now. These have mainly been women's collectives *(collettivi)* which have sprung up all over Italy, of which the most famous are Via Cherubini in Milan and Via del Governo Vecchio in Rome While many of them have tried to intervene with women on estates, or provided women's information centres, many of them have also found themselves becoming primarily consciousness-raising groups where only interpersonal relationships and life-styles are discussed.

Others have tried to provide an abortion service. which is still only very inadequately provided by the state. Women, in these centres have often found that they end up having very little contact with the women they abort and even, that providing the service makes less urgent the demand on the state to provide free abortion.

In some cases, groups have taken a radical anti-men stand and refused to admit men to any of their activities whatsoever. In others, remnants of the problem of what is called 'double militancy' (i.e. first fighting with a comrade and then against him. because he is a male) have very often led to a total disenchantment with working in political organisations at all.

The 19 May edition of *Donna* summed up just how removed from participation in politics many of the women have become. In its only, short, article on the elections. *Donna* calls for a 'cynical anti-institutional vote' that 'will not delegate our struggle to any party' and blindly lumping the Communist Party together with the new left, never once mentions the importance for women to vote against the Christian Democrats. 'Elections are' according to *Donna* merely 'a time of courtship for them and time of separatism for us'.

Many other women, however, are expressing the need for more political intervention, and particularly the need to organise women in the trade unions. Despite women's issues having been vociferously raised, the actual status of Italian women in society, at home and at work, has seen virtually no change over the past ten years.

Unionisation as a whole in Italy is lower than in Britain, but women trade union members are virtually non-existent in many industries. The Unione delle Donne Italiane (UDI), originally the women's section of the Communist Party, and once spurned by the feminists as being ineffectual, is beginning to take the lead around women in the union. Four years ago, the UDI virtually lost all credibility so much so that on an abortion demonstration last year, the few women from UDI in the march held banners which read: 'we're from UDI *but* we support you'!

Now unless other groups to the left of the CP offer some initiative to women, the UDI could grow again, if only through sheer frustration at the lack of activity coming from other areas of the movement. As one woman bank clerk from Reggio Emilia told me: 'I want to get our women organised in my bank and the collectives can't help me. So I think I'll have to join UDI even though I don't go along with the Communist Party'.

If trade union militants are looking to UDI, other women are beginning to look to immediate all-out armed struggle against the state. Not that the Brigate Rosse type organisations have even the vaguest shred of feminism in their tomes on 'revolution tomorrow'; merely that such groups offer an immediate outlet to the frustrated student energy stored up over the less spectacular years since 1969. The numbers of women involved in such groups must be small.

However, they are significant enough to have been the subject of a recent conference on violence at the Via del Governo Vecchio in Rome, where violence was interpreted ambiguously as being both violence against women and the need to counteract it with violence. Whatever the case, it is clear that frustration with the ghettoisation of the collectives must make even the insane option of permanent armed-struggle appear a more attractive one.

There have also been attempts to organise from sections of women hitherto outside the 'women's movement' as such and which the movement has failed to integrate. For example in Milan last year a group of working-class women spontaneously set up a Mothers and Women's Anti fascist Committee. Two of their sons had been killed by a fascist squad. In the climate following the Moro kidnapping only a few days before, the fascists no doubt thought that the murders would be drowned in the rising wave of anti-terrorism. But these women fought back. They proved that they could organise; they asserted their claim as women to be part of the struggle not through sitting around in consciousness raising groups, but taking to the streets. leafleting the markets and organising their areas against further fascist attacks.

One 50-year old woman put their case in a nutshell: 'From now on, we're going on the streets with our sons. And not only when there's a death and a funeral. We've got to be in the everyday struggles—the struggles for the hundreds of problems of their and our existence: unemployment, black labour, rising prices and all the rest'. *(Expresso* April 1978)

It is particularly this emphasis on the need to intervene as women in everyday struggles that the orientation of the women's collectives misses out on. As a result the collectives find themselves ghettoised and pushed outside the mainstream of political activity. In their plea for autonomy from political groups, or even from a political strategy, they inevitably find themselves marginalised from struggles altogether. For 'autonomy' whether it be for women or for marginalised groups, by rejecting any notion of structured organisation, rejects also a political analysis capable of inserting itself as a movement into the general working-class struggle of which it is part.

Many of the women of the Italian women's movement do claim to be socialists and do see the need for revolutionary politics in their struggle as women. But without the organisations to the left of the PCI taking any lead in the women's struggle, without them fighting for women's politics inside and outside their organisations, without them attempting to break the women's movement out of its ghetto, they cannot claim to be revolutionary parties.

Similarly, as long as the women in the movement who are revolutionaries continue to proclaim autonomy as being the only way out of the male chauvinism in the organisations, they will fail to offer anything but a personal and individual solution to many women, who, like the Milanese mothers, are asking for much more. Ironically, from their revolutionary stance of four years ago, they now find themselves offering no more than the reformists, since 'autonomy', as the experience of the collectives proves, ends up being at best an accommodation to capitalism and not the challenging of the system itself. Socialist feminists in this country should learn from the Italian experience that this is what 'autonomy' means.

Hooray for Hollywood?

Hollywood symbolises manipulation for many socialists. The usual response to 'let's go to the flicks' is muttering about 'escapist nonsense' and 'the new opium of the people'. The accusation that movies short-circuit workers' frustration, is almost as old as the cinema itself:

'You may have three halfpence in your pocket and not a prospect in the world; but in your new clothes you can stand on the street corner, indulging in a private daydream of yourself as Clark Gable or Greta Garbo, which compensates you for a great deal', wrote Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier*.

Certainly, the ruling class does not survive by naked force alone; it is still front-page news in many countries when the army guns down people in the streets. The belief that nothing can change for the better, that what we've got is what we deserve, the casual acceptance of defeat you hear in the bus-queues and the Tesco check-out, is really more important to the bosses than the CS gas and the T55s.

Films, along with literature, the press, TV and pop-music are dominated by pessimism. The ways in which people act, their expectations about wealth, marriage and happiness are shaped by the culture around them; how many housewives feel guilty because they aren't as glamorous as the women in the adverts and how many American kids died in Vietnam with John Wayne's celluloid blessings?

But Hollywood isn't the monolith it seems. Even in the 1930s, when Fred Astaire was dancing around impossible Art-Deco palaces and Stalin's Russia was used as an amusing backdrop for Garbo's *Ninotchka*, movies were appearing like *Blockade* which supported the Spanish Republic and *Dead End* which sympathised with its heroines' involvement in industrial picketing. President Roosevelt legalised union membership in 1933. A year later, unions of actors and screen-writers were formed beginning six years of bitter action to secure recognition.

The successes of fascism prompted a committee of Hollywood employees, including Dashiell Hammett, then a screen-writer, to organise aid for China and Republican Spain. Screen-writers, including Dudley Nicholls (who wrote John Waynes' first successful film *Stagecoach*) founded the Anti-Nazi League in 1936. This organisation exposed the Nazi German-American Bund, demonstrated against Leni Riefenstahl and Mussolini's son, and picketed the Joe Louis-Max Schmeling fight.

These achievements and the thriving Hollywood Communist Party branch were enough to prompt the McCarthy investigations in the late 1940s. These silenced the radicals for decades; many left film-makers were unemployed for years. The typical Hollywood film of the 1950s and the 1960s extolled middle class values; blissful marriages of handsome young executives and Doris Day wives, set in expensive vulgar apartments.

So why have films like *Rocky* and *Saturday Night Fever* both peopled by working-class characters, been box office smashes? The unionshave appeared again in *FIST*, *Blue Collar* and the as yet unreleased *Norma Mae*. After decades of pap, working class concerns are being depicted in Hollywood films.

Rocky was the first of these films and it is a simple success story in the classic mould. With guts and grit you too can be a contender. Its optimism is in contrast to the bleakness of its post-Watergate contemporaries. This no doubt contributed to its financial success. The turn to workers as hero-fodder may also have something to do with the scarcity of traditional beefsteak amongst the cocaine-sniffing, easy living ruling class.

Encouraged by *Rocky*'s box-office takings, *Saturday Night Fever* followed. It combined music and dancing with a background of gangwar, racial tension, dead-end jobs, and male contempt for women. It depicted a violent urban life, eased by drugs and disco. The film's happy ending, as Tony moves upward into Manhatten is as hollow as its Bee Gee's soundtrack.

These films are both fantasies on working-class themes and add little to our awareness of life in modern society; they use unemployment, poverty, urban decay as a picturesque backdrop for conventional stories. *Women's Realm* serials with street credibility. But their popularity is not all depressing. It suggests that the movie-goer is interested in the tensions and issues in post-Vietnam, post Watergate America.

The smug optimism of the 1960s had collapsed: it's hard to believe that wealth will just steadily increase as the X millionth person collects a security check and the hippy-dream turned into the Manson nightmare. There seems a desire to relocate values in the rubble of the American Dream. These films, by returning to the basics of life (work, home, the bar) are part of that process.

The opening up of Hollywood has produced a spate of liberal films on women, Vietnam, and has granted critical acclaim to *Harlan County*. It has also permitted trade unionism to again become an acceptable subject. Few of these films would have been financed or released five years ago.

Both *FIST* and *Bluecollar* are realistic in that the day to day features of working class life are accurately recorded. They both present work as oppressive and there is no trace of the 'dignity of human labour myth' which still lives in right-wing culture.

Set in the Checker Cab plant in Detroit, *Blue Collar* portrays work as unrelentingly grim; if the big corporations had allowed the film crew into one of their works the picture would have been even grimmer. Checker produces 50-60 vehicles each day. Ford produces that number each hour!

This realism hints at problems and issues close the the socialists' heart: the corruption in the unions, the inaccessible leadership, the inadequacy of the 'he-man' image, the futility of individual revolt and the violence of the police. Neither of these two films has an overall cohesive message: neither suggests any solutions in the way that, say, *The Grapes of Wrath* advocated a return to goodwill and friendship. They leave the question open.

Perhaps it is this openness that has angered the left and brought down its disapproval: where is the call for a rank and file movement waiting for Penguin to include an SWP card in every copy of *Capital*. The films show unresolved tensions because they reflect the unresolved class war.

How can *FIST* end happily? With a truckers' insurrection storming the White house? The men in *Blue Collar* treat women foully; they patronise their wives and use women as they use drugs, for relief. The film shows them miserably alienated in their manly roles. If they somehow found some non-sexist life style, the film would have become absurd, since this option does not exist for workers at large.

Realist films present problems which should be the concern of the left: they show what we should be talking about in the class. If we were a stronger, more working-class socialist movement, with the basic ideas about exploitation and oppression alive in the minds of hundreds and thousands of people, our conclusions would be drawn.

Workers would add their own 'messages', as the pull of socialist ideas produced an entirely different audience reaction. *FIST* would not be just another film about gangsters, but one which shows union leaders out of control. The audience and its ideas determines what a film represents culturally, as much as the intentions of its producers.

This is true even for *The Deer Hunter*, which uses the audiences' sympathy with the heroes to obscure the reasons for the US presence. If our views were as current as, say, the Communist Party's in Italy, *The Deer Hunter's* glib presentation of life would fall on sceptical eyes. It is a sign of our isolation that the outright lies of that film go unchallenged and that our assumptions about imperialism are not shared by viewers at large.

Realism is one of our cultural allies, not an enemy. We shouldn't sit back waiting for films which 'depict the working-class as a whole' (not more top-hatted capitalists and brawny proles, please!) but try to expand the insights certain Hollywood films contain about workers' lives. This means that our reviews should be seen not as 'fillers' but as important statements and debates about polities in the broadest sense.

Audiences are stirred and unsettled by films as powerful as *Blue Collar* and *The Deer Hunter*, just as people were by the *Holocaust* series. Let's not miss the opportunities to get across our case: Hollywood only manipulates it we let it.

Paul Cunningham.

Reviews

Accidents happen

The Explosion
Hans Heinrich Ziemann
New English Library £4.95
The Prometheus Crisis
Thomas N Scortia and Frank M Robinson
Pan 80p

The development of widespread opposition to nuclear power is a comparatively recent phenomenon, yet nuclear power, its development and consequences, is a subject which has from time to time exercised the minds of science fiction writers.

As long ago as 1940, Robert Heinlen considered the dangers of a nuclear reactor going critical in his short story *Blowups Happen*; Lester del Rey developed the theme in 1956 in his novel *Nerves* which described an accident at a nuclear power plant. But there the interest seemed to die, not to revive until the early 1970's.

And perhaps this wasn't so surprising since in the late 1950's and right through the 1960's, nuclear power was being sold as the only large-scale source of energy available to replace the declining fossil fuels.

The early 1970's saw a return to the theme by Kit Pedler and Gerry Davis in their novel *Brainrack* (sadly out of print) and both *The Explosion* and *The Prometheus Crisis* are in the same mould, owing much to the growing feeling that nuclear power is not quite what those who sell it would have us believe.

Both novels use much factual information, most of it readily available from governmental sources, and it only requires a little imagination to develop stories which are far from incredible.

Once read, it becomes difficult to believe that nuclear power is really as safe as its defenders claim, that bodies like the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate really have things under control, and that the frequent accidents at plants like Windscale are not just 'isolated incidents, well within acceptable limits'.

So what are we to make of these offerings? Unfortunately *The Explosion* is in hardback and expensive, but it should be available in your local library and is worth reading.

Set in West Germany, significantly one of the most ambitious countries in the present development of nuclear power, it concerns the opening of Helios, the largest nuclear power plant in the world, a successful attempt to sabotage it, and the consequences for West Germany and Europe.

In spite of the security precautions which are shown to be pretty useless in reality the plant is easily sabotaged. The man who plants the bomb can best be described as an ecological activist, heavily influenced by the pacifist ideas of Bertrand Russell.

His aim in sabotaging the plant is not to destroy it but to show how easily a bomb can be planted and to use the incident as a focus for opposition to the development of nuclear power in general.

Contrasted to the attempts, eventually successful, of an individual to take on the nuclear menace are the attempts by local people to organise opposition and the response of the authorities to this.

In this the plant represents more than just an input to the national grid it just happens that the local political bosses own the land on which the plant is built and that, more than the energy the plant will eventually produce, colours their attitude to the opposition and their crude attempts to crush it.

The sabotage attempt is successful but goes wrong. While one of the bombs is being removed it explodes and destroys the electronics which control the reactor. A meldown follows and a huge cloud of radioactive dust and gas starts to drift across West Germany towards Frankfurt.

The remainder of the book concentrates on the response of the Federal authorities to a nuclear catastrophe. Attempts to decontaminate people in the immediate vicinity prove futile and in the mounting chaos, the decontamination squads are withdrawn and the people left to die.

As the cloud moves closer to Frankfurt drastic action is taken—the city of Darmstadt is set alight to create a firestorm in the cloud's path, forcing it into the high atmosphere. Imagine if Windscale went up, setting light to Lancaster or Preston to save Manchester!

Gripping stuff, with the consequences for West Germany and Europe described in stark detail. A good read and, if its success in France and Germany is worth going by, worth bringing into a cheap paperback edition.

But even this is not as good as *The Prometheus Crisis*. While *The Explosion* touched on the connections between the state, the energy companies and nuclear power, in *The Prometheus Crisis* the connections are drawn more sharply and are more central to the book.

In writing it, the authors used information about the nuclear industry which was freely available and then followed it through to a possible conclusion—indeed the final "loss of coolant accident" which the book describes is based directly on material in US government documents. Some dramatic licence is taken, mainly for effect and in order to simplify a complex process, but the effect is terrifying nonetheless.

Prometheus is the largest nuclear power plant in the world, a complex of four reactors on the Californian coast being built by Western Gas & Electric. It is behind schedule and its basic safety systems do not work properly, all of which lead the plant manager to refuse to bring the plant on stream.

But the company want it working it is a prestige project which, if successfully commissioned, will ensure that the company build a further 12 plants of the same kind at $5 million a time. It will also provide half the energy needs of California and is central to a speech the President is to make on energy.

Good public relations dictate that the plant must come on stream as he speaks and the company are prepared to go to any lengths to achieve this. The top brass are flown in, the plant manager sacked, and his deputy instructed to bring the plant on stream.

It goes wrong—a combination of shoddy engineering, bad design, rushed commissioning contribute to a failure of the emergency core cooling system and 10,000 tons of core begin to meltdown. They call it the *China Syndrome* since given long enough, the melting core will reach the other side of the globe all the way to China!

Into the story of the meltdown, which is terrifying enough, is a fascinating sub-plot built around a plant employee whose family died as the result of radiation poisoning at another of the company's plants, and who is systematically stealing plutonium from the reprocessing plant to sell to an unnamed organistion.

Again, attempts to control the meltdown prove futile and we get a glimpse of how the authorities might react faced with a catastrophe of this kind—the army brought in, martial law, the works! The radioactive cloud from the crippled plant moves south towards Los Angles and we are left to wonder if it got there.

The book has been made into a film called *The China Syndrome* which is playing to packed cinemas in the States. In the aftermath of Three Mile Island it does not seem at all implausible.

Hopefully Bookmarx might make this one of their 1979 choices but if they don't then the money you pay for it will be well spent. *Bryan Rees*

BACK TO BASICS

The Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace, in Edinburgh, have received an order from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority fastbreeder research establishment at Dounreay for two copies of *Nuclear Power for Beginners* (Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative).
(*Peace News*, 8 June 1979)

Inside the Nazi state

Economy and Class Structure of German Fascism
A Sohn-Rethel
CSE Books, £6.00

This is an extremely interesting book, but it is not one that I would wish to recommend to the general reader. If you are interested in the detailed economic relationships between the Nazis and German big business, you will find in this book a number of very provocative arguments and some suprising information. If, on the other hand, you want a general account of the subjects that the title suggests, you will not find it. Unfortunately, I do not know of any other marxist source that you will find it from.

Much of the interest of the book arises from the peculiar situation of the author and original purpose behind writing the essays which make up the book. A Sohn-Rethel is a very distinguished marxist academic, who was born in Germany but has lived in England for a great deal of his life.

In the early 1930s, while a secret communist, he chanced o be employed in a major agency of German big business- he was on the editorial board of what was, to all intents and purposes, the 'internal bulletin, for sale to members only' of the major German capitalists. He thus saw at first hand a great deal of the secret politicking which preceded the Nazis coming to power in 1933. Incredibly, he managed to remain undetected in this post for three yeas until the Gestapo got too close and he was forced to flee to Britain.

Even more remarkable is the fact that the book was based on essays written at the request of Wickham Steed, former editor of *The Times*, who used them in his political alliance with, of all people Winston Churchill. What that ignorant old butcher of workers and peasants made of this particular example of marxism we are not told.

In many ways, the book is a model of marxist analysis, It moves very easily from complex theoretical questions to analysis of concrete situaions and contains many valuable insights at both levels. Among the numerous questions it touches on are the nature of the imperialist needs of German big business, the way in which different productive techniques influence the political positions of big capitalist, the relationship between finance capital and industrial capital, the manner in which the bourgeoisie remained the 'ruling class' in Nazi Germany, the impact of new productive techniques on the labour force, etc.

It is obvious that such a wide range of questions cannot be

on which to run a home and maintain a family.

Their constant problem in balancing the family budget, and the way in which they tackled it, form the subject of a recent reprint by Virago, with this title.

The book was compiled from information gathered over a four year period, from 1909 to 1913, when Maud Pember Reeves, a middle class campaigner on behalf of the rights of working class women, together with other members of the Fabian Women's Group, carried out an investigation into the income, budgets, expenditure and way of life of women in this part of London.

The families chosen were not amongst the poorest; for the most part the husband was in regular, although sometimes casual work, and whatever his wage, his wife might expect a weekly income on which to manage the household, of around a pound a week.

The women were caught in a double bind. Firstly their husbands' earnings would fluctuate in accordance with the regularity of work, the possibility of overtime or other additional payments – in short with the demand for labour.

Secondly the household budget, the money which they had to feed, clothe and house the family, would vary according to the husband's 'generosity', depending on the amount which the man chose to keep back for himself, for his pint of beer, his tobacco or his bet.

A woman whose husband earned 22/- a week and handed all of it over to her for the family's needs might be better placed than the woman whose husband earned 25/-, but handed over only a pound.

But whatever the precise figure, the income was never adequate to meet all the family's needs and guarantee a wholesome diet and a healthy environment.

All too often a choice had to be made between rooms which were damp and unhealthy, at a low rent – so that more money was left over for food – and between a higher rent, taking a larger proportion of the weekly income for better accommodation, but leaving less for other necessities.

It was a brave woman who ignored the landlord's demands in order to ensure that her family was well fed, when money was tight. Only one woman, a tenant of the Duchy of Cornwall, seems to have done so with impunity.

She it seems, was a believer in the sound philosophy of enough to eat, and so, when her husband's work was slack and the family income dwindled, she simply did not pay the rent at all, but spent all her money on food.

"The Prince 'er Wales, 'e don't want our little bits of sticks, and 'e won't sell us up if we keeps the place a credit to 'im." – an argument which did not hold good for most of the women who were the subject of the investigation.

The payment of rent was, for most women, the first priority, and expenditure on food, or, rarely, clothing, would be allocated according to the amount which remained once this obligation was met.

The diet of the 'respectable poor' was, inevitably, monotonous. Bread and potatoes were the two single most important items, chosen for their cheapness, rather than for their nutritional value.

It was not ignorance which prevented mothers giving their childen nourishing food – as do-gooders so often suggested. It was quite simply lack of money which prohibited them from indulging in the luxury of giving their children milk, or meat, with any regularity.

Middle class philanthropists endeavouring to carry the 'gospel of porridge' to the Lambeth people, met with little success, failing to realise that this foodstuff, whilst appetising enough when covered with milk and sugar, was rather less appealing when served, as it had to be in the poorer homes, without these relishes, and carrying with it, very often the taste of the fish or 'stoo' which might have been cooked in the one family saucepan the day before.

Sadly for the middle class philanthropist, the poor could not abide porridge on such terms. In fact 'they 'eaved at it'. Children would go hungry rather than eat it, and husbands threatened dire retaliation if the stuff appeared at their breakfast table.

Of course it was—and still is—often suggested that poverty derives from extravagance, drink, or some other personal defect, peculiar to those who have no money and unknown amongst those who do. Commentators who do not have to 'manage' on a low income are often adept at suggesting the ease with which it can be done.

The implication is clear. The poor are poor as a result of their own personal failings and their own inability to use their money to the best advantage. It is not a view which is shared by Mrs Pember Reeves, who knocks down the arguments of the patrons of the poor, by detailing the inadequacy of the incomes of all of the women whose lives are documented in this book.

That the poorer London children suffer from insufficient and unscientific nutrition she agrees, but that the responsibility should be laid at the door of their mothers she shows to be nothing short of ridiculous.

No-one, she argues, however fit, or well-trained for the task, could manage on such a limited income. So why should these women, for the most part overworked, uneducated, living in cramped conditions and suffering many privations, be competent to do so?

Mrs Pember Reeves was not concerned to illustrate the potential for organisation and struggle on the part of the women whose lives she documents. As a Fabian she accepted the need for state responsibility towards mothers and children in respect of the basic essentials of life and campaigned to that end.

But as the result of her work, together with other Fabian women, we have access to some of the details of the lives and problems of working class women in London over 60 years ago. Many writers have pointed to the problems of trying to understand working class life and experiences in past decades, and the difficulties are especially acute in relation to the lives of women.

Often outside of organisations which might have left some documentary evidence of their activities, and centred on the home and family, the experience and daily activities of housewives, even at the beginning of this century, are not easily uncovered.

The value of this book lies in its capacity to document something of that experience, although in accordance with the scope of a limited investigation, reflecting not only the formal organisation of the household, but the feelings and attitudes of the women themselves.

The volume is prefaced by a useful introduction, written by Sally Alexander, setting into context the work and preoccupations of the Fabian Women's Group.

Virago, the feminist publishing company, have issued a number of interesting reprints, as well as new publications on women's history in recent years. This one is well worth purchasing, at the not unreasonable price of £1.95.

Jan Druker

fully explored in 159 pages, and the book is fragmentary and often quite confusing for anyone who does not share the author's range intellectual achievements.

One of the major weaknesses is the lack of attention to the sociological dimension of the Nazi party's base. Despite its title, the book only really considers the social base of the NSDAP after it came to power. The author claims that, in visiting factories, he found that the most solid support for the 'programme' of the Nazis came from the lower functionaries – clerks, foremen, supervisors. The bosses regarded the Nazis as a necessary and profitable evil. The workers hated them. Only the middle layer really believed in the rag-bag of Nazi ideology.

That in itself is not surprising or particularly new. The problem arises in that both the author and David Edgar, in his introduction, try to draw limited parallels between Germany in those days and Britain today. True, both are careful not to make an identity, but the extent to which even the points they wish to make are valid seems to me a matter for debate.

It is clear, for one thing, that on the evidence that this book alone gives, the economic situation in Britain has substantial differences from that preceding the Nazi seizure of power. Secondly, and much more importantly, the social base of the NSDAP, **before** the seizure of power, was not identical with the 'empoyee' strata.

There are a number of major questions which this book does not even attempt concerning the factors which drove millions into the camp of Hitler. If we are to draw any valuable lessons for contemporary political practice, then we need a discussion of the social structure of pre-Nazi Germany, a study of the base of the NSDAP before its rise to power, and some idea of the way in which different social groups were welded into the Nazi block. We would further need to know how far such factors continue to operate in modern Britain. It seems to me that this book avoids some of these very pertinent questions.

Unfortunately, that forces the value of the book back onto the level of propaganda at best, and academicism at worst. The questions it deals with well are important questions, but it is to the credit of the author that he sees marxism as a guide to action as well as to history, and in this area it is weak.

Colin Sparks

Making ends meet.

Round about a pound a week
Maud Pember Reeves
Virago £1.95

The problem of making ends meet has long been one of the major difficulties facing the working class housewife. How can you get just a little bit extra for just a little bit less?

The mathematical skills of the 'average housewife' are probably much under-rated, for most are balancing budgets with a low and limited income, and a wide range of goods and services which must be paid for, if a minimum standard of comfort is to be maintained.

The problem is not, of course, a new one. Women in Lambeth, before the outbreak of the Great War, might count themselves lucky, if they were receiving *Round about a pound a week*

Capitalism made difficult

The State, Capital and Economic Policy
Suzanne de Brunhoff
Pluto Press £2.95

Capitalism grew up in a Europe already divided into Nation-States. Its worldwide expansion went hand in hand with a territorial carve-up which left little but the oceans and a few desolate spaces free from the taxman, the customs-official and the policeman.

At the same time in its classical form of private ownership Capitalism enforced a separation of State and society, politics and economics which has misled many into counterposing 'State' and 'Capital' as if they belonged to two distinct and antagonistic worlds.

The very attempt to relate two different sorts of abstraction is at fault. Any particular State exists only as part of a system of States, and it is that system which is integral to the world of Capital.

All talk of the 'externality' of the State, even of its 'relative autonomy', and it pervades the work under review, tends to imply a State standing aloof from a Capitalist system which is implicitly confined within national boundaries.

Where the point being made is not simply banal, it leads into all sorts of unnecessary difficulties about exactly how the one relates to the other. The message of Bukharin has still not been grasped – that the existence of the world of State Capitals is quite independent of the extent of any particular State's control over its national economy or the degree of nationalisation.

Only once that is understood can we deal properly with the particular ways in which private Capital has sought both to use and limit the growth of the State, and the way in which States have served not just as the instruments of a property-owning class but as direct agents of Capital accumulation.

In the absence of such a perspective this book falls into a familiar mould. Vague generalities and empty abstractins on the one hand, fragmented pieces of empirical analysis on the other. That said, serious attempts to use Marxist categories to investigate the 'economic' activities of the State are so rare that the translation of this work from the French is to be welcomed.

De Brunhoff's other work available in English, *Marx on Money*, was a disappointing study of an important subject little more than a reiteration of what Marx himself said, in language if anything more difficult than the original.

In contrast the sections on money, inflation, and the effects of the decline of the dollar and floating exchange rates on the world economy are some of the best in this book.

The State, Capital and Economic Policy in fact includes much that is both useful and original in its discussion of the character and contradictions of Keynesian inspired attempts to regulate national economies. But these attempts derived their aura of success from an unprecedented worldwide boom for which they were not really responsible.

De Brunhoff offers no explanation of the boom, or indeed of the current crisis. As a result the arguments lack foundation, the overall assessment is unclear and this reviewer at east was left feeling rather frustrated at the end. Matters are not helped by the attempt, the product I suspect of the current economics of book-publishing, to compress a vast subject-matter into 150 pages.

An interesting but in the final analysis very unsatisfactory work. And if you're not already acquainted with the basic ideas of both Marx and Keynes you'll find much of it very hardgoing indeed. *Pete Green.*

Hot Gossip

The History of Sexuality.
Volume I: The Will to Knowledge
Michel Foucault
Allen Lane £5.95

There is a commonplace saying about sex: "if you are always talking about it, you can't be getting it". Michel Foucault seems to have taken this as a guiding principle for his latest book, which is declared to be a general introduction to a six-volume history of sexuality (though rumour has it that the other five are never to appear).

As such, it asserts an argument which awaits demonstration. We are asked to take its theory on trust, an experience not unlike agreeing to play the Marquis de Sade at snooker. As the game proceeds, everything is correctly observed, but you begin to suspect whose rules you are playing to . . .

The book is part of Foucault's project of analysing the relation between knowledge and power in our society. Its arrogance towards the reader is displayed in the assumption of complete familiarity with the rest of his writings (an arrogance which of course flatters intellectuals who read his other books, and attracts them to him). For example the title, *Will to Knowledge*, refers to a concept fundamental to his whole analysis; but here it is itself hardly discussed. Broadly speaking, the term refers to the great destructive principle which he sees underlying the development of science since 1600.

It describes the changing sets of rules which, embodied in social institutions, lay down what can be said and by whom. Foucault makes a careful distinction between **knowledge** and **truth**.

For instance, the medical knowledge possessed in our society is not the sum of what is thought to be true about the human body; it is the sum of everything that can be said within the practice of medicine. This knowledge, which has a definite relation to what is true but cannot be reduced to it, defines 'medical discourse.'

And it is this concept of discourse which is central to the history Foucault is writing. 'It is in discourse that knowledge and power are joined together'.

What, he says, is the accepted

view about sex? We are all repressed. We cannot speak of it openly. But what makes Foucault suspicious of this view is the fact that it is so often stated. If society is shouting so loudly about its own repressions, perhaps these protests are not so opposed to the established order as they appear to be.

Not by accident are all those skin-flicks called '*Confessions* of a Night Nurse/Driving Instructor etc'. Confession, the disclosure of a secret life, has become intimately caught up with our idea of sexuality because it is, in its various forms, the key method by which sex is tranformed into discourse.

The policing of the body operates through a regulated process of incitement, not prohibition. If the nineteenth century silenced sex in polite conversation, it also encouraged increasing eloquence in the medical profession, culminating in Freud's scientific 'discovery' of sexuality at the turn of the century.

More accurately, science **produced** a notion of sexuality, using confession as its main technique. Foucault continues to remind us that what we are led to believe is the most natural thing about us is in reality the historical product of a scientific and judicial process.

The objective of this process has been to connect knowledge and power in a pattern which maintains domination. Control over people's bodies through the production of sexuality rather than the repression of sex: this is Foucault's main argument.

Bourgeois society has made sex the most important thing about our existence. It is all we ever think about, as individuals. Sex has become, not just the secret life, but the secret of life. How has it happened? This is where the will-to-knowledge comes in. The scenario Foucault sketches out is a bit like those 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers' type movies.

The will to knowledge starts out with the stars but is unwittingly brought down to earth by nutty professors like Galileo. Once established in our midst this alien force, which is basically a regular guy, only concerned to bring progress and material benefits to mankind, cannot help devouring everything in sight.

Having chomped its way through nature it invades the body and, despite its best intentions, kills off the soul. But, and here's where things get creepy, nobody knows their bodies have been invaded! The whole of civilisation as we know it is walking around thinking that their body is their own affair.

Enter our hero, not in specs and speckled jacket but in a Pierre Cardin raincoat, casually dragging on a Gauloise. He works out, scientifically of course, how the trick is done.

It seems that by substituting for the soul a new mystery of the self, a new unattainable secret for us to desire, in short by mesmerising us with the question of sex, the power-knowledge connection can have.

its evil way (we always knew that seductive blonde in the second reel was not to be trusted).

The marvels of science and technology definitely exert their hold over Monsieur Foucault. He even scatters throughout his text metaphors such as 'lines of force', 'matrices of transformation', 'networks/contacts/relays', rather like that clutter of bubbling test tubes and retorts which always surrounded the mad scientist of the movies.

But these metaphors are meant seriously. They describe the political technology of the body. To understand this we need a new conception of power.

Up to now, power has been conceived as a negative, restrictive force exercised through the rule of law and unified through the state apparatus. Against this, Foucault identifies the historical emergence of a new improved brand of power, one centred on **techniques** not rights, **norms** not laws, **controls** not punishments.

It has been hailed by people who should know better as a theoretical breakthrough. But if this amazing new conceptual detergent begins to sound like the same old soap, do not be put off—it contains a magic ingredient, **bio-power**.

Bio-power was released when the will-to-knowledge invaded the body, bringing the human life process itself within the sphere of economic objectives. And it really does work wonders for capitalism, because it makes possible "the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment . . . of population to economic processes".

The insertion of your body into the machinery does not hurt one bit, because science has already taught you to think of your body as a machine. This machine, which the bourgeoisie first tried out on itself, was fitted out with a sexuality and handed to the working class, with instructions to keep it in good order—an ideology of health and hygiene.

From a healthy body to a healthy body politic is but a goose-step and racism quickly made it. When John Tyndall talks about us as the pus of society which must be eradicated if the health and vigour of the nation are to be restored, he reveals the extent to which the accepted images of the body have a political and ideological function.

From a marxist position the decisive point in the whole analysis concerns the relationship between the will-to-knowledge and the institutional apparatus of the state. It underlies all the talk in this book (and in Foucault's previous one on prisons) about the historical shift from power as law to power as technology.

Yet it is precisely this relationship which Foucault ignores and mysifies by turn. The most plausible reason for this is that he believes it cannot be explained in any general way, but can be understood only as a result of separate 'localised' analyses corresponding to the localised nature of power.

For Foucault there is no unified structure of domination centred upon the state. Relations of power are everywhere, yet nowhere are they uniform. Such unity as they have comes from the overall 'strategies' which interlock the various power struggles, like the way a general on a battlefield would carry out a strategy through the deployment of troops in local skirmishes. Except that here there is no general (certainly not the ruling class).

What are the implications of this for revolutionary politics? Like those widely dispersed power points, "the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic condification of the points of resistance that makes a revolution possible". Doubtless.

The emphasis is upon struggle in your own backyard, which by some unspecified means—it cannot be through political parties: they are obviously an anachronism because they are based on an outmoded conception of power—is to be codified (not co-ordinated) with others.

The possibility of any action at the level of a class is virtually refused, and the seizure of state power becomes positively irrelevant. So do Foucault's analyses signal the end of Marxism as we know it?

Clearly his work on knowledge and power cannot be grafted on to any branch of marxist politics without a significant change in one or the other (and in most current attempts to do so it is Foucault who remains unmodified).

The most obvious examples of the political practice which Foucault's theory endorses are perhaps to be found within the women's movement—though his own language clings fondly to 'Western Man'. And perhaps it will be within that movement that the questions which this book raises about the body and sexuality will themselves be interrogated as practice, and made to confess their truth.

Certainly they should not be completely rejected. On the contrary, they are much too important to be left to a gang of French intellectuals and their English camp followers. *Ian White*

Record of Song for Blair Now Available

This song, written and performed by Mike Carver is available on an EP record with 3 other tracks.
(The SPG Song/Urban Decay/Nobody Loves You When You're Unemployed.)

All proceeds will go to the Blair Peach Memorial Fund so send at least £1.10 (inc. p&p) to: SW Recordings, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2DE.

Murder of Blair Peach

I can't believe they'd do that
But they did, I saw it
Walking peacefully away to the pub
To the pub, he bought it
Pigs sealed off the road
Blocked it off with vans both ends
Ran wild with flailing truncheons
To terrorise our friends

They hit him once, he fell down dazed
Get up you runt, they cried
He couldn't so they smashed his skull
And later on he died
Vomiting in hospital
His blood ran on the floor
The worst head wound I've ever seen
And then he was no more

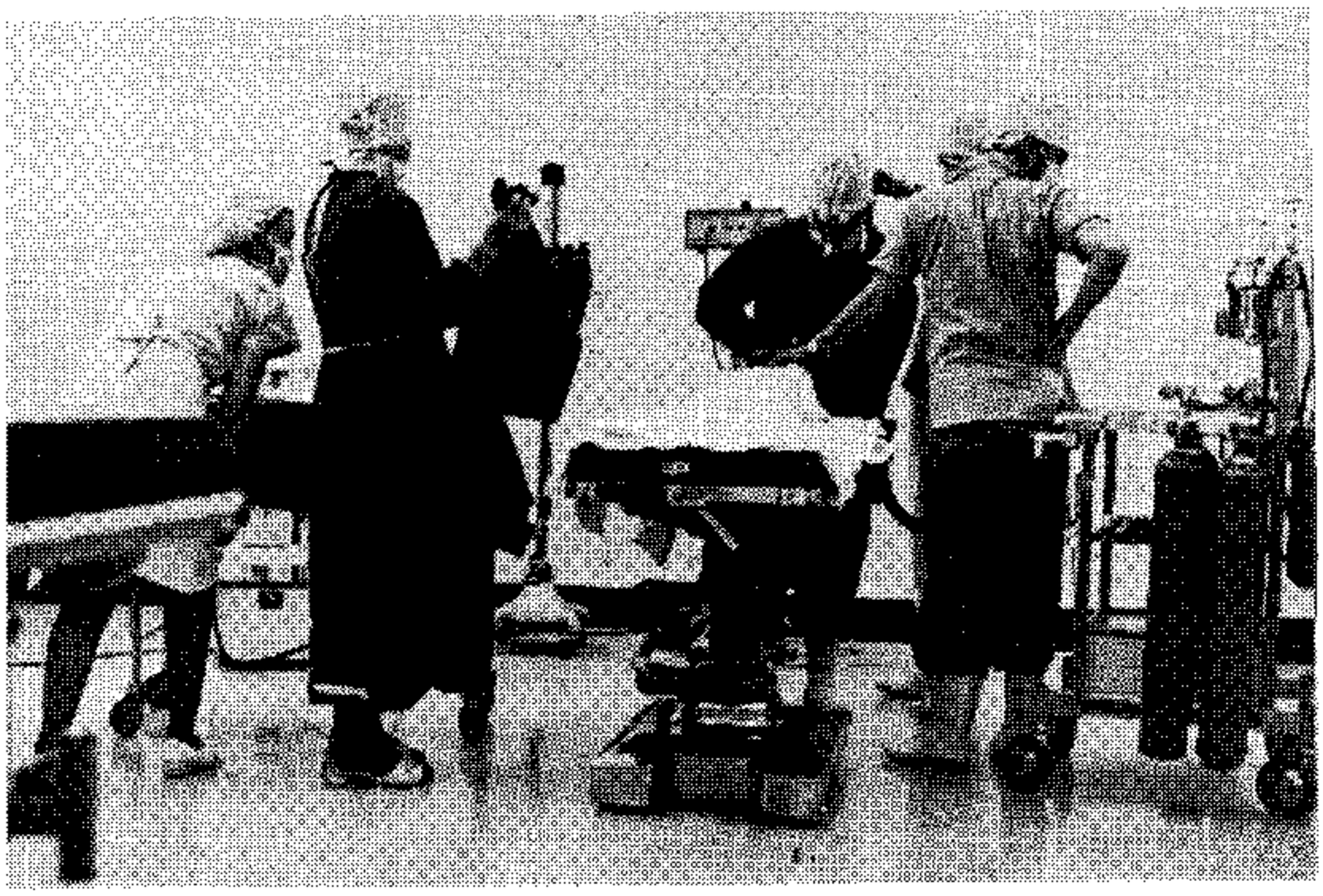
Who needs the nazis
When we've got the SPG
Who needs the fascists
In this 'democracy'
Racist pigs protecting fascist rats
In the name of liberty
Who needs the nazis
When we've got the SPG

From Monday April twenty-third
Nineteen seventy-nine
Blair Peach won't stammer any more
Or drink or shoot a line
Can't be mugged again by nazi thugs
Or lead the union's rank and file
Or teach his kids or hurt his friends
Or love or laugh or smile

'Urban Freedom Fighter'
'Left Wing Activist' they sneered
The TV News, the Daily Mail
They stood around and jeered
It's easier to crush an acorn
Than to chop down a large oak tree
He went to stop recurrence here
Of Hitler's memory

Who needs the nazis when
When we've got the SPG
Who needs the fascists
In this democracy
Hooligans in uniform
Attacking you and me
Who needs the nazis
When we've got the SPG
Smash the nazis
Disband the SPG

Proceeds to Blair Peach Memorial Fund



For health read wealth

Class Struggle, the State and Medicine
Vincente Navarro
Martin Robertson £7.95

A book to be welcomed. Most accounts of social policy development are turgid. Dry, academic summaries of major developments swimming around in a social democratic soup. The NHS, in particular, is either seen as the product of humanitarian generosity or a victory for socialism.

Navarro's book suffers from none of this, and is exciting. His marxist account places the evolution and present state of the NHS firmly within a capitalist mould. One by one he destroys the usual explanations offered by bourgeois commentators for the development of our health services.

He rejects entirely any account of the sudden ruling class interest in workers' health during the early part of this century as due to the spread of charitable values.

The National Insurance Act of 1911 is seen as a ruling class concession to the combined threat of the Triple Alliance, the 1905 revolution in Russia and mass unemployment. And health insurance is assessed more as a victory for commercial insurance interests than for the working class.

The NHS Act itself is not viewed as the far-sighted feat of social engineering that the Labour Party always boasts about. Rather 1945-51 is seen as 'a golden opportunity missed by a thoroughly reformist party committed to capitalism'. Bevan, the Left's hero, is quoted as claiming that 'he choked (the consultants) mouths with gold'.

This of course, he did: and in so doing established a Health Service designed not to protect patients against the high cost of medical services but to insure doctors against patients' inability to pay.

Navarro pays attention to many vital topics that the usual books on the NHS ignore. Medicine, for him, has a double function under capitalism. It ameliorates and makes palatable the diswelfare created in the sphere of production and consumption. (There are short, but interesting, sections on occupational and environmental diseases). But it also has an ideological role, ie to make people believe that what is politically and collectively caused can be individually cured.

The book provides interesting details too, eg about the inverse care law whereby health and resources tend to concentrate in urban, middle-class areas, and about how the 1974 Reorganisation of the NHS did not integrate care but centralised a management well versed in capitalist business ethics.

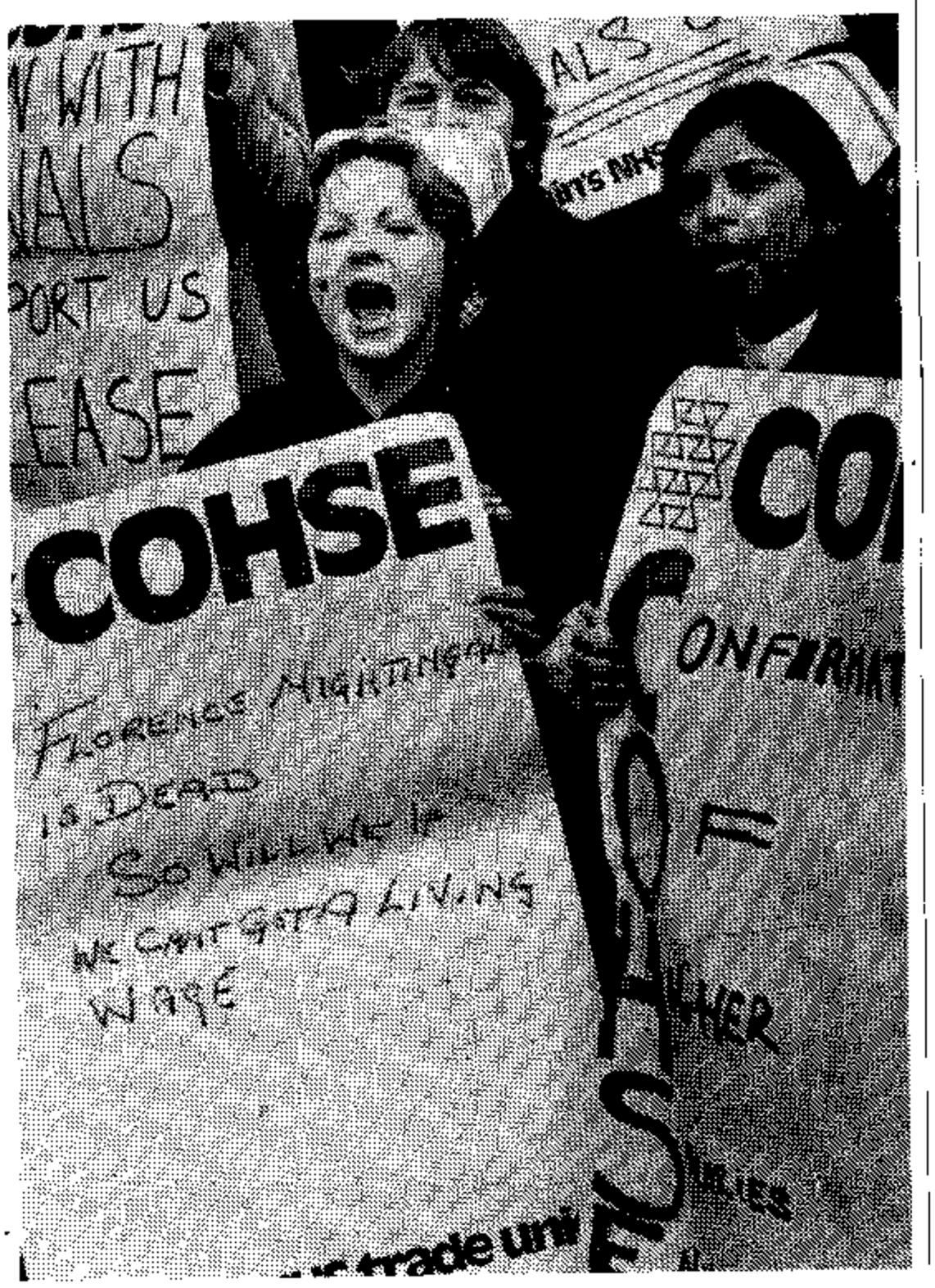
Most of the chairmen appointed to the new Regional Health Authorities were bankers, directors, property developers, retired Army officers and accountants!

The book does have faults though. Occasional American sociological terms creep in such as post-industrial society (Sic). Mostly though Navarro is free of jargon and easy to read.

Too much energy is spent demonstrating how consultants are part of a class that actually owns the State in some way. The relations of production are what counts not personalities. And despite concluding that 'the Labour Party is as far away from socialism as the Vatican from the Sermon on the Mount' there is no discussion of a viable socialist strategy in the health service, or anywhere else.

A real gap in a book that stresses class struggle as being of central importance in understanding the development of social policy.

Although shy of offering a political strategy Navarro has written a fine book dedicated 'to those in Britain who are struggling for socialist change'. His consistent warnings about how mass working class pressure for reforms is always shaped by the ruling class' own purposes should serve as a salutory reminder to those who like to call themselves 'socialists' of their political bankruptcy. £7.95 is a lot for revolutionary socialists – hopefully the publishers will bring out a paper-back version. If not, order it for your library.
Phil Lee



in brief

The Wealth Report
edited by Frank Field
Routledge and Kegan Paul
£6.95

A new book written by a group of people best known for their work exposing poverty. Here they turn the tables with research on the wealthy, taking as their starting point R. H. Tawney's remark that 'what thoughtful rich people call the problem of poverty, thoughtful poor people call with equal justice the problem of riches'.

While the research and the evidence put forward are excellent, we only get vague and unhelpful ideas about strategies to end the 'problem'.

Health in Danger: The Crisis in the National Health Service
David Widgery
MacMillan £2.95

What an immense pleasure to read a book on the National Health Service where every page seems to call for a fight back, where the central conclusionof the thorough argument is build, buy, sell and read the *Hospital Worker*. An excellent prescription. This is a Bookmarx club choice.

Einstein for Beginners
Joseph Schwartz, Michael McGuinness
Writers and Readers £1.95

The latest book in the successful beginners series of cartoon texts orginated by the Writers and Readers Publishing outfit, specially published for Einstein's centenary year.

Bisbee 17
Robert Houston
Writers and Readers £5.95

The events described in this novel are absolutely authentic. A fierce strike of copper miners at Bisbee, Arizona, in 1917 is the setting in what turns out to be a class-war western. Available through the Bookmarx Club.

The Politics of Industrial Relations
Colin Crouch
Fontana £1.50

This is a dreadfully repetitious and pretentious book written by a right-wing social-democratic university lecturer. Reads like a 196 page preface to the Labour government's concordat. As an industrial relations text it is completely superfluous.

Trapped Within Welfare: Surviving Social Work
Mike Simpkin
Macmillan £2.95

Here Mike Simpkin, both socialist and social worker, carves a route through the jungle that entraps the welfare state employee. Carefully marshalling his arguments, and basing a great deal on his own experience, he puts forward the case for a socialist strategy in practice in a welfare state that's at crisis point. Strongly recommended.

The Workers' Report on Vickers
Huw Beynon, Hilary Wainwright
Pluto £2.40

This is the Vickers shop stewards combine committee report on work, wages, rationalisation, closure and rank-and-file organisation in a multinational company. The authors examine how the company handles its workforce and the shop floor response, focussing on rank-and-file organisation and the problems and potential of combine committees. This is a Bookmarx Club choice.

The fight back on new technology

Is a machine after your job?
Chris Harman.
SWP Training Dept, P.O. Box 82 London E2. 40p plus 15p p&p

Job Massacre at the Office
The Women's Voice Word Processor pamphlet
Women's Voice, PO 82, London E2 25p plus 15p p&p

The New Technology
Counter Information Services, 9 Poland Street London W1 75p plus 20p p&p

New Technology
A Nalgo Action Group Pamphlet, 32 Kersley Road, London N16 20p plus 15p p&p

The Collapse of Work
Clive Jenkins and Barrie Sherman
Eyre Methuen £3.50
(This is the collaborationist, reformist, official trade union view.)

All these books are available by post from Bookmarks, 265 Seven Sisters Road London N4
Alastair Hatchett

POBox82

Socialist Review
POBox82
London E2

A manipulatory leninist sect

I'm really angry with Lionel Starling's article on gays and the left (*Socialist Review* May/June 1979).

As a libertarian I **object** to being associated with disease—'libertarianism which **infects** the gay movement **even** to the exten of influencing gay socialists' (my emphasis).

I also object to the patronising and manipulatory approach to gay politics—'gay struggle should be directed' . . . 'to integrate gay struggle' . . . 'having homosexuals on the Right to Work marches' . . . 'joining the SWP'.

I'm afraid this article just confirms my worst view of the SWP as a manipulatory leninist sect unable to appreciate what social liberation is all about.

And as for the gay movement being middle-class and liable to turn counter-revolutionary, now get this—leninism (as represented by the SWP) has itself historically been a middle-class movement consisting of ex-workers and declasse intellectuals claiming to speak and act on behalf of manual workers, while actually pursuing its own bureaucratic-managerial interests.

I'm sick and tired of this class of people telling us 'libertarians' and 'autonomists' what we should be doing.

I wish I could have written this letter more coherently attacking the author's false assumptions (eg the implication that working-class people just aren't gay), but, after all, it is written very much
In Anger
Bob Dent
Liverpool

POBox82

Glad to be gay - and realistic

I was interested to read Lionel Starling's article on the gay liberation movement (*Socialist Review* May/June 1979) because it seemed to say a lot about the movement which, on the face of things, appears to be true—and therefore I agree with many of his criticisms.

However, his over-generalised approach being left aside, I must disagree with his criticism that the movement is separatist, pie-in-the-sky and anti-heterosexual. To explain: it is not that I disagree that the gay movement is separatist or anti-heterosexual, it probably is. I disagree that this is a major criticism.

It is Lionel Starling who is guilty of pie-in-the-sky talk if he is proposing that the minority movements—in particular the women's movement and the gay movement should abandon their own identities and join in the socialist movement as a means of liberation.

Ideally I whole-heartedly agree with him, but if he thinks that gays in Britain in 1979 are going to flock to the socialist movement and effectively deny their own group identity –an important need (unfortunately) among the majority of gays he is sadly very much out of touch with gay people as a whole.

Such is the situation now that it is hard for many gay people even to come to terms with **themselves** let alone stand up and shout it across the rooftops! That's why the gay movement is separatist and that's why it needs to be for the moment in order to reach gay people **at all.**

Finally, as for being anti-heterosexual -possibly; but when we advertise around the Poly here in Sheffield that the Gaysoc is open to all gays **and non-gays** it's notable that not only do these posters rapidly disappear or are defaced, but not a single heterosexual person **ever** turns up or contacts us. Of course the gay movement's separatist its an unfortunate but **realistic** fact.

Derek Hitchcock
Sheffield

Socialist Review
POBox82
London E2

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Who are the Rank and File?

David Beecham's article 'Room at the Top' (*Socialist Review* May/June 1979), although providing a relatively clear analysis of the 'birth of the new right' in the trade-union leadership, provides yet another example of the 'grey consensus' mentioned by Paul Cunningham's letter in the same issue.

In his conclusion Beecham triumphantly states that 'the right doesn't seem capable of going on to force a new hard line to take them into the 1980s. It doesn't look capable of reversing the trend towards stewards' power'.

This is yet another example of the simplistic idea prevalent on the left that one can analyse trade-union structure in terms of a dichotomy between the trade-union bureaucracy and the rank and file. The outcome of this analysis is a strategy that emphasises work-place-centred action and shop-steward militancy.

The notion of the rank and file is usually implicitly accepted as including shop stewards or other workplace union representatives. However, there are a couple of points (at least!) that must be mentioned before this idea becomes firmly embedded in the left's collective consciousness.

First, the left (as well as most academic writers on industrial relations since the 1968 Donovan commission on trade unions) have based their image of the shop steward on those centred in the major large-scale industries. This is all well and good up to a point but reflects another preoccupation of the left, that of the increasingly concentrated and multinational nature of companies.

This trend is obviously vitally important and must be understood. However, to concentrate on large-scale industries means that you tend to ignore small to medium businesses (except for special cases such as Grunwick). With the latter sector, stewards face quite different problems (bad organisation, poor facilities, etc) to those in large-scale industry.

This leads to a situation in which the autonomy of stewards' organisation, presupposed in the left's analysis, does not exist in the small-scale sector where stewards must rely quite heavily on full-time officials. The separation between rank and file and bureaucracy is nothing like so clear-cut in this situation as it is presumed to be.

Furthermore, to rely on an image of the shop steward drawn mainly from shipbuilding, heavy engineering, the car industry, etc in effect excludes women shop stewards from one's analysis.

I would imagine that the majority of female stewards would find it hard to square Beecham's 'trend towards stewards' power' with their own situation of low pay, poor conditions, low (though fast increasing) levels of unionisation and the myriad problems associated with the sexual division of labour.

Even if you examine the development of stewards' organisation in industries with the best traditions you have got to be careful about including stewards within the definition of 'rank and file'. The concentration and centralisation of British capital since the 1950s produced pressures for the parallel centralisation of trade-union structure which have affected stewards' organisation.

The growth in the number of full-time stewards and convenors is symptomatic of this trend. Their role is changing from co-ordination to control—of other stewards as well as 'dissident' rank-and-filers. Perhaps the outcome will be unofficial, rank-and-file organisations like the Ford Workers' Combine.

The final point concerns the positive efforts now being made by both the state and the employers to separate stewards from the rank and file. The Donovan commission reported in 1968 that it was imperative to 'recognise, define and control the part played by shop stewards in our collective bargaining system'.

This effort to control stewards has manifested itself directly in two ways. First, through management actively participating in the establishment of stewards' organisations so that total autonomy can be denied them from the start.

Second, increasing management recognition of stewards—but on the basis of their competence in bargaining - has led to the introduction (now enshrined as a right under the Employment Protection Act) of time off with pay for training. The emphasis in shop stewards' courses is on the professional ability of the steward as negotiator, organiser, etc rather than as the leader/co-ordinator of militant mass action.

The term 'rank and file' has become increasingly meaningless over the last ten years. Devoid of any theoretical content it has simply become a password for an alternative within the labour movement to the trade union bureaucracy. However, it is imperative for both theoretical and practical reasons that some definite meaning is attached to the phrase.

Richard Hyman has brought this matter to the attention of the left (*Socialist Review* June 1978, *Revolutionary Socialism* No 3)—so far with little obvious effect. It's about time some-one took some notice before the left's theories of trade-union action assume all the relevance of the Flat Earth Society's rantings -with disastrous consequences for practice.

Al Rainnie
Newcastle

The Communist Party (CPGB) in 1979

A demand that has been raised in contract negotiation in the US car industry for years has been 'Sixty and Out'. Retirement at sixty on full pension for all carworkers. Next year the Communist Party of Great Britain will itself be sixty years old. Will it finally be out?

This question may appear a little extreme or even downright insulting, depending on your political stance. It is neither.

It is quite a fair question to ask at this stage in the life of the CPGB. For the Communist Party is presently undergoing its deepest crisis for forty years, and one that although not yet fatal in the strict sense of the word, is nevertheless, the closest thing to death agony.

Two small but public incidents give an indication of the terminal nature of the crisis. Thus on April Fools Day this year, the Executive Committee of the CP was summoned to its first emergency meeting for over ten years since Russia invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968. Why? To consider te resignation of Gerry Cohen as London Organiser in protest at the Political Committee's decision to send Monty Johnstone, a leading Right-Eurocommunist critic of Stalin and st~~alinism~~, on an official CPGB delegation to a world Communist meeting in Hungary.

And in the June 1979 issue of *Marxism Today*, Mick Costello, the National CP Industrial Organiser openly attacks the interpretation of the *British Road to Socialism* that Dave Cook, the CP National Organiser and fellow Political Committee member, presented in an earlier article.

After the biggest, longest pre-conference discussion ever leading to the 1977 CP Congress and the adoption of a new edition of the CP programme the *British Road To Socialism*, there is more open and internal major disagreement than ever before. Not just about the nature of 'socialism' in Eastern Europe; but also about the very core of the new *British Road* strategy itself.

The present crisis arises from two open wounds inflicted on the CP under the 1974-79 Labour Government. Its industrial strategy sank like the Titantic. And its political and organisational cohesion was shattered as its right-ward political drift, forced a new attack on its very **raison-d'etre:** support for Russia.

The statistics of the crisis are stark: In 1974 the CP claimed some 30,000 members: In July 1975, 28,500; in July 1977, 25,300; some 23,000 by Autumn 1978; and around 20,000 by Summer 1979. The claimed YCL membership fell from 1,976 in November 1976, to 1,663 in November 1977 and to 1,282 in November 1978. In 1978 the average daily circulation of the Morning Star in Britain fell by 2,000 to 19,000 (with a further 14,000 going overseas to Eastern Europe).

CP membership is thus well below the earlier post-War low point of 25,000 members in 1957/58 after the Kruschev revelations about Stalin and the suppression of the Hungarian revolution. And it is even lower than in 1940/41 before Hitler invaded Russia and the Red Army entered the Second World War to make it a 'war against fascism'.

Membership totals themselves don't, however, tell the full story. For there is a major difference in the activity-level of most CP members now and of those in the 1940s and before. When the late Sid French led a Russian Embassy-inspired breakaway from the CP in the summer of 1977, the New Communist Party, he estimated CP membership as 10,000 of whom only 3,-5,000 were at all active.

The gap between this **inside** estimate (French was Surrey District Organiser for many years) and the total claimed is made up by the 'card issue' a distribution of CP cards to individuals year after year who pay up for the whole year and are never visited again nor ever attend any CP meetings or activities.

The result of the crisis and major contributor to it is that the CP is now split into two major warring tendencies with, perhaps two or three lesser subdivisions on each side. And in the middle an increasingly small and impotent bureaucracy. The basic division is between 'Right Eurocommunists' and 'Left Eurocommunists'.

The former are the architects of the 1977 British Road to Socialism which launched the key notion of the 'Broad Democratic Alliance' (BDA) strategy for socialism in Britain. This involves stress on general political movements and democratic demands within them as being the basis for democratising society in the direction of socialism.

The latter are the defenders of the strategy of the 1968 edition of the *British Road*, described as the Anti-Monopoly Alliance (AMA). This emphasises the need to build an anti-monopoly capitalist movement and hence sees the role of the working class and the trade unions as being decisive. But the division goes very much deeper as we will see later, with lines drawn between the 'post-1968' and the 'pre-1968' generations, between the 'anti-Stalinists' and the 'Stalinists', between the 'pluralists' and 'democratic centralists' and between the 'intellectuals' and the 'workers'.

How did this crisis develop? Part One of this article looks at the CP's industrial strategy. Part Two at the disappearance of its political cohesion and finally where the arguments are likely to take the CP.

OUT AT 60?

The industrial disaster

From 1945, when the CP re-organised itself away from factory branches onto a geographical basis more suitable for constituency electoral intervention, electioneering became an increasing part of regular CP activity. And this included CP work inside the trade unions. Since the CP remained barred from affiliation to the Labour Party, the major way it saw of influencing Labour Party policy was through CP-led trade unions and their sway at Labour Party Conference.

The 1961 ballot-rigging episode, when a High Court decision removed the CP leadership of the ETU because of its complicity in fiddling the vote, led to a major shift in CP policy. The ETU case coincided with the 1960/1961 period of struggle within the Labour Party where the Gaitskellite right-wing were for the first time deserted by the trade union block vote when they tried to remove the 'socialist' Clause 4 from the Labour Party constitution.

The evidence of political life within the Labour Party (and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) at the very point that **direct** CP control of a trade union was firmly discredited, caused the CP to turn to a 'Broad Left' approach to trade union work. Whereas previously it had openly fought for **CPers** to be elected and appointed to office, it now sought to work with Labour Lefts and non-affiliated socialists against the right-wing.

The result was a futher downplaying of CP factory branches, since the priority was to convince the left Labourite of the honesty of the CP's intentions, and a further boost to electioneering as against rank-and-file organising on other issues, like wages and conditions.

In the late 1960's this Broad Left strategy was rewarded in the AEU: Hugh Scanlon was elected president. Dozens of other victories for the Broad Left accompanied the big one at the level of full-time district secretaries, divisional and national organisers. The Scanlon era ended finally in 1978, with the victory of Terry Duffy, a right-wing nonentity, over Bob Wright, the Broad Left candidate.

But the demise of illusions had begun much earlier. Even the Broad Left stopped talking about 'our' Hughie some time in 1975 when he openly supported the Labour government's phase one wage controls. It took them another three years to put it down on paper – and the *Morning Star* has still not made a critical evaluation of the period.

The August/September 1978 edition of *Engineering Gazette*, the CP side of the 1978 split in the Broad Left, wrote:

"Hugh Scanlon, like many before him, came in as a determined radical only to be swallowed by the Establishment machine. After leading the AUEW opposition to the Tory Industrial Relations Court, Scanlon slipped away, taken in by the Social Contract. Other left members of the Executive decided not to rock the boat and pinned their hopes on Scanlon. Perhaps they now regret it". But it's not only Bob Wright who now 'regrets it'.

During the 1970s the Broad Left electoral machine in the AUEW also 'slipped away' since the CP refused to accept the need to establish a rank and file organisation **independent** of Scanlon and electoral vagaries. CP workplace branches either disappeared, atrophied or turned to stone. The reduced leading role of 'CP industrial advisory' committees run from King St as the key decision-making bodies encouraged the collapse of any internal discipline among trade union members, particularly their full-time officials.

Leading CP trade union figures increasingly operated on their own, shifting openly to the right, without ever being publicly called to book by the CP (which was anxiously flirting with other 'left' full-time officials and would not give the impression it actually 'disciplined' recruits).

This 'slipping away' of CP industrial work was inevitable given the looseness of their 'Broad Left' popular front formula. This identified trade union officials who were strong exponents of more state intervention and import controls and other aspects of economic nationalism as 'progressive'.

If they were also less hysterical about the threat posed by CP members, and if they were rationalising trade union organisation to take account of the expansion of membership from 1969 to 1974, then they were positive 'good'.

When David Basnett succeed the right-wing Lord Cooper as General Secretary of the GMWU in 1972, the *Morning Star* heralded the fact that Basnett (the official in charge of the 1970 Pilkington strike) was different from Cooper in an interview called 'Neither left nor right Basnett'. And during the 1979 low pay dispute, by which time most were aware of exactly how right-wing Basnett is, the *Morning Star* actually featured front-page pictures of Basnett on three separate occasions, once with the lead headline building him up as a great fighter against unemployment.

The politics of the CP also identified "workers' participation" within British Leyland as a means of 'proving' that nationalisation works. Derek Robinson, the Leyland Longbridge Convenor and a CP member, told *Comment* (5 August 1978): 'If we make Leyland successful it will be a political victory. It will prove that ordinary working people have got the intelligence and determination to run industry.'

In turn, these politics encouraged the emergence of the CP scab—the full-time convenor or shop steward who, for the sake of the 'nationalised company', would not fight the victimisation of militants nor for basic solidarity with workers elsewhere.

The fact that a whole layer of CP industrial members had been brought up in the 1950s and 1960s as 'pure' wage militants– refusing to take other political issues into their workplaces, without factory bulletins arguing for socialist politics, without a commitment to **rank and file** organisation linking workers in different factories and industries—was decisive. When the political climate got more difficult with the increasng strength of appeals to the 'national interest', they were unable to resist.

Equally inevitable, then, was a constant decline through the 1960s and 1970s in the actual manual working class composition of the CP. In the areas where the CP remained strong, like Glasgow, into the 1970s it could still keep card-carrying members as 'club supporters'— members who paid up once a year to be in a 'club of militants'. But all over the proportion of manual worker activists fell. During the 1950s engineering workers made up 22 per cent of delegates to CP Congresses and teachers 8 per cent.

At the 1977 Congress engineering workers were only 14 per cent, teachers (in higher and lower education) were 15 per cent and students 10 per cent. As the composition of the CP shifted towards areas where the 'norm' was a low (or non-existent) level of industrial struggle, then the CP increasingly recruited members not on the basis of any form of class struggle or support for that struggle, but on the basis of machine/bureaucracy activism.

The CP itself only fully realised the extent of its own decline when Duffy's victory was announced on 2 May 1978: the final chapter in a six year period of right-wing recovery from 1972 when Scanlon's strategy led to the smashing of the engineering wage claim. On 16 June 1978 Mick Costello, the new CP industrial organiser, wrote an appraisal of CP industrial strategy in the *Morning Star*. He was not at all self-critical, but argued (a) for 'mobilisation of the rank and file'; and (b) for 'more Party branches built at the place of work for the day-to-day campaigning issues to be related to building political understanding of the need to end capitalism'.

At the March 1979 CP Executive Committee, Costello returned to the problem, arguing for 'a new **"turn to industry"** by the party'. 'All branches, area and city organistions must', Costello went on,

'redirect attention to the workplace, to ensure a "presence" especially at major factories in their areas, ensuring our policies are put to the workers. Such attention to work can help overcome a tendency for a separation in the minds of many comrades between "industrial work" and "general party activity".'

And in a section of his report entitled 'Rank and File base for broad left', Costello argued,

"The broad left is not something that starts or ends among the upper reaches of trade union organisations. We see it as based in the rank and file of the movement, providing forums for debate on policy and action; as, above all else, a fighting and campaigning living body.

"This requires organisation. The broad left needs many more journals like *Engineering Gazette*, *Flashlight*, *Seamen's Charter*, *Building Workers' Charter*, the higher education *Broad Left* and civil servants' *Broadside*".

Can this 'turn to industry' succeed? The first thing to point out is that the failure of the previous strategy has unleashed a major debate which, for the first time, is gradually putting the industrial members' activities (or lack of them) under the spotlight. It used to be absolute heresy within the CP to raise any questions about the automatic character of the 'left advances' the CP was allegedly encouraging along within the trade unions.

But in the September 1978 issue of *Marxism Today*, the leading CP intellectual, historian Eric Hobsbawm, actually rips the whole idea of 'left advance' to shreds. The trade union movement today, he goes on to argue, is more sectionalised, less political, and less class-conscious than twenty-five or thirty years ago. Ken Gill, the appointed General Secretary of ACEW/TASS, a union the CP now controls thanks to consistent work winning branches and delegates to Conference during the 1960s, responded immediately.

The set-back is only 'temporary', Gill argued in the December 1978 *Marxism Today*. The Social Contract was a 'political bargain' – and hence a sign of progress – but on 'mistaken' terms. It should not have exchanged wage bargaining for promises of social improvements. But it does not mean that the 'advances' have been 'halted' – indeed 'recent history shows . . . substantial advances have been made . . . Organised labour is now a political power in the land'.

Even more explicitly critical of recent industrial work, has been the argument hinted at before 1977 Congress but then suppressed as a Congress discussion by Bert Ramelson, Chairman of Standing Orders, that CP militancy is 'economistic'. Closely allied to this argument is that advanced most stridently by Dave Purdy, a Manchester University economics lecturer and prominent CP Right-Eurocommunist, that the CP should not be negatively hostile to incomes policies. Instead, Purdy argues, the left should argue for a 'socialist pay policy.'

In *The Leveller*, February 1979, Purdy wrote:

"The issue for socialists is not whether, but how and on what terms to enter the process of debate and negotiation surrounding policies for pay . . . The current tendency to climb abroad the bandwagon of disillusionment with the social contract, and to identify progress with every fresh pay dispute, is sadly mistaken. It is leading away from a coherent socialist strategy for Britain. The main reason for this assertion is that the key to contemporary socialist strategy lies in the unification of diverse areas of struggle and the creation of a broad social and political alliance around consensus over at least the main directions of social and economic policy.'

Not surprisingly, this argument's **explicit** acceptance of state capitalist 'consensus' created a wave of anger amongst CP trade union militants. They were being lectured that their class instincts were 'leading away' from socialism.

The argument kept cropping up in the letters columns of the *Morning Star* and *Comment*, the CP fortnightly. This rubbed salt in the wounds. Its strength lay in the fact that it offered an explanation for the evident industrial failure which could not be answered by simply repeating that no retreat had taken place.

Yet this was the only answer that Gill and Costello could give. For as soon as you accept that a cross-class 'alliance' is the key strategy for socialism, then any explanation for its failure can only be in terms of the 'alliance' not being 'broad' enough. You have to adapt to 'wider' forces if you want to be popular.

Aside from an odd individual here or there the only real alternative, the fight for a **revolutionary** strategy aimed at breaking the 'national interest' consensus which traps workers politically (through the Labour Party) and organisationally (through the narrow workplace horizons of the shop stewards' organisation), is not present within the modern CP.

The attempt at a 'turn to industry' is taking place, then, at a time when the industrial, trade union membership of the CP is incredibly on the defensive. In large areas of the country the prospect of being taken over by the local geographical branch with its Right-Eurocommunist activists is not welcomed by the factory workers to say the least. And since the Right-Eurocommunists are equally disdainful of the necessity for the long slog outside the factory gates, the nuts and bolts of the 'turn' are unlikely to get tightened.

Meanwhile, even within the trade unions, the new 'rank and file' orientation is unlikely to get off the ground in those unions and industries where the CP has any base amongst the full-time officials. These officials have for years been totally unaccustomed to CP activity and discipline; and they resent any 'unofficial' activity as a threat to their control.

In those unions the CP control, like the Scottish miners, the CP-dominated leadership will argue there's no need for a rank and file movement or journal; and where they have a few dozen appointed officials, as in NUPE, these officials will oppose CP-supported rank-and-file organisation since they would upset the existing leadership and cut their promotion and expansion chances. In factories where they are the senior stewards they will likewise argue that 'everything should go through the proper channels', since anything else would be a threat.

The reality is that with a handful of exceptions the CP is too much a part of the trade union establishment to be able to 'turn' to build rank-and-file organisation as 'a fighting and campaigning, living body'. To do so, for example in the TGWU, would have meant openly denouncing the activities of 'their man' Alex Kitson, now deputy general secretary, in January 1979, when he took responsibility for "controlling" unofficial picketing during the lorry drivers' strike.

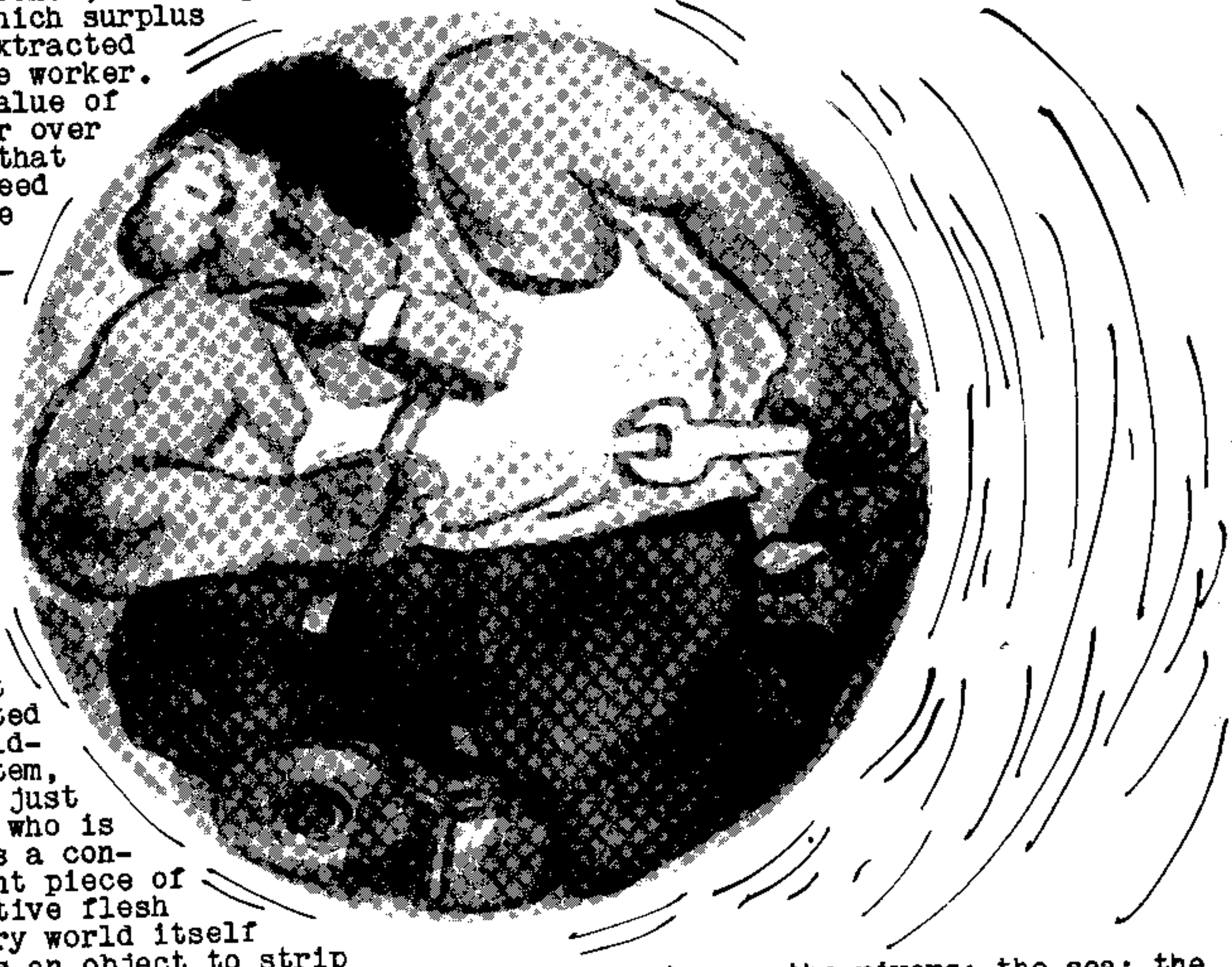
As it was, the *Morning Star* coverage was totally split between defending the right to picket against the Tory and right-wing Labour attacks on the one hand, and on the other suggesting that really the pickets were being highly 'responsible': on January 19, their front-page report began, 'There was no evidence in Liverpool yesterday to back charges that pickets were flouting union requests to let essential goods through'.

Thus the intention is to carry through the 'turn to industry' **without** embarassing the trade union leaders who are CP members or fellow-travellers. That means, of course, that the policy of 'soft-pedalling' as far as 'progressive' trade union leaders are concerned will continue. And this means that the verbal argument for rank-and-file activity and organisation will remain just that: words. *Steve Jefferys.*

The second part of this article will appear in our next issue.

E is for EXPLOITATION

In 1806 Gillray drew his startling cartoon of William Pitt and Napoleon Bonaparte carving up the globe: 'The Plumb Pudding in Danger'. Sweeping, dramatic in its simplicity, stark and true, this drawing pre-dated re-carves. Nowadays the USA and Russia wield the knives; perhaps in fifty years it will be a Euro-superstate and China... Exploitation, in a strict Marxist sense, is the process by which surplus value is extracted from the worker. The value of his labour over and above that needed to feed and clothe him or her and generally keep him or her quiet is stolen by the employer. But in a wider sense, it's not only the worker- his blood bones and brain that is exploited by a world-wide system, not just the worker who is treated as a convenient piece of productive flesh but the very world itself is seen as an object to strip of its life and richness and independence. The trees; the rivers; the sea; the land and the air. Capitalist exploitation is thorough. Our beautiful little planet, blue green and silver, whirling magically through space, carrying its population of intelligent people, incredible animals, plants and birds, fish and tigers, jungles, prairies and mountains is being ruined.



In the days of Pitt and Bonaparte capitalism was on a very small scale, built and defended by crocodiles of weary footsoldiers and scurvy-ridden sailors in prison-like hulks. Now military surveillance satellites whip round the earth and they have invented the neutron bomb which kills PEOPLE (who don't matter) but leaves intact PROPERTY (which is a good investment). Recent innovations would probably horrify even the capitalists of the early days of imperialist expansion round about 1800; they had the slave trade and other horrors, but the scale has changed. World wars; concentration camps; Nagasaki; Vietnam...the Boat People. A quantitative change. But it's not qualitative; then as now the world was tortured by a writhing mass of competing capital blocs struggling for control of the same market- that is, plum pudding Earth, rich and life-giving, which is, as Gillray pointed out, in danger.

Phil Evans