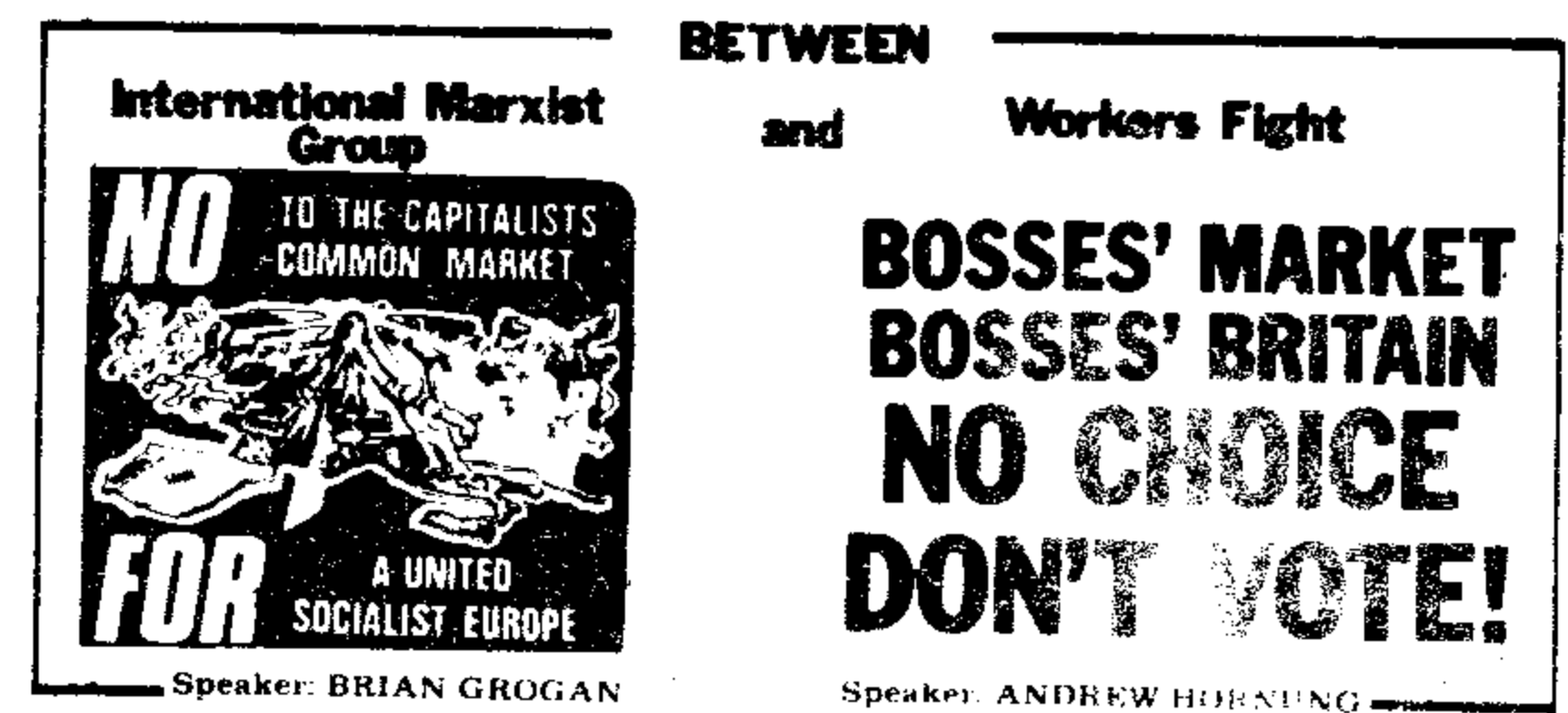


Workers' fight

5p

No.98 May 31st to June 7th 1975

SOCIALISTS AND THE E.E.C.
A public debate on the Referendum



7.30 pm Monday June 2nd
at
Islington South Library, 115-117 Essex Road, N.1
Tubes: Essex Road, Angel. Buses 38,73,171,277.

BOSSES' MARKET BOSSES' BRITAIN NO CHOICE DON'T VOTE!



Workers at Massey Fergusson's Banner Lane site in Coventry looking at some of the 310 summonses the firm has taken out against strikers occupying the plant. FULL STORY ON BACK PAGE.

ON JUNE 5th, the great flood of confused, repetitious argument about the Common Market will finally reach its climax.

Should Britain stay in the economic alliance through which the capitalist classes of the EEC hope to gain a wider 'home market' and build up larger economic units the better to compete with US and Japanese capitalism?

Or should Britain attempt a different policy — turning to different economic alliances (with non-EEC European nations, with the 'Commonwealth', with the USA), or, less likely, to protectionism?

These questions have been looked at again and again from the angle of 'what is best for Britain'. While many have claimed to speak for the interests of the working class, the British working class has no interest in helping British capitalists to outdo other capitalists: we have every interest in following the elementary socialist principle "workers of the world unite".

From that angle both the alternatives. In or Out, are to be opposed. Neither a capitalist Britain inside the EEC nor a capitalist Britain outside the EEC offers any basic advantage to workers. We should abstain on June 5th and fight for the international

workers' unity which will be necessary in or out of the EEC.

Almost all the bigger and more vigorous capitalist interests favour staying in the EEC. But in the working class movement few, other than the most direct spokesmen of those capitalist interests (people like Jenkins, Healey, Wilson), support a Yes vote.

Workers' unity

There are a few who argue that the EEC could give better chances for international workers' unity. Possibly greater economic integration will give greater opportunities for revolutionaries to get the idea of setting up things like international combine committees more easily accepted. But at the same time the EEC will probably mean greater attempts by capitalists on a European scale to divide workers, and it will not in the least help unity between European workers and the working people of Africa and Asia.

One imperialist alignment rather than another means no automatic benefits for workers' unity.

In the 'Vote No' camp, by contrast, we find the great majority of the labour movement, together with a few Tories and the National Front. Paradoxically,

however, it is the attitude, the traditions, and the prejudices of the right wing — the most bone-headed, backward looking elements of the right wing, at that — which dominate in the No camp.

The fundamental driving idea of the 'Vote No' camp is the wish to keep foreigners from meddling in "our" British state. This idea is completely nonsensical, since Britain, like every other advanced capitalism, is closely intertwined with the world economy, and cannot be independent. More important, the idea is totally reactionary. Socialists have always argued that workers must strive to unite internationally (socialism cannot be built in one country alone) and must regard 'our' national capitalist class as our worst enemy, our main enemy, because it faces us most directly.

To argue otherwise is to fall for the poison of "national interest", replacing class struggle with the waving of the Union Jack.

This fundamental 'Vote No' argument comes in a bewildering variety of forms, often garbed in "socialist" or even "revolutionary Marxist" plumage. Most popular is the rallying cry to defend "our"

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SPECIAL REFERENDUM ISSUE

CHEAP CREDIT FOR THE FAKE LEFT FROM PAGE 1

democracy and sovereignty against the Brussels bureaucracy. The anti-EEC "revolutionary left" take up this cry in the form of dire warnings about the "strong European super-state", or the crushing effects of Europe-wide concentration of capital.

Here we have a strange sight! The anti-EEC left proclaim themselves ready to smash capitalism at a stroke once they are left to fight it out in the British cockpit— but for now they are white at the gills and trembling at the knees in the face of this mighty EEC "capitalist conspiracy". (And at the same time as the left flees from the Market tyrants, they talk piously about a 'socialist Europe'. How, through what process, a 'No' vote helps a socialist Europe, they never say.) But what is the reality of this 'super-state'? The infamous Brussels bureaucracy has a smaller staff and not much more power than the British Department of Health and Social Security!

Diversion

Socialists should oppose capitalist state bureaucracy whether in Brussels or Whitehall — and fight instead for workers' control and a workers' state. To blame everything on the conveniently vague and distant Brussels bogeymen can only lead to a diversion from effective class struggle. Against rising prices, the answer becomes, not a fight for higher wages rising automatically with the cost of living — but a campaign to "Get Britain Out". Against unemployment, the answer becomes, not factory occupations and a fight for

Against the tide

NEARLY all the papers and parties of the left — Tribune, Morning Star, Socialist Worker, Workers Press, Red Weekly, Militant, Big Flame and others — have been campaigning hard for a NO vote. But supporters of WORKERS FIGHT have been doing their best, and not without success, to see they don't have things entirely their own way.

In Marylebone AUEW, Communist Party members of the branch invited a speaker from the Get Britain Out campaign, Fred Silberman. No doubt they expected an easy ride, since the CP is strong in the branch. But the speaker was strongly opposed by WF supporter Gary Kinsella, and the proposition that the branch should actively oppose Britain's continuing membership of the EEC was defeated by one vote. Moreover, a suggestion that the branch donate £25 to the Get Britain Out campaign was defeated when Bro. Kinsella counter-proposed that this sum of money would be far more usefully spent in supporting a strike fund of any workers in struggle.

Eston Labour Party in Teesside also voted against supporting Get Britain Out, and the chairman, a leading figure in the GBO campaign, resigned. WF supporter Lol Duffy moved successfully that the party should organise a three sided debate on the EEC, and this will take place on Friday 30th May, with Simon Temple of Vauxhall LPYS speaking in favour of abstaining on June 5th.

At Enfield College Students Union a motion moved by Bas Hardy, putting the abstentionist position, won through against the combined opposition of the CP, IS and IMG.

One of the arguments used by revolutionary socialists who support the NO campaign is that they don't wish to stand apart and separate themselves from what left wing workers and militants are thinking. The point is that they have deprived themselves of a voice, of any way of influencing what those workers think. They gave up in advance, without even trying.

Where an internationalist policy is fought for, it can be won. If the bigger parties and wider circulation papers on the left had fought to denounce the whole "Yes/No" charade, the confusing effect of the referendum could have been substantially counteracted.

work or full pay and nationalisation without compensation, but voting "No" on June 5th.

One of the major results of the anti-EEC hullabaloo is that leaders like Benn and Foot and Jack Jones, while doing nothing for the workers' cause in the class struggle, are able to regain a 'left' reputation by their nationalist demagoguery against the EEC. And the anti-EEC "revolutionary left" have helped them in this.

Somehow, the 'left' keep insisting, there is a short cut round internationalist working class struggle. If we can block the centralisation and concentration of capital represented by the EEC —

every one of the anti-EEC Marxist phrases there is a nationalistic gut reaction. Beneath all the sophistry about thwarting the bosses, there is the simple notion that things will be all right if only we can be left to fight it out in Britain without foreign interference. The Parliamentarians fear that legislating socialism is against the rules of the EEC: as if it isn't against the rules of the British state, not to mention being against the laws of history! And the 'revolutionaries' feel that outside the EEC, we are safe from outside physical intervention: oh to have such faith in the capitalist class's clinging to the rules of cricket!

Social Contract

The real struggle involved in the EEC debate is not a fight of the right wing 'Yes', against the left wing voting 'No'. Those usually thought of as the "left" are more right wing than the right wing on this question.

The 'No' campaign does not strengthen left wing ideas, left wing measures, or left wing actions. What it does is enable species such as Social Contract-salesmen to maintain a left wing image on the basis of nothing

What we said in 1971

"One of the arguments against having any truck with the opposition to the Common Market is that after entry, working class defence against any attacks by the ruling class will be hindered by the illusions about the Common Market itself being the cause of the pressures on the working class. Conditions which are quite likely to be as bad outside as inside will be attributed to the Common Market rather than to capitalism. The typical petit bourgeois confusion of the Communist Party would have a natural breeding ground and energy would be deflected from the actual class struggle into a 'Get Britain Out' campaign..."

From: IS & The Common Market, published as a document inside the IS group in 1971 by the Trotskyist Tendency, forerunner of WORKERS FIGHT.

if we can throw a spanner in the works of the bourgeoisie by getting Britain out, which will result in economic chaos — then the fight for socialism can take an easier route. 'Entry into the EEC is a matter of life or death for British capitalists', they say — and what socialist would pass up the chance of ensuring "death" for the British bosses just by voting in a referendum?

One problem with this argument is that it contradicts the line put out by many of the Labour left and by the Communist Party, who say that the British capitalist economy is suffering from the EEC and would be much more prosperous outside. The evidence, however, is that the Labour left are wrong on this point and the anti-EEC revolutionary left are more correct: withdrawal from the EEC would lead to bad times (though not disaster) in the British economy.

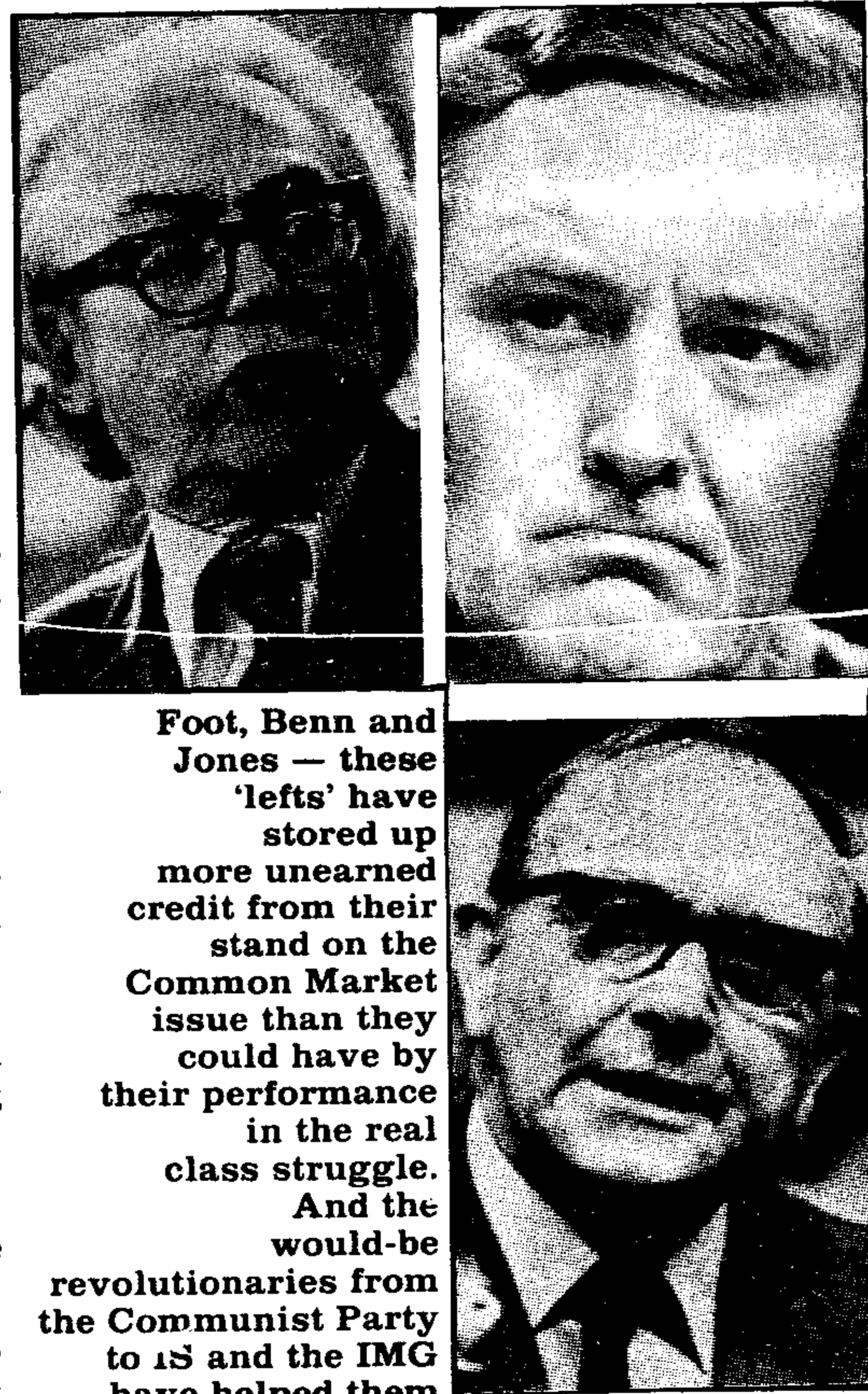
But the basic laws of development of capitalism cannot be abolished by a vote on June 5th. As long as capitalism continues, so also will the international centralisation and concentration of capital continue.

Smaller units

In the unlikely event of a majority voting "No", the British capitalist government will not be so lunatic as to attempt a 'siege economy', but will seek other arrangements and alignments for trade and the movement of capital. Socialists do not make the vain attempt to turn the clock of capitalism backwards, nor to advise the capitalists. Our policy on capitalist mergers has never been to demand they be broken up into the previous smaller units. We fight to oppose capitalism all along its development, learning and forging new weapons to match what's needed. And we fight to overthrow capitalism.

And the working class, after smashing capitalism, will introduce bigger 'concentrations', greater centralisation, more monopoly, bigger 'multinationals', than capitalism has ever seen.

The 'Vote No' campaign will not smash the bourgeoisie. But it has confused and weakened the working class. If inside every fat man there is a thin man struggling to get out, inside



Foot, Benn and Jones — these 'lefts' have stored up more unearned credit from their stand on the Common Market issue than they could have by their performance in the real class struggle. And the would-be revolutionaries from the Communist Party to IS and the IMG have helped them

better than reactionary chauvinist speech making.

Foot, Benn, Jones and their ilk make a great noise about the EEC hitting jobs and living standards. But they neither take nor encourage nor support one single concrete step of working class action on those issues.

Both "No" and "Yes" are anti-working class votes.

But there is a class struggle to wage on this issue. That is an ideological struggle: a struggle for an independent working class standpoint, against lining up behind either alternative of capitalist exploitation. The shock troops of the enemy in this struggle are nationalism and chauvinism, traditions deeply rooted in the history of the British Empire and in the buying off of a top layer of the working class with colonial super-profits.

For too long, the British left has failed miserably to fight against this chauvinism, particularly on the question of Ireland and of racialism against black workers in Britain. Increasingly, that failure is rebounding on the left.

IT IS TIME WE STARTED TO SWIM AGAINST THE TIDE.

HOME FROM THE PHONY WAR

WHEN the Common Market issue is over and the battalions of conflicting experts are demobbed, how will they fit into civvy street? Men bred for fighting don't always settle in to civilian life so easily. Who's to say that in this case men bred for debating will adapt themselves to class struggle...

While the Common Market took the headlines, so much else went by the board. Imagine half the vigour of the EEC issue dedicated to the fight to get the Shrewsbury Two released, or the Abortion Amendment Bill of James White thrown out. Imagine just a fraction of the energies spent in arguing for "British democracy" mobilised to fight such an obvious infringement of civil rights as the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Imagine some of Heffer's high principle being applied to these vital struggles — or, for that matter, against unemployment, against spending cuts, against the use of troops to break the Glasgow dustcart drivers' strike, against the growth of Fascist organisations!

Audrey Wise was booked every night to speak on the EEC issue, so she couldn't get to speak against the James White Bill. Bob Wright of the AUEW revealed that he had forty public speaking engagements on the Get Britain Out circuit — many times the number in support of the engineers' wage claim or even his own candidacy for the General Secretaryship of the AUEW. The research facilities of the ASTMS were switched full time to the question of the EEC. Trade union co-operation was at an all-time high ... against the EEC.

So what will happen when the wordy war is over and they're all demobbed?

Well, what did they do before?

A handful, the best among them, had played an active part in these struggles, though groupings like Tribune never threw their full weight behind a single one of them. Indeed, many of those who managed to get to their feet and even move into a jog-trot on the EEC had not supported a single extra-parliamentary cause or even a progressive cause in Parliament.

An issue like the Common Market was tailor made for them: it would not provoke industrial action or any significant strengthening of the sinews of the rank and file of the workers' movement; it did not put into question the nature of the existing social order but only obscured it; it touched their most cherished institution, Parliament; and, above all, it was, and could only have been, a ... debate. Never a fight: all talk and no action.

And yet, even so, within its limits, it did show what COULD be done. The victory within the TUC and within the Labour Party at every level of the 'No' campaign is an indication of what forces CAN be mobilised by the Labour leaders when they want to and aren't afraid to.

Had these forces been mobilised in support of an issue that could attract the support and active participation of the working class... But that's just it. At any point that the working class is likely to be drawn in actively on a mass scale, or at any point that the balance of forces these leaders have learned to live with — in society, in the Labour Party and in the trade union movement — is likely to be upset ... then the issue is always dropped.

Even in this EEC campaign, the moment the 'No' lobby of the Labour 'lefts' had actually won at the Special Conference and had the entire machinery of the Party at its disposal, it collapsed. Instead of demanding that the Party toe the majority line, they capitulated at the NEC meeting after the Conference in a brief twenty minute bout of paralysis before their own potential power.

Soon it will all be over. And across the horizon of the Referendum date there waits a Labour leadership and a TUC leadership ready to impose huge cuts in the living standards of the working class. There are already voices on the TUC General Council (Chappel and Alf Allen) urging a statutory wage control. In any case, the 'Social Contract' is to be rejigged to be more and more directly anti-working class.

Unemployment is rising and will continue to rise. Cuts in employment and public expenditure which will be given official blessing by a new budget after the Referendum have simply been delayed until the 'Great Debate' is over.

And what will our anti-Market crusaders do then? Will they stump the constituencies to drum up action against these anti-working class measures. Or will they sit back on the benches of the House of Commons — a House fit for heroes — in the safe knowledge that their finest hour, their greatest campaign, had no effect whatsoever on the class struggle. Other than to distract workers from the blows that will fall after June 5th — in or out of the EEC.

Statement by G.E.C. Action Committee:

THE STRENGTHENING of the Common Market runs directly counter to the interests of the entire trade union membership employed by the General Electric Company. This is the agreed view of the GEC Action Committee, which receives active support from stewards' committees and office committees on the best organised GEC sites in Stafford, London, Rugby, Wigan, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Treforest, Leicester etc.

The growing trend for mergers on a European scale represents a real threat to trades unionists in the electrical industry throughout the world. The importance of developing links with trade unionists working for GEC in other countries was stressed at the Action Committee's meeting last weekend. Links have been established with GEC workers in

Dundalk and Dun Laoghaire with the help of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union and letters have been sent to the CGT and CFDT in France, enquiring about union organisation in the 'Lincoln' washing machine factories which are now part of the GEC group. Similar efforts are being made to get in touch with GEC employees in Germany and Portugal.

Future copies of the GEC Newsletter should contain reports from factories in these countries, as well as information on disputes and wages in the British factories. Any trade unionist working for GEC can obtain copies from the Secretary, GEC Action Committee, 140 Clarence Road, Peterborough PE1 2LE. Please send a stamped addressed envelope.

THE THREAT FROM EUROPE?

Workers' Fight comments

THE STRENUOUS efforts of the GEC Action Committee to develop links with GEC workers throughout Britain and in many parts of Europe show that whatever way they vote on the Common Market issue, in their day to day trade union activities they are anything but insular, backward looking or conservative.

But their actions don't follow from what they say about the EEC — rather, what they say

is in direct contradiction to what they are doing.

Of course, it's better to be internationalist in deed and not in words rather than the other way round. But the apparently left phrases which introduce each paragraph of the GEC Action Committee statement — phrases which have become so familiar since the 'NO' Campaign started that they are often just taken for granted — are dangerous ones,

and we think that their use by even very class conscious workers should be argued against on the grounds that they run counter to effective progressive actions like developing links with trade unionists abroad.

These ideas can lead to some strange contradictions in action, too. For instance, Ford workers in England not long ago asked workers at Fords Genk works in Belgium to black any work the employers might try to transfer to them from the strike-bound works here. Many of those stewards who approached the Genk workers for their co-operation were within weeks campaigning for import restrictions being placed on motor vehicle imports from places like Belgium — a policy which would mean redundancies at Genk, and which could in any case only serve to divide car workers in Britain from their brothers abroad.

EEC is not British capitalism's only option for survival by any means. The decline of capitalism without a victory for proletarian revolution would mean a descent into barbarism, a chaos of war, famine and destruction unequalled in history.

All sorts of things strengthen capitalism anyway. Take the development of computer technology. That undoubtedly gave a boost to capitalism, and, seeing that computers are not part of every worker's own hardware, it could be argued that their development not only strengthened capitalism but put in the hands of the capitalists an immensely sophisticated piece of technology that it could use directly against the working class as a weapon. But are socialists against computers? Is it the duty of socialists working, say, for IBM, to destroy plans for new computers? Obviously not. As a matter of fact, computers will be an invaluable aid in the development of socialism after the proletarian revolution.

And what goes for computers goes for all sorts of other developments which represent not "threats" but simply new stages of capitalist development.

Our task, as workers and as socialists, is to build those forces which will be capable of killing capitalism at a stroke wherever and whenever we strike. We can do this and go on doing this whatever arrangements capitalism makes to gain this or that advantage. But we will fail to do it if we do not clarify our goals and methods.

A bigger threat than all the mergers

Organisations for class struggle like the GEC Action Committee are a stage in building the forces that can smash capitalism. It has the makings of an international combine committee. But it will be less effective, and possibly self defeating, if it continues to adhere to ideas whose logic is that every development of GEC's empire is seen as a time to tell the new addition to the group to see if it can break away, rather than an opportunity to construct a link that can be used in the struggle against the employers.

That the logic of these ideas is still the exact opposite of what the GEC workers are doing, is a good sign. But the danger is that the ideas will come to affect and weaken the action — and that poses a bigger threat than all the mergers and all the Treaties of the bosses.

Killing capitalism at a stroke

This 'left' phraseology which is so dangerous is also wrong and illogical. The GEC statement says: "the growing trend for mergers on a European scale represents a real threat to trade unionists..." Does it? Why?

Surely the trend for mergers is the very trend that created the Action Committee. Are the members of the Action Committee of the opinion that they should fight any further attempt by GEC to merge or take over? Do they think it would have been better had GEC-AEI-EE never existed? Are they — to be consistent — for the break-up of the group now? For a "get AEI out" campaign?

We are sure they are not!

How is this different when the mergers are on a European scale? The tendency towards an increasing concentration of capital is inherent within capitalism itself. It sometimes appears on a national and sometimes on an international scale, but it is still the same thing.

And in what way is this trend "a threat"? Many on the left argue that the threat lies in the fact that capitalism is strengthened by this trend. But if capitalism is strengthened, does that mean that workers are the weaker for it, weaker and less able to fight back, less able to destroy capitalism and build socialism? It would if, like a body deprived of its life-blood, capitalism deprived of its necessary development would just drop dead leaving the workers to build socialism in its place. But that isn't what happens (and in any case, the

'The best article written on the Common Market...'

Take his refutation of the idea that "the Market will facilitate socialist and trade union unity". Instead, he says, "it will put the bourgeoisie twenty years ahead at one throw. Luigi and Kurt and George and Gaston, with their secretaries, their linguistic skills, their massed telephones, their expense account weekends, their interlocking eurodirectorships, their manipulation of the rules and of the Brussels spouters, will always be smiling at the table, with the agenda cooked, the day before the workers get there."

Thompson the distinguished historian stands here awestruck. Not before the might of the state, of the powerful repressive institutions of capitalism, of its mighty armed forces... but, like every frightened petit bourgeois, bowled over by the technical apparatus, the headphones, the multilingual switchboard operators. Before these trappings of power there is partly panic and partly wonder, but above all an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and defeat.

The "British middle class sub-conscious" that Prof. E.P. Thompson attacks here with such verve and wit finds its fitting expression in "the distinguished historian" himself. Imagine having a shop steward who was so impressed by the boss's big desk that he declared that the workers just couldn't win because of it!

But it isn't all defeatism and impotence. Indeed, Thompson soon leaves behind the vision of

European trade union unity wrecked on the massed telephones of the Eurobosses, and turns to the British trade union movement which transports him to dizzy heights of optimism. "As British capitalism dies above and about us, one can glimpse, as an outside chance, the possibility that we could effect a peaceful transition — for the first time in the world — to democratic socialist society. I mean that we could do this in the next five years, not in the next century."

Another first for Britain?! "The best article yet written on the Common Market" thus ends, with the repetition of the same national prejudices that have beset the labour movement from the fall of Chartism onwards: in Britain the peaceful road is possible... Britain will always be peaceful. It will be first. And it will be... alone.

But like the incorrigible petit bourgeois he is, not even this supremely giddy optimism is allowed to pass without the most cautious hedging of bets. And thus he comes to preface this image of a uniquely favourable future "in the next five years" with the inconspicuous little phrase "as an outside chance". If he's wrong, he can always get his money back...

Rhetoric

Victory, for such people, is always "an outside chance", too slight to inspire confidence, let alone personal dedication or commitment. Which makes it not surprising that Mr. Edward Thompson long ago removed himself entirely from the political field. Thankfully, now, the working class does not hear his voice, except "by kind permission of the Sunday Times".

And all this receives from Michael Foot, the standard bearer of the Labour "left", such unreserved praise.

What a picture of the "Left" this presents: Foot, all noise, all gesture, all rhetoric; and Thompson, delighting in the subtle phrase, the clever joke and, above all, in himself. Together they manage to unfurl the nation's flag, now with more red showing, now with more blue; and always, never obtrusive but finally decisive, the white of an eternal truce in the class war. In case the "outside chances" don't come off.

"IT IS the best article yet written on the Common Market" said Michael Foot of a contribution to the Sunday Times' Europe Debate series. Not slow to follow such an authoritative cue, Tribune rushed into reprint.

Feeling that our task in refuting the anti-Market "lefts" has been just too easy, we eagerly sought "the best article yet written" in the hope of at last coming face to face with the REAL arguments.

But before we could even get to grips with these, our attention was diverted by the "visuals". The article, written by historian Edward Thompson, is set in Tribune like an upside-down 'L' over a large advertisement issued by the Flour Advisory Bureau. ("I want a fresh loaf that tastes good, keeps well and is good for my family" - British housewife. "You've just described your daily bread, and it's one of the cheapest in the world" - British baker" whose offering, a sliced loaf wrapped in a Union Jack, is handsomely illustrated.)

Trivial

No doubt the Tribune design department decided to support Professor Thompson's arguments in the common sense language of "home economics". After all, Thompson begins his article by berating those who think that "the EEC is about the belly", remarking that "This Eurostomach is the logical extension of the eating out habits of Oxford and North London." To these "green pepper" gourmets that Thompson attacks, Tribune counterposes the dull, familiar great British sliced loaf.

Thompson's momentous argument is that certain people will unfortunately be voting Yes with only their diet in mind. (He ignores the far greater number who no doubt will be voting No for the same reason.) "Once replete", he warns them "the Eurostomach will want to euronate. The present idea is to do it on the working class". But in his own approach to the question, he is just as determinedly trivial as those he castigates. In fact, as soon as he gets up from the dinner table and turns to the grand sweep of history, it becomes clear that triviality is this article's saving grace.

No, it wouldn't be the end of their world!

THE DEBATE between supporters and opponents of the Common Market has turned, among other things, on the effect on British capitalism of pulling out. The pro-EEC camp say it is vital for 'our' future prosperity; the 'vote no' campaigners claim (depending on how 'left' they are) either that withdrawal will force the bosses to invest more in Britain, which will be GOOD for workers; or that it will create havoc for the bosses, which will somehow be GOOD for workers and socialists.

All this is pretty irrelevant, from the viewpoint of revolutionary internationalism. It is however quite instructive to see what the bosses themselves think. Their leading weekly review, *The Economist*, recently

published the results of a survey on the attitudes of the chief executives of major British firms on the Common Market.

Some points are clear. Big business is strongly pro-market. 95% of the survey wanted to stay in. Only 2% wanted to leave.

But what if Britain gets out? The 'left' in the Labour Party and trade union leadership, and the Communist Party, argue that the bosses would then have to invest more in Britain. In fact, only 4% of the sample agreed; 41% would expect to invest less (and among the largest firms, which really dominate the economy, the percentage was higher, at 50%).

73 per cent of firms thought that withdrawal would harm them at least to some extent. And nearly half the biggest ones

(firms with a turnover of at least £11 million per annum and including all the giants of British capitalism) saw themselves being harmed a lot.

So far so good for people like the International Socialism Group (IS), who think that everything that's bad for capitalism is good for us, and never mind the fiercer attacks that would be mounted against the working class. But British withdrawal wouldn't anyway be the apocalypse that see people see it as. 80% of the firms in *The Economist* survey admitted that the uncertainty caused by renegotiation had not affected their investment programmes in Britain.

In general big business needs the Market, and it is a natural consequence of the large

firms most involved in trying to compete on the world market, and with most chance of success in the EEC. But in the long run, most firms saw themselves employing the same number of workers, or just a few less, if Britain remained in the EEC, and only one in five firms thought that they would invest less or employ many fewer in a separate Britain. Thus for the majority, in or out would make no major difference. In fact, the whole tendency of the crisis-ridden EEC economy is toward only a very slow process of integration, as the process of renegotiation and the reams of exceptions to EEC rules that have appeared over the last couple of years, serve to demonstrate.

WHAT DO European revolutionary socialists think of the chauvinist anti-EEC uproar which is now thundering with such nauseating self-abandon within the British labour movement? What do they think of the fact that the revolutionary groups, one after another, have joined in the anti-EEC chorus?

We reproduce here the views of the French Trotskyist organisation "Lutte Ouvriere" on the capitulation to British chauvinism by the British International Socialism (IS) Group, with which LO maintains close fraternal links. In restrained tones, but very definitely, LO indicts IS for blatant opportunism, making exactly the same case which we made in our pamphlet "IS and the Common Market" published inside IS (of which WF was then a part) in mid-1971, immediately after IS buckled under the pressure of British chauvinism and jumped

on the anti-EEC bandwagon. Every point in this article against IS's opportunism applies with as much — and sometimes more — force to the WRP, 'Militant', the IMG and the other Anti-EEC groups.

L.O. has links with IS, but retains autonomy, and thus expresses itself openly. What the European sections of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International think of the unrestrained chauvinism of their British sister group, the IMG, we don't know — though we know that not one section of the USFI within the EEC is campaigning to get its own country to come out, or to keep Britain out. We know that the French section advocated abstention in 1969 in a referendum on whether Britain should be allowed in or not. These organisations, which maintain a hollow pretence of being an International based on a common programme and bound by

international democratic centralism, agree to keep quiet on the matter. But their silence is eloquent.

If the IMG is now behaving as a revolutionary Marxist organisation should, then for example the German section of the USFI is clearly failing in its revolutionary duty to campaign to get Germany out. And if the sections of the USFI in EEC countries are right in ignoring the Common Market, then the IMG is indulging in scandalous opportunism and capitulating to British insularity and nationalism.

In reality each national section does "its own thing", and is regulated by weather-vane sensitivity to local pressures and not by fidelity to and resolute struggle for a common international socialist PROGRAMME. In reality the so-called "International" these groups belong to is a sham and a fraud. That it allows the

IMG to dance to the British chauvinist tune is only one more proof of it.

The article below contains a passing reference to the EEC which reflects LO's analysis that it is an insubstantial and a fragile organisation.

WORKERS FIGHT disagrees with LO's analysis. There is of course still a tremendous nationalist resistance and continuous struggles for national advantages within the EEC. But the EEC will only collapse when the advantages of retreat to full economic nationalism outweigh the advantages of the EEC. Economic integration and the consequent benefits which the EEC has brought to the major European capitalist powers has advanced so far that only in conditions of large scale world capitalist collapse (probably worse even than that which followed 1929) could the advantages from a retreat by each of the nation

states behind its own economic borders possibly outweigh the present advantages from the EEC. And even then, the whole EEC would not necessarily collapse. The longer the EEC lasts and the greater the integration, the greater will be the world capitalist economic catastrophe necessary to make a nationalist retreat the likely response.

The difference we have on this with LO on assessing the Common Market has no relevance to the majority of the arguments used here against IS and which are applicable to almost the entire so-called revolutionary left in Britain — which is disgracing itself yet again (with various evasions, pretences and excuses), by taking its place in the ranks of the chauvinists, dipping the red banner of socialist internationalism and marching under the butcher's apron of British nationalism.

A EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONARY VIEW

THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM GROUP AND THE E.E.C.

The British Labour government has decided to hold a referendum on 5 June next on whether UK will stay in the Common Market or not. It is the first time the British electorate has been called to vote in a referendum. The leaders of the Labour Party are very divided over this question (Wilson has just been forced into the minority within his own party which came out in favor of withdrawal of UK from the EEC). But at the same time, the subject of the referendum is far from exciting public opinion. It remains to be seen how much notice the British government will take of the result of the vote, whatever it may be (though a YES vote is practically assured). After all, only a year ago, Wilson was denouncing the Common Market. And he did not later need to ask the British people's opinion when he began defending the exact opposite, that is, Britain's participation. This, he now claims, will get the British economy moving again. There is no reason for him to feel bound tomorrow by the results of the referendum, if he wants to call into question Britain's participation in this fragile agreement between the European capitalist states.

THE REAL PROBLEMS

In fact, the Labour government is using this referendum to turn the working class's attention away from the real problems concerning it. In particular, the government has been distracting them from its anti-working class policies, namely, the call it made in the name of National Unity to freeze wages. This they were able to do by firstly getting the support of the trade-unions. The latter in their conference of September last, agreed almost unanimously to Wilson's «social contract.» And at the very last, the extreme left of the trade-unions rallied to it too. The aim of the present referendum is to enable the Labour politicians and particularly the left wing of the trade-union movement to demonstrate a noisy and spectacular opposition concerning a matter of secondary importance. In doing so, it falls into the sort of demagoguery that puts it into the same boat as Enoch Powell. Yet, all the while, it agrees to the «National Unity» pact and remains loyal to the government's famous «social contract.»

It would only have seemed natural for the British socialist revolutionaries to denounce the political swindle that this refer-

BY THE FRENCH TROTSKYIST GROUP LUTTE OUVRIERE

endum is. They should agitate so that the workers refuse to participate in this vote. Whatever the result, it can only serve the political interests of the government, and at the same time enable the Labour Party left to restore its image as an opposition.

This is not the stance taken by the comrades of International Socialism.

They have chosen to wage a campaign to vote NO. In this way, they have joined the positions of the Labour Party and trade-union left. The latter, like the Communist Party, use every demagogical argument they can to defend «national independence.» They organize joint meetings with any anti-Common Market forces in the country, from the Labour Party left to the extreme right. And thus, the «National Front» which out of basic decency could not be accepted into the family of all the bourgeois and reformist political organizations campaigning for a NO vote can pay itself the treat of disrupting the latter's joint meetings. It does so quite naturally on the grounds of the right to express themselves on the same program, which is what happened April 13 last.

AIR OF RESPECTABILITY

The IS comrades wrote in their weekly *Socialist Worker* (1 February 1975):

The debate is remarkably confused. On the one hand, we have the extreme-right wing of the Labour Party pretending it is «internationalist», talking of «unity with European socialists.»

On the other, left trade-union leaders opposed to the Common Market.

... Instead of leading a fight against the attempts to hold back pay and increase unemployment, they (the trade-union bureaucracy) have tried to divert attention by com-

Right: WORKERS FIGHT's stall at this year's LO international fete for revolutionary socialists. Next page: a mass rally at the fete.



plaining about the «threat to sovereignty and democracy» from Brussels. Such people claim it necessary to unite «everyone» in opposition to the Common Market. What that has meant in practice is unions forking out money to pay for meetings for an open racist like Powell, and left wingers giving the National Front and other extreme right wing groups an air of respectability by working with them.

This shows that IS is fully conscious of the policy of the Labour Party left. How then do they justify their stand? The answer is to be found in the 8 March *Socialist Worker*:

So how can we say «Vote NO» in the referendum on whether Britain stays in the Common Market? Isn't that just pandering to reactionary nationalist ideas?

... A NO vote, that is to say a defeat for the big business, Tory, Liberal, and right-wing Labour coalition on this issue is in our interests. We are part of the left. We can no more abstain in this confrontation than we could abstain in last year's elections. The arena for our internationalist message is inside the NO camp. That is where the vast majority of class-conscious workers are. That is where we belong.

In a previous issue of the paper, Chris Harman replied to those readers who stood for abstention or boycott:

For the International Socialists to abstain on this issue would be not only to refuse to hinder British capitalism's plans to

strengthen itself, it would also be to line up with the extreme right within the working-class movement.

This would play into the hands of the Communist Party leaders, who would be able to pretend that their own disgusting chauvinism and alliances with Powell were the only alternative to the Jenkinsites and the Market.

This is why the National Committee of the International Socialists unanimously decided in January to campaign for a NO vote around the slogans No to the Common Market, No to national chauvinism, Yes to the United Socialist States of Europe.

CUSTOMS AGREEMENT

The arguments of the IS comrades are of two kinds. Firstly, they say that the common market is a reactionary attempt to bolster British capitalism. They also acknowledge that it is utopian to think that the Common Market can be anything else other than a customs agreement between rival capitalisms. However this does not stop them from declaring that a victory for the NO vote would aim at weakening big capital! This type of argument is convincing only on the surface, when one considers that IS itself has declared that a victory of the NO vote would not really influence the government's policy on the Common Market:

This is undoubtedly why they add another type of argument to this first analysis which is not very convincing. It consists in saying that it is indispensable to strengthen the left wing of the Labour Party and of

the trade union movement. «A NO vote would quickly bring on a political crisis and seriously weaken the right wing of the Labour movement.» But that is precisely the point. Such a «victory» of the Labour Party left based on a nationalist political demagoguery, as acknowledged by the IS comrades themselves, would be a false victory. It would be an imposture and certainly not a victory for class-conscious workers. Contrary to what *Socialist Worker* says, the «most class-conscious» workers are not especially on the side of the NO voters. After all, this choice just plays on the nationalist prejudices of the British proletariat. The opportunism of the IS comrades toward the trade-union leaders causes them to give in to these prejudices. And it is these very same prejudices that are flattered by demagogical politicians who claim to be «left-wing.»

ILLUSIONS IN LABOUR LEFT

A «victory» of the left on secondary grounds such as these and where the opinion of the workers is in reality superfluous can do nothing to raise the awareness of the latter. It cannot provide them with the means of fighting against the reactionary, anti-social policies of the Labour government. All it can do is reinforce the illusions in the reformist leaders. And what is even more serious, it can contribute toward binding the working class a little more to the politics of its own national bourgeoisie. Worst of all, this would be done on a truly reactionary basis. Finally, IS very quickly assimilates the Labour Party left with the «class-conscious» workers. By spreading the idea that supporting the NO vote will strengthen the Labour Party left, IS is helping to make this imposture of a referendum credible. They are enabling the leaders of the reformist left to regain a semblance of popularity at a low cost and on the basis of a demagogical policy. These are the same reformist leaders who have accepted all sorts of compromises with the Wilson government.

If one considers that the revolutionaries have a role to play during this election campaign, then, it is precisely that of denouncing this political campaign in which the working class can only lose out by being taken in.

And if IS persists in participating in the referendum in this way, contrary to all political logic, it will just show up its coattailing of the trade-union leaders.

It is not possible to wage a campaign for the NO vote on a «class basis» during this referendum, despite what *Socialist Worker* writes. A class-based revolutionary policy cannot be pursued when one has adopted a position which means endorsing a demagogical, chauvinist, and reactionary policy of National Unity.

JUST EMPTY WORDS

All of the IS comrades' internationalist proclamations are just empty words and empty propaganda, drowned out by the agitation for the NO vote. Whether they like it or not, they are at the sides of the reformists, the Powellites, and the extreme right.

IS tries, of course, to make up for its coattailing by numerous declarations concerning their good internationalist intentions. Here is the axis of their campaign (*International Socialism*, no 77, April 1975):

- No to the Common Market; Yes to the Socialist United States of Europe.
- Socialist Internationalism, not British chauvinism.
- Build international links between organized workers; build international combine committees in the multinationals.
- For trade-union unity; one international federation of all genuine unions irrespective of political affiliations.
- No «popular fronts» with Tories, Powellites, or Fascists; for working-class unity against the Common Market.

But an accumulation of words concerning their internationalist plans is not enough to cover up IS's opportunistic policies in coattailing of the British left. Nothing will be changed by all the declarations of internationalist propaganda. During such a campaign, they can be nothing but propaganda. All it means is using nice words and intentions to hide a very real political capitulation. And all these manifestoes (which can only be for internal usage) cannot give an internationalist character to IS's campaign in the midst of an electoral bandwagon which is far from internationalist.

The biggest fraud in this election is having the British workers believe that they can change their life in any way by expressing their opinion on what they consider to be the best way for the British bourgeoisie to get along with its imperialist neighbours

and competitors. Inviting the workers to say yes or no means maintaining the illusion, one way or another, that they can check the present economic crisis within the framework of the system. It has them believe that they can exert an influence on the economic system in Great Britain. It would like them to think that they can direct it to the advantage of the British proletariat, either by relying on capitalist «growth» as advocated by the pro-Common Market liberals, or by opting for a reactionary protectionist policy supposedly protecting them from the high cost of the agricultural produce of the European states. It means having them hope for a change in their lives in the months and years to come which can be brought about by inviting them to choose between the various possible policies of the bourgeoisie. It all comes down to turning working-class consciousness away from its class terrain. And this is the very thing that is to be condemned.

Revolutionaries should not be getting caught in a political battle on a terrain deliberately chosen by the bourgeois politicians in power to divert the workers' attention from their real problems. This should be avoided even if their aim is to strengthen the «Labour Party left.» For this is an illusion and merely a cover up for reinforcing the prejudices of the British proletariat.

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST

If revolutionary militants want to publicize their program during this campaign, the right way to go about it is not by proclaiming «No to the Common Market.» It is a very bad point of departure for launching internationalist propaganda. Because we are socialist revolutionaries we are naturally in favor of all that goes toward abolishing national borders. It is not a question of denouncing the Common Market because «it strengthens big capital.» This grievance is not just a strange one, but a puerile one. And even if we assume that it is justified by the context, it still remains so. Though it has always been a reformist argument, it has never been adhered to by revolutionary Marxists. Have Marxists ever been «against» the concentration of production because it strengthens big capital—which is obvious anyway? We are neither for nor against the Common Market for the good and simple reason that it is not a real attempt to do away with national borders, whether it strengthens big capital in Europe or not.



All it represents is mere bargaining over customs tariffs between second-rate, rival imperialisms. In fact, the Common Market does not even mean the end of protectionist policies on the part of individual bourgeois states. Far from it. Though bourgeois theoreticians or politicians would like to see it as a step toward the suppression of national borders, we just denounce it as being purely and simply utopian. This is even truer in this period of capitalist decay. Even if it is in their own interests, capitalist countries are incapable of organizing the world market and freeing it totally of national borders. The European capitalist countries simply cannot create a «Common Market» This is essentially all we have to say about it to the workers.

A POLITICAL FRAUD

Only the United Socialist States of Europe will be able to abolish these long-anachronistic borders. And one certainly does not put oneself in the best position for making internationalist propaganda by campaigning for «No to the Common Market.» For whether we like it or not, this means to everyone «national sovereignty» and «protectionism» and awakens nationalist feelings in them. Assuming that the IS comrades really want to direct an internationalist propaganda toward a wider public during this referendum, the only way they could do so is by an outright denunciation of the political fraud constituted by it.

Refusing to do so, as the IS comrades in fact do, is to bow down to the deepest prejudices of the British working class. Whatever one might say or think, it boils down to abandoning all internationalist propaganda worthy of its name.

“Abstentions carried” the convenor said

TOM LOOKED up from his machine and listened, slightly puzzled, as the sound of silence slowly moved up the shop. The steward must be back from the meeting. Tom removed his gloves and goggles, took off the safety helmet with the ear muffs attached, and bent down and unbuckled his gaiters. Feeling strangely light he joined the other workers streaming towards the canteen.

Inside, there was the usual confusion of a mass meeting called by the union in works time and no one seeming to know what was going on. As everyone got settled with a cup of tea, rumours were flying around.

“OK brothers and sisters, let me have your attention”. It was the convenor speaking, standing on one of the tables. “At the last branch meeting a resolution was passed instructing the shop stewards to open negotiations with the management to scrap the shift system and revert to regular day work.

“This morning, we saw the management, and their reply was that to keep the firm viable they would be retaining the two shift system. But as it had been brought to their notice that people were not happy with the shift system as it stood, they were quite prepared to juggle with the hours, and with this in mind would offer the workers the choice between A6am until 2, 2pm ‘til 10pm, as with the shift pattern now; or B7am ‘til 3pm, 3pm to 11pm.

“So brothers and sisters, the choice is yours — A shift or B shift.” The convenor stopped speaking and looked round the canteen.

Tom leaned back with a grin on his face and waited for the reaction.

The first person to speak was young Kathleen from the press shop. In her opinion shift B was much the best as you got an extra hour in bed, and therefore your social life was better when you were on the early shift. Abdul immediately supported her. Gardening was his hobby and he did his gardening when he was on the late shift; he would be able to get up at the same time, and get in an extra hour's digging.

Nellie the grinder jumped up next. She wanted shift A: finishing at 2. was perfect for her because she was then able to cook her husband and kids a proper dinner. They would have to catch what they could otherwise, and all her husband could manage was egg and chips or sausage and chips.

He was itching to speak

While she was speaking Jack the crane driver had been trying impatiently to catch the convenor's eye. He was itching to speak. The people who wanted B shift were quite mad — couldn't they see that they wouldn't be able to get a pint after work as the pubs would be shut!

Cyril the creep spoke next, to say that whatever choice was made it must be made in a reasoned manner but the most important thing was to keep the firm viable.

Tom sat listening as the discussion went back and forth, until finally he could take it no longer. He caught the chairman's eye. “Brothers and sisters, what are you doing? Can't you see how management has divided us? Does shift A lead to regular days? No! Does shift B lead to regular days? No! So what the hell are we doing discussing them.

“Remember five years ago when we were threatened with redundancies and management put the question to us of who goes first, blacks or women. We refused to answer this question and went on to demand work sharing. The management soon forgot about redundancies when they knew they were going to have real resistance, and we won. We should remember what we learned from that exercise.

by **Geordie Barclay**

“Now the question today OK, it has got minor advantages for some workers to be on shift A. Shift B has slight advantages for other workers. But regular day shift has major advantages for all the workers. Therefore the meeting should refuse to answer the question put to it, and instruct the Union to continue to pursue the demand for regular day working.”

Not a hand was raised

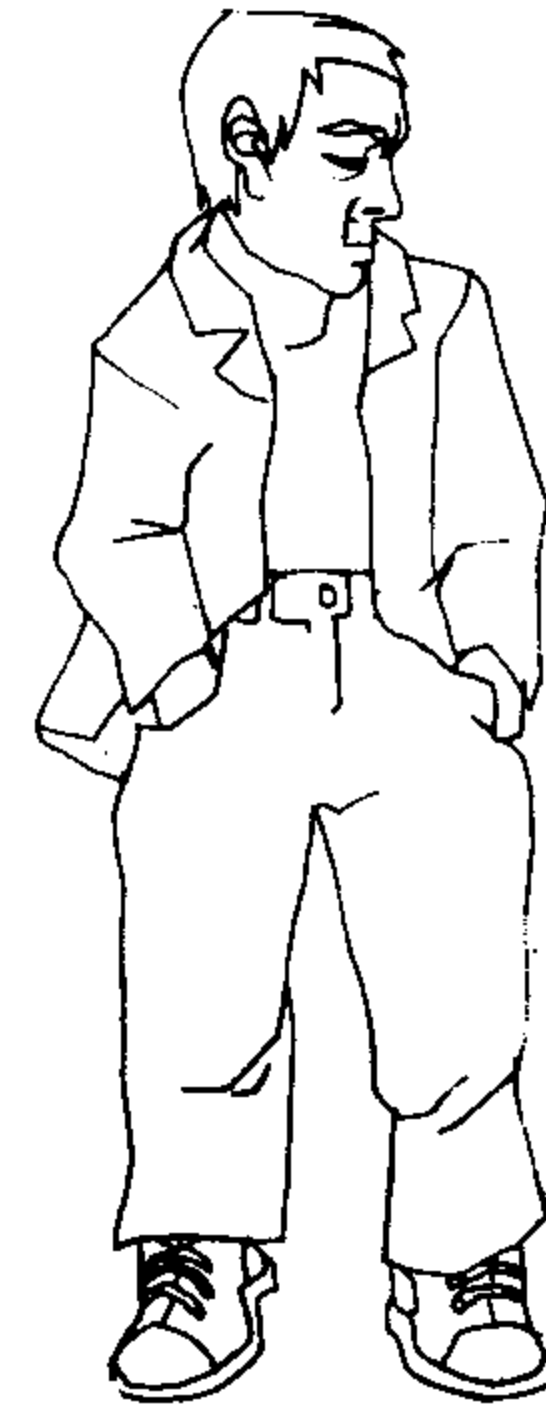
At that, the convenor put the question to the meeting. “All in favour of shift A”: not a hand was raised. “All in favour of shift B”: not a hand was raised. “Abstentions” — the hands shot up. “OK” the convenor said, “abstention carried unanimously.” And the meeting was closed.

That night, Tom was at the local Labour Club, and found that there was a meeting on the Common Market. Two MPs were speaking, one to support staying in, the other to vote NO. Tom sat at the back of the room and looked around to see who he knew. He noticed 9 or 10 people from the factory.

The meeting started, and both the speakers launched into lectures about the best way to run the capitalist economy. One said that prices wouldn't be so high if we were out of the Market; the other said they would be even higher. One said less people would be on the dole if we were out of the Market; the other said if Britain was out, even more would be out of a job. As far as Tom could make out, they were both just guessing, and he knew that anyway the best way to save jobs was to fight for them, and the best way to deal with inflation was to make sure that wages kept ahead.

The anti-Market speaker dwelt a lot on the remote Brussels bureaucracy, on the “loss of British sovereignty” and on the Market making for more mergers and bigger firms. On all

IT WAS CYRIL THE CREEP...



Tom sat back with a grin, and waited...

these counts, Tom again had his doubts. The local Town Hall was already more tied up in red tape than Whitehall itself, and he couldn't see why a few miles of Channel would make things worse: surely it wasn't a matter of geography! As for sovereignty, Tom knew that he and people like him had no control over what their MP did, and that their MP had no control over the Cabinet or the civil service or the ‘leaders of industry’. And mergers — well, they happened anyway: when his firm had been taken over, the workers hadn't wasted their time fighting to keep the old firm going — they had been far too busy fighting to get better working conditions and make sure there wasn't any speed-up. Anyway, the worst sweat-shop he knew of was run by a local ‘family firm’ where everyone knew the boss. What mattered was to be well organised.

A girl who sold papers

After both speakers had ended — each with resounding talk about ‘socialist internationalism’ — an old Labour Party stalwart got up to make a contribution. Neither speaker had impressed him much, he said, but the pro-Market MP had sounded too much like a Tory. He would be voting No because that was the opposite of what the Tories wanted. One had to take a position and vote: not to vote was a cop-out, it just wasn't a political position.

Tom wondered. He remembered the morning's meeting. As he was thinking about it, various other people spoke. Those in favour of ‘Europe’ said it would be better ‘for Britain’. Which Britain, thought Tom. Those against also dwelt on ‘Britain’, and seemed to be full of ignorant prejudices and fear of change. A girl who sold left wing papers outside Tom's factory said voting No was part of a fight for a Socialist Europe. Tom wasn't convinced.

Finally he made up his mind and got up to speak. There weren't just two positions on the matter: there were three, and there should have been three speakers. People looked puzzled, but he went on: to vote yes meant you were voting yes to European capitalism. It was nothing to do with socialist internationalism. To vote no was to say yes to British capitalism. Abstention, he said, wasn't a cop-out from any real struggle, just from a debate that didn't really concern workers at all. Any experienced trade unionist will tell you that a favourite trick of the bosses is to ask workers questions which amounted to asking “when did you stop beating your wife?”. Any answer would land you in a mess! There are some questions that workers cannot and will not answer, and it is downright dangerous to answer such questions. “Come June 5th”, Tom finished, “I for one won't be voting!”

Somebody heckled from the front row: “I've heard that load of rubbish once too often today”. There was no mistaking that voice. It was Cyril the Creep...

ARMED FORCES CONTROL TIGHTENS IN PORTUGAL

SOME OF the facts are now clearer about the closing of the Lisbon pro Socialist Party paper 'Republica' (see WF 98). Apparently the demand of the printworkers — not all CP members; in fact, one of the far left groups, LUAR, has more influence than the CP — for control over the paper was originally connected with genuine workers' grievances, and only later did it become a pawn in the CP-SP rivalry.

But the question of 'Republica' seems to have

been totally submerged by the general political crisis, in which the Armed Forces Movement is increasingly internally divided. The SP leaders have ended the boycott of cabinet meetings which they began over the 'Republica' dispute; and at the same time the government have taken a further step towards repressing the left wing and working class organisations which have grown up since the overthrow of Caetano, by seizing the offices of the Maoist Party MRPP and jailing 200 of its members.

FIRM TAKES OUT 310 SUMMONSES AGAINST STRIKERS

BY
DAVE
SPENCER

LAST WEDNESDAY Massey Ferguson management pinned 310 summonses to the gates of the occupied Banner Lane plant in Coventry. The documents, hung on the factory's four gates, named 310 of the strikers, meaning that they are summoned to appear in Court in London on Friday of this week.

Massey Ferguson are claiming that the occupation of this plant — one of three being occupied in Coventry in pursuit of a wage claim — has taken place "without licence or consent".

The strikers are not

intimidated by the big-wigs of the Queens Bench division, though. They realise that Massey Ferguson has been planning to smash the militant organisation at the firm for a long time. In fact, as we reported last week, the occupying strikers have discovered a memo from the board to management indicating that they are going to provoke a strike at this period.

The union, however, is chickening out as fast as it can. George Butler, (Flunkey by name, and flunkey by nature...) assistant divisional organ-

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT conference of the Troops Out Movement, held in London on Saturday May 24th, was described by the organisers as the largest delegate conference ever in Britain on the question of Ireland. It was attended by some 500 people, about 300 of them delegates from trade union and Labour Party or LPYS branches, trades councils and student unions, and certainly could be a step towards rooting the movement in wider sections of the working class than hitherto.

Whether or not this turns out to be the case depends largely on the ability of delegates to fight for a real understanding of the issues at stake in Ireland. There is a real urgency, as Eamonn McCann stressed in the morning session. At issue,

iser for the AUEW, has told the convenor to end the occupation. What they ought to be doing is the same as the Massey Ferguson management, call for reinforcements. In the case of a union, though, it doesn't mean going to the courts (the men are expected to refuse to attend the hearing), it means organising solidarity action in the district and through the company's other plants. This is all the more necessary as it is clear that Massey Ferguson's workers militancy is a by-word in Coventry and a defeat for these strikers will have serious consequences for the entire local labour movement.

Demagogy used to obscure the issues

by J.W.HARDING

he said, was the very existence of the Six County state, and the fight for democracy was a fight against the existence of that state, with its permanent built-in sectarian rule.

McCann pointed out that the status quo could now be defended only by the most reactionary means, with the army and Protestant assassination squads cooperating in terrorising the Catholic population to accept undiluted Orange rule.

Dr Tim Shallice, of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, spoke about the technological warfare and torture used by the British army in northern Ireland. Having been engaged in over 50 small wars since 1945, and now as the veteran of an ultra political conflict in Ulster, he said, the British army had become the most expert counter insurgency army in the world. By its refusal to move against last year's UWC strike, it had shown its potential ability to mutiny against the civil power. Especially since 1972, the army had operated in a much more sophisticated manner, its repression being far more specifically focused, and its operations being informed by much more directly political thinking. This could be seen, for instance, in the number of house searches in the Catholic areas — 17,262 in 1971, 71,914 in 1974 — and the random arrests for very short periods of literally thousands of people.

The link up between the army and the Protestant reactionary forces was stressed by a member of the Association for Legal Justice from Belfast, who said that six years had been spent in arming the Protestant para military forces and attempting to disarm the Catholics. There were now 100,000 licensed guns in the province, and untold numbers of unlicensed guns in the province, and untold numbers of unlicensed ones, mostly in the hands of the Protestants.

These morning speeches would have been very useful if the conference had attempted some serious discussion of practical conclusions to be drawn from them especially from Eamonn McCann's contribution. But instead we saw one of the worst possible examples of the opportunism of the TOM leadership, their willingness to give their platform to any sort of politics as long as it boosts their publicity. Leo Abse, MP for Pontypool, was the next platform speaker.

Not only was Abse not denounced by the TOM leadership: TOM leader Gery Lawless defended Abse on the grounds that he represented the "broad labour movement". We would ask Lawless: if Abse had spewed out the same racist abuse against black people as he did against the Irish, would you still have defended him as the speaker of the "broad labour movement". Or is it just that the English liberal conscience to which you accommodate is more queasy about anti-black racism than anti-Irish racism?

Truly bizarre and degrading is the sight of Lawless, who makes so much of his Irishness, accepting anti-Irish racism for the sake of his ambitions for a 'broad movement'.

Yes, it is a fact that the "broad labour movement" still has racist swine like Abse at its head. The task of revolutionaries is not to boost Abse, but to denounce him as mis-representing and mis-leading the labour movement.

WITHDRAWAL

The last section of the agenda, given over to discussion on the resolution, gave little opportunity to clarify the issues. On the contrary, it was marked by the most scandalous bureaucracy and irresponsible demagogy.

A verbose and woolly resolution, reflecting the policy of the TOM leadership, was put by Michael Knowles of Hackney Trades Council. The resolution, while reasserting the main demands of TOM — Troops Out and Self Determination — was also calculated to endorse the TOM leadership's policy of unprincipled accommodation. Mild criticism was directed against the 'Bill of Rights' and 'withdrawal to barracks' positions, but the main theme was to welcome TOM co-operation with any progressive activity on the Irish question (such as Leo Abse's?). No attempt at all was made in the resolution to seriously assess and draw conclusions from the actual situation in Ireland. The proposals for action were for a mass rally in November and a national lobby of MPs' surgeries as part of a week of action on Ireland to be held on July 13th-19th.

There were two amendments which raised important political differences with the TOM leadership, both proposed by supporters of Workers Fight. Simon Temple argued that TOM should take seriously the danger of communal civil war, should declare it stood four-square in support of the national struggle in Ireland, and should start campaigning for relief committees to aid the nationalist population to be set up in the event of civil war. Alan Haslam attacked the unprincipled politicking of TOM with Labour MPs. Ireland, and should start campaigning for relief committees to aid the nationalist population to be set up in the event of civil war. Alan Haslam attacked the unprincipled politicking of TOM with Labour MPs.

Of the eight or so floor speakers permitted in the debate (from a list of 87 applications to speak), it somehow(?) happened that no less than three were from the TOM bureaucracy — Paddy Prenderville, Alastair Renwick, and Gery Lawless himself, coming back for a second oration after a 30 minute speech just an hour or so previously. (This performance, at least, did cause some uproar from the floor.)

All devoted most of their time to attacking the Workers Fight position in the most dishonest way.

Paddy Prenderville said that we could not call for TOM to widen the scope of its activities, because logically (!) you could not then stop widening the scope, and you would end up calling for TOM to be active on Bolivia and Vietnam.... Alastair Renwick lyingly accused Workers Fight of demanding TOM do what we were not prepared to do ourselves. (As he full well knows, it was WF who took the initiative in getting a relief committee going at the time of the Loyalist 'general strike'.) Gery Lawless capped it all with a direct lie, asserting that WF had been crying wolf for nine months about the danger of civil war in Ireland.

No right of reply was granted to the WF speakers. Indeed, the running of the conference could be summed up by saying that there were two distinctive political views expressed, of which one had the platform at its disposal for seven minutes, one for seven hours. The amendments were defeated, though a considerable number of delegates voted for the one criticising TOM's opportunism towards Labour MPs.

The TOM leadership "high" on their visions of themselves as leaders of a mass movement, felt able to ignore the urgent warnings outlined by Eamonn McCann in the morning session. It is vital now that a fight is taken up in the labour movement and in consequences for the working class and for Ireland.

Bonus strike ignored by Northampton L P

THE official strike of building workers at Henry Boot's Exeter Road site in Northampton is now entering its fifth week. The men are resisting a clear attempt to lower the wages of building workers in the area in a period of high unemployment in the industry.

The main demand of the strikers is that they be guaranteed a fall back bonus of 50 per cent of their basic rate of £34 — something even Henry Boot's own bonus scheme says they should earn for an average day's work. The present bonus varies between £3 and £7.

The strike committee has appealed to local trade unionists and the trades council for support and collections have been made on other sites.

The reaction of the local Labour Party tops has been less encouraging. They have been ignoring this dispute although the local General Management Committee of the Labour Party has voted to support the men and although this dispute is one a site where council houses are being built with lump labour — a clear breach of the agreement between the council and Henry Boot's.

The leader of the Labour group has even implied

that workers cannot expect to get the wages they got in the so called 'boom times' and that the law prevented the Labour group from taking sides in the dispute... unless of course it is to side with Henry Boot.

All donations and messages of support to P. Hinton, 159 St Edmunds Rd, Northampton. D.G.

THE BRISTOL N.U.T. meeting on the education cuts last Thursday (22 May), while exposing the seriousness of the cuts, failed to organise any action against them. The authority has added £1,000,000 to the £800,000 cuts ordered by the government last year. Avon is 215 teachers under quota, while at least 200 teachers are unemployed in the area. In Bristol, 31 per cent of children are in classes of at least 35 — though the NUT regards 30 as the maximum desirable class size, and will support teachers refusing to teach classes of over 35. Several speakers from the floor proposed the idea of an alliance of unions in the public sector to fight the cuts — but the official motion passed by the meeting ignored this idea altogether. S.O.

FIGHT FLOPS WITHOUT RANK AND FILE ACTION

AS militants in the Chapel feared, the fight over natural wastage and redundancies at South Lancashire Newspapers is as good as lost, on account of the failure of the Chapel to commit itself to any rank and file action.

After the total closure of one of SLN's weekly papers on Thursday May 15th, the NUJ responded by invoking official negotiation procedures, forcing management to admit it was in breach of a national agreement in the case of one of the threatened redundancies, and ensuring a place was found for the other journalist while talks proceeded.

But the following Tuesday, a Chapel meeting heard that the Kirkby office was to close; the staff were removed to Prescott and told to produce the Kirkby paper from there. No decision was made to oppose this, because "everything is in the hands of the officials now". One NUJ member has succumbed to continual management threats and resigned — four face prohibitive travelling costs, one having to spend one third of her take home pay on getting to and from work. N.W.

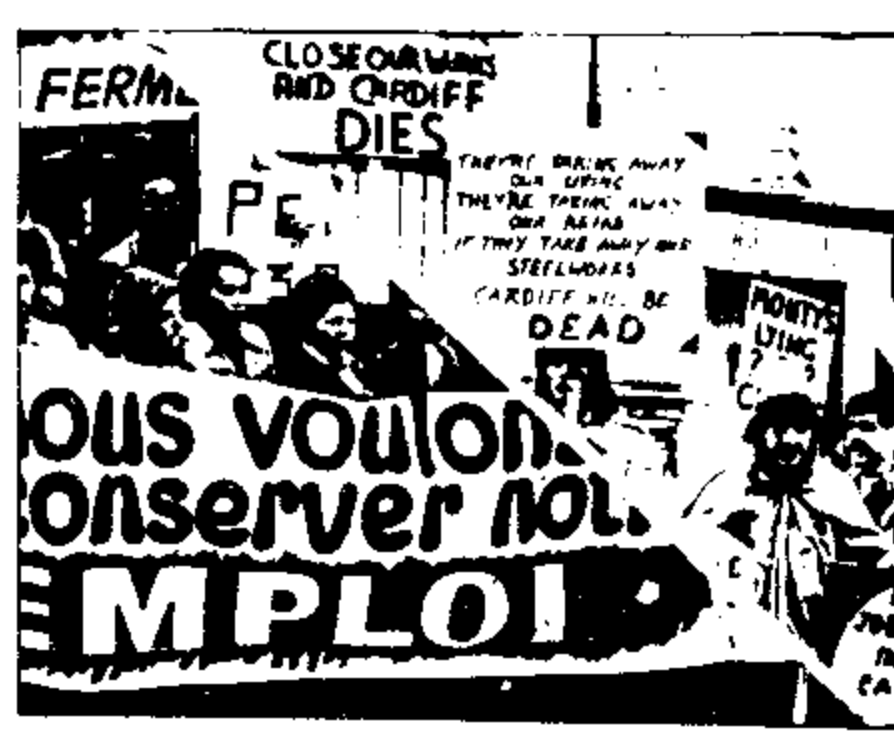
NORTHAMPTON Workers' Fight meeting on the Common Market. 8pm, Tuesday 3rd June, at the Co-Op Hall, Exeter Road, off the Kettering Road.

NOTTINGHAM Workers' Fight forum: Sue Leigh on Vietnam. 8.30pm, Sunday 8th June, at the Peacock, Mansfield Rd (near Victoria Centre).

NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN meeting: 6.30pm, Tuesday 3rd June, at the Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre, Theobalds Rd (Holborn underground). Anna Coote speaks, plus Broadside Theatre Group.

MANCHESTER National Abortion Campaign Day of Action: Saturday June 7th. This will include a rally and demonstration. Details from 061-792 1070. On the Friday night, June 6th, there will be a social in aid of NAC at the West Indian Centre, Carmoor Road, Rusholme, Manchester.

THE EEC IN OR OUT



THE FIGHT GOES ON 5p

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Occupying print workers need more support

THE Mabbutt and Johnson occupation in Ironmonger Row, London EC1, is now in its third week. The workers — members of SLADE and NGA, who have made the dispute official — are united around the aim of bringing the employers, John Alexander, back to the negotiating table to reopen the factory. The workers have so far received no money in lieu of notice, no holiday pay, and no redundancy pay.

Taking a lead for the Briant Colour Printers occupation of 1972, the occupation has decided to try to get work from community groups and trade unions, and they have already printed a poster and a leaflet about their occupation. They also plan to publish a brochure explaining their case.

The only real solution is for the workers of Mabbutt and Johnson to take over the firm without compensating the owners and run it in their own and other workers' interests. To make this possible they will require massive solidarity and assistance from other print unions and other workers.

The Mabbutt and Johnson workers have organised a demonstration in support of their struggle for 6th June (starting 1pm at Ironmonger Row). Their last demonstration mobilised 200 people. Let's hope it's many more this time!