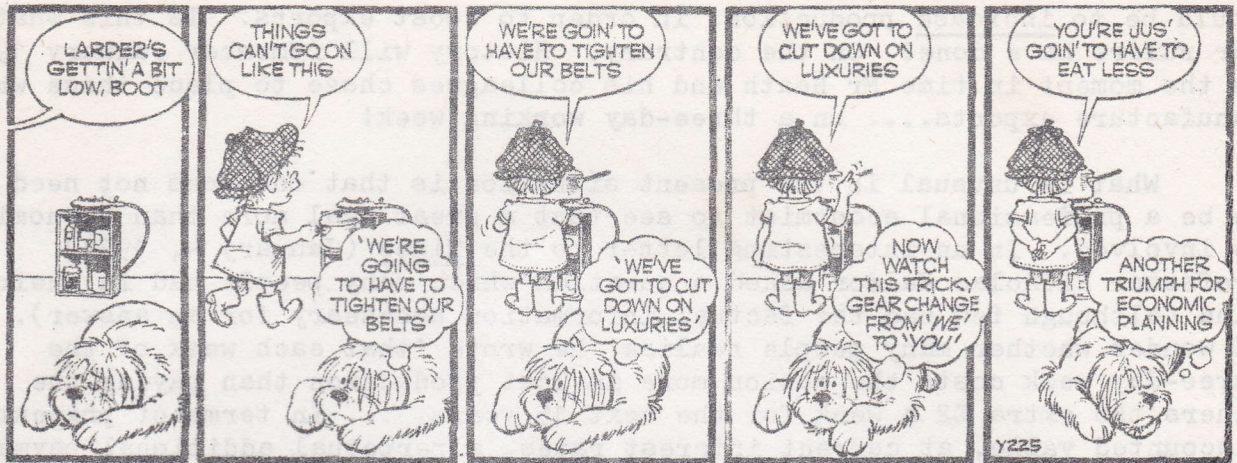


solidarity

for workers' power vol.7 no.9/ 5p

- Talking to miners
- Where is Britain going
- N. Ireland
- Lip - Ford - Reports





WHERE IS BRITAIN GOING?

The current social crisis has three main roots: the specific economic conditions of Britain in the 1970's, the actions of our rulers, and the increasing understanding, by the working class, of its own strength.

Britain is hardly a showpiece for modern capitalism. There is the chronic problem of the balance of payments. There is the problem of undercapitalisation and of backward management. To these have now been added the increase in the cost of oil. This has happened at a time when the re-structuring of the economy (fully to exploit nuclear power and North Sea gas) was only beginning to get under way. But these specific difficulties of British capitalism should not be extrapolated - as they are by so many revolutionaries - to imply an uncontrollable economic crisis, of the type forecast by Marx, affecting the system as a whole.

The specific problem of British capitalism was put in a nutshell by Mr Gordon Richardson, Governor of the Bank of England. On January 15 he told a city audience that 'even before oil prices were increased Britain's deficit on the balance of payments was running at 4% of her national product (or at £2500 million a year)'.

Now it is not our habit to advise our rulers on how best to solve their problems, i.e. on how better to exploit us. But if we were 'captains of industry' confronted with this kind of 'difficulty' an obvious solution

would be to increase production, in order to boost exports. Is this what our rulers have done? On the contrary. History will remember January 1974 as the moment in time Mr Heath and his colleagues chose to place those who manufacture exports.... on a three-day working week!

What is unusual in the present situation is that one does not need to be a professional economist to see that a great deal more than economics is involved. In an interesting letter to the Times (January 4, 1974) Professor Nicholas Kaldor asked a question which many people had in their mind (although few had the factual information necessary for an answer). 'I wonder whether many people realise' he wrote 'that each week of the three-day week costs the nation more in lost production than paying the miners the extra £2 a week for the next 15 years. ... In terms of present discounted value, at current interest rates, a perpetual additional payment of £2 a week to every miner would only come to £200 million - which is less than half the value of the weekly loss in output caused by the 3-day week'.

Except for a few traditional revolutionaries, in various marxist organisations, everyone can see that the present crisis is a largely man-made event. The ostensible reason for the 3-day week was to save electricity. The real reason was to mobilise public opinion, and particularly working class public opinion, against the miners. Underlying both lay a deep crisis of authority. The government has to 'govern'. It could not be seen to be giving way to the miners.

The atmosphere of crisis -signally contributed to by the entire left - could therefore be used to their advantage. Ending television programmes at 10.30 p.m. and advising people to brush their teeth in darkness were measures that could save but little electricity, but that were designed to have maximum impact. (That they completely misfired, and that people began to draw 'more light, less Heath' conclusions, is another matter.)

This is not to say that there were no economic components to the crisis,* or that there may not be important economic repercussions. But as we are constantly told it is primarily a question of 'who rules'. The Government was badly mauled by the miners in 1972. It had been elected on

* Neither a fall in total profits, nor massive unemployment were significant components of the recent crisis. A shortage of labour, in practically every industry characterises the present situation. As for profits, they have seldom been higher. Comparing October 1973 with October 1970 there has been a 28.8% increase in post-tax dividends and interest payments in real terms (at 1970 prices). For this to correspond to a fall in the rate of profit would imply an enormous increase of capital, itself incompatible with claims that there is stagnation or recession in the development of the productive forces. Source: Economic Trends, October 1973, p.25 and 31. Also The Times, January 21, 1974, p. 16.

public promises to 'sort out' industrial relations (by bringing the law into them) and on private undertakings to 'tame the unions'. It could not afford to be defeated - and conspicuously to be seen to be defeated - as a result of working class action. The Conservative Party would lose all credibility - and possibly more - if chewed up by the very monster whose teeth it had so often promised to draw.

There are several novel and encouraging aspects to the whole situation. Although the Government measures - and in particular the 3-day week - have hit large sections of the working class quite hard, there has been little or no obvious working class hostility to the miners. There is a growing awareness that the Government is not only manipulating the situation but manipulating it clumsily - although to some extent it is also a prisoner of its own rhetoric and of its own way of viewing the problem. There is a tendency among many, not directly involved in short-time working, to sit back and wait for the next instalment of the serial: 'how will THEY try to get out of a crisis largely of their own making?'. Even employers are beginning to squeal. The Confederation of British Industries apparently 'objects to losing 20-25% of production while still paying some 90% of normal wages' (Observer, January 20, 1974). Mr Alan Berry, director of the important Coventry Engineering Employers Association estimates that by a combination of weekend working (at overtime rates) and tax-free unemployment benefits, some 100,000 workers are in fact now earning more than they did before (Observer, loc. cit.). Finally the Government has been shown to have made a gross miscalculation. Far from tightening their belts and adopting a 'we're-all-in-this-together' attitude, workers have refused to carry the brunt of inflation on their shoulders. Strong and confident after a long period of relatively full employment, they have struggled not only to defend their previous positions but to improve them. Government pronouncements that 'we're all in the same boat' have been answered by 'yes, but why should we always do the rowing?'.

In all this the Labour Party fundamentally stands for exactly the same things. Their differences with the Tories are tactical, not strategic. For all their noise in Parliament, Labour would also tell the miners to stop their industrial action, in the 'national' interest - i.e. in the interests of those who rule. (In a sample poll, only 26% of those questioned believed Mr Wilson to be 'honest'. Sunday Times, January 20, 1974.)

The Establishment is deeply divided on how to extricate itself from the mess. What is at stake is more than the survival of one particular administration. It is a sign of the depth of the social crisis that whatever our rulers do - and whichever of their Parties does it - it will probably be to their disadvantage. Wherever they place their foot, it will probably be in the shit.

An election would clearly solve nothing. Every problem would remain, exactly as before. And given the mood of the working class today the struggle would continue, whichever Party were in power. But there is a sense in which an election at this specific time, on the specific issue of

'Who rules the country? The elected Government or the unions?' might have particularly harmful results for any government, and encouraging ones for us. What happens if you fight an election along 'who-rules-Britain?' lines and don't win? What happens if you win, but with a reduced majority? What happens, for that matter, if you win with an increased majority, but the miners just shrug their shoulders and go on with their overtime ban, as if nothing had happened? In every case both your authority and the legitimacy of the institutions you defend have suffered quite a knock. No wonder sections of the Establishment are scared of the real questions being posed, even inadvertently, even in a distorted way. They will clearly think twice before they have an election.

Let us forget for a moment the false alternatives of 'Government or unions'. The union leaders, shuttling back and forth between Congress House and Downing Street are as worried as the politicians about the situation 'getting out of control'. They are doing everything they can to get the Government off the hook, while trying hard to preserve a minimum of credibility among 'their' members. They are as scared as anybody at the prospect of the veil being ripped off reality, and of the naked truth appearing to all: that the real power in the land is not the Prime Minister. Not the Cabinet. Not the Government. Not Parliament. Not the political parties. Not even the trade unions. That the real power is the working class, all those who work by hand or by brain, who produce the wealth off which others live. As this awareness deepens, it will not only bring down governments. It could lay the basis for a new way of life.

ON THE SOLIDARITY WAVELENGTH

There has been a slow but steady spread of Solidarity's ideas internationally, during the last 18 months. In vol.VII, nos.4, 5, and 7 we carried articles listing Solidarity pamphlets and articles translated into Swedish, Japanese and French respectively. In our next issue we hope to carry news of similar developments in Germany.

In addition to the Swedish and Japanese editions of The Bolsheviks and Workers Control previously referred to, we are pleased to report that this book has now been translated into Spanish (and published by Editions Ruedo Iberico, 6 rue de Latran, Paris 5), into French (published by Autogestion, 15 rue Racine, Paris 6) and into German (and published by the now dissolved Verlag Roter Oktober). An American edition has been produced by Black and Red (Box 9546, Detroit, Michigan 48202) and readers in the USA wanting copies should write to the comrades concerned.

Kollontai's pamphlet on The Workers Opposition (together with Solidarity's historical notes) was published last year in Portuguese (by Afrontamento, Porto). As We Don't See It has recently been produced in Flemish by a revolutionary Council Communist group in Belgium (Dirk Masschelein, Riddenstraat 192, 3000 Leuven).

DEFEND THE SHREWSBURY 24

BUT DON'T TRUST THE UNION OFFICIALS....

In our support for the Shrewsbury 24 we should not forget why they, rather than the miners or dockers, were selected for the chopper. They were picked on, and given vicious sentences, because job organisation in the building industry is weak.

Why is the construction industry so badly organised? The standard reason given is the existence of the 'Lump'. But is this really the case? Or is the main reason the systematic attacks by both union leaders and bosses on site organisation? Both feel threatened by such organisation. From Shell-Mex House to the Barbican and a hundred other cases, the record is clear.

At every stage the unions in construction have signed away hard-won rights in return for some of the lowest wage rates in the country. For example the infamous pay deal of 1970 gave away flexibility and undermined the rights of stewards in return for a basic rate, for skilled men, of £20! The current rate of just over £26 is just as pathetic.

It is not surprising, in this context, that hundreds of thousands of workers have rejected this set-up and are achieving wage rates far in excess of (and sometimes multiples of) those 'achieved' by the union bosses.

THE UCATT RECORD

The record of UCATT during the 1972 strike was appalling. It has now been followed by the union leaving the Shrewsbury men to carry the can on their own. The excuse given by the officials - that the Shrewsbury men could not be defended because they were charged with criminal acts - could have as easily been applied to the Tolpuddle Martyrs!

No calls on the UCATT leadership, or the TUC, are going to help the jailed men. Nor will they stop the same thing happening again when a weak group of workers dares to stand up for itself. All we can expect from these sources is to be buried under militant (or not so militant) rhetoric.

Expecting help on this issue from the officials is like asking Mary Whitehouse to co-star with Marlon Brando. Up and down the country 'left' trade union bureaucrats are using the weakness of the building industry as an excuse for weaseling out of taking effective action in support of the Shrewsbury men. This should come as no surprise. In acting as they are, they are preparing the way for more Shrewsburys in the future.

GET READY FOR THE NEXT ROUND

And let's make no mistake: future struggles are going to meet even more brutal police intervention. In our defence of the Shrewsbury men we should not forget the need, in these struggles, to use even more robust and effective mass flying pickets. The greatest betrayal of the 24 would be to allow the intimidation by the State to succeed. In addition to confrontation with the union officials, militants in construction should begin to create links with workers on the 'Lump'. This would establish the basis for united action against the common enemy: the government, the boss and the trade union officials. This is the only insurance against history repeating itself.

Solidarity is hoping to get a discussion going between workers in the building industry with the aim of breaking down some of the barriers between the two sections. We would very much like to hear from interested construction workers, whether on the 'Lump' or not.

HELP NEEDED! SHREWSBURY 24 DEFENCE COMMITTEE

SEND CASH AND SUPPORT TO : M.R. Williams,
1 Fford Pentre,
Ocean View, Carmel,
nr. Holywell, Flintshire.

talking to miners...

I recently visited the Kent coalfield at Betteshanger, and Merthyr Vale in South Wales. Talking to miners where they work and live, in their own social clubs, at the pit-head or close by, gives one a very different view from what one gets through the mass media.

At Betteshanger we entered the social club after looking into the canteen. Most men were still working and not due off until 9.30 p.m. Nobody asked any questions. We were served drinks at the bar. I started talking to a man and he told us when we could meet more of his mates. Later we were given free beer, along with all present. I understand this is on the house, which is run and owned by the miners themselves.

At Treorchy in South Wales we asked where we could meet some miners. We were advised to go to the local Conservative Club! 'The men go there not because they are Conservatives, but because the facilities are so much better!'. In Merthyr Vale we met miners in their own Workingmen's Club, near Aberfan. Here we met some rather suspicious looks. We explained that we were a couple of workers, and that I normally wear a cap (and was not just putting one on for the occasion). It was not long before a group of miners were ready, in fact willing, to talk. Our intention had been to find out what they felt and how we might help get their opinions known. In fact we had a great time, talking and drinking with these fine people.

* * * * *

My first impression was that most of those we met were aged 50 or more. It would be interesting to find out the average age of miners, throughout the British coalfields. I was told that there were few young men in the industry, and that no young people now want to go down a mine. This is no surprise. We already know that hundreds of men are leaving the pits every week.

One man who had been invalided out showed me his hands. They were tattered and torn. Parts of fingers were missing and bones had been broken which had not healed anything like a normal hand. The man was on social security, having had to give up work because of a chest condition. His hands, apparently, were not considered as being a good reason for not being able to work. He told me his story was by no means unusual.

The interesting thing was that this miner was receiving payments which were not much less than the take-home pay of those of his mates now working a basic five-shifts week.

Everyone was eager to stress that they were doing a full week's work without overtime. They denied they were 'holding the country to ransom'. They felt very bitter about the way the Government and the media were presenting their position.

The basic week's work resulted in gross earnings of £23 - £25. After stoppages, men with two or more children were taking home about £21. These reduced wages were beginning to bite; there was not sufficient to meet the rapidly rising cost of living, after payment of rent and other essential expenses.

A young man, employed at a local light engineering firm, presented a sharp contrast to the miners' position. He was working 3 days and drawing 3 days' unemployment pay: gross pay £31 per week, take-home pay £29. When he worked a full week he grossed £37, and took home £31. He said 'I don't mind working a three-day week for only £2 less than full pay'. I wondered how widespread this was, although I don't want to imply that there is no suffering as a result of the imposition of the three-day week.

I felt the bitterness of some miners, living alongside men who were so much better off. They also felt bitter about the profiteering encouraged by the Government, while they were expected to work massive overtime in order to satisfy their modest needs. Everyone said 'we are not on strike - we are working a normal basic week, for basic rates, which is not enough to live on'.

One younger man who had only recently returned to the mine said 'I have five children. I'm not working for those rates when I can take home more cash if I go on Social Security'. Others said 'There is something wrong with a society which pays more for not working while people employed in one of the worst jobs imaginable are paid so poorly.'

When I asked how they felt about the need for more coal, the reply came from almost all present, in chorus. 'If they want coal, let them come and get it. We won't stop them'. When I asked who they meant by 'they', I was told 'all those who say the nation can't pay the miners more'.

We talked about the possibility of a general election if the miners didn't return to 'normal' (i.e. overtime) working. Attitudes were mixed, and in my view very confused. Some said 'It would make no difference who formed a government, they would still have to settle the question of the miners' pay'. Others thought they would be better off under a Labour Government. Some had faith in their trade union leaders. Others were suspicious of them. One man said 'They can't settle on the basis of some productivity deal. We cannot work any harder'. He also said 'I am not a Communist, but what we want is a revolution'.

Most of the older men said they couldn't care less about what happened to the coal industry. There was nothing in it for them. 'Jam tomorrow' was always being offered, but it never came.

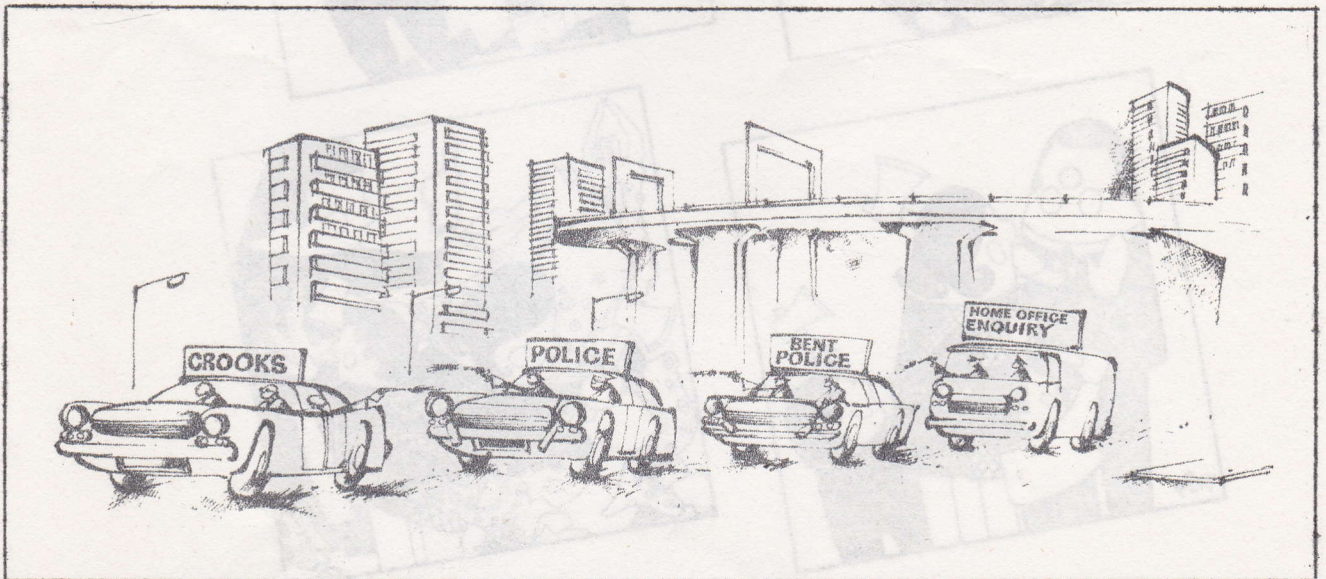
My overall impression was that these men, treated so disgracefully all their lives, had little or no faith in any solution other than their own efforts, namely withholding their labour in order to get more pay. When I asked how more pay would solve their problems, in the face of rising prices and other means of controlling their living standards, I met a rather fatalistic response. It was simply 'we will have to go on fighting for more. If we don't get more, there won't be enough miners left to produce the coal'.

The people I spoke to had not yet really begun to ask themselves questions about a real alternative to the present set-up. There was a feeling of impotence, expressed when they referred to the position they found themselves in. They felt despondent because of all the lies about coal stocks, earnings, etc. They felt they were being made scapegoats. They were aware of the power of governments and their agents. 'What can we do?'

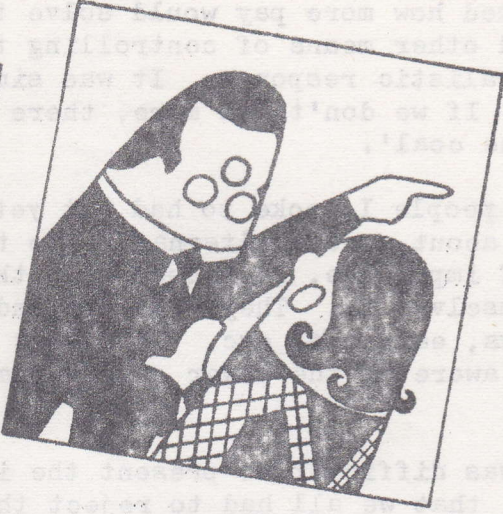
It was difficult to present the idea that the solution lay in their own hands, that we all had to reject the idea that political parties, trade union leaders or anyone else could do things for us. It is still very difficult for most people to develop confidence in themselves, to rely on their own efforts now, where they live and work. It is also difficult to develop a view of the possible alternatives to this society.

What the miners didn't seem to see was that in practice they were challenging the values of the society we live in, that they were forcing the powers that be to resort to measures which will in the long run expose the nature of this society. When the miners and other working people realise the power they have, real changes will become possible.

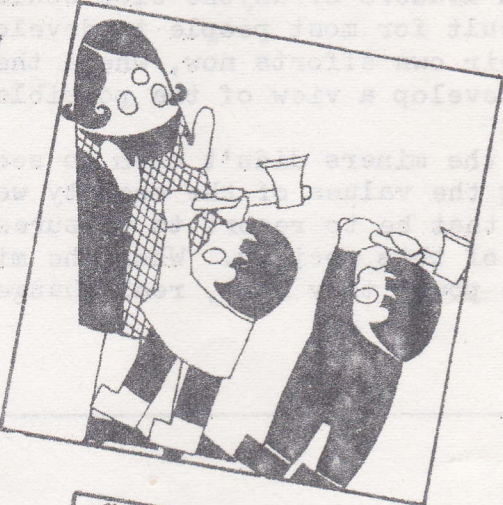
Joe J.



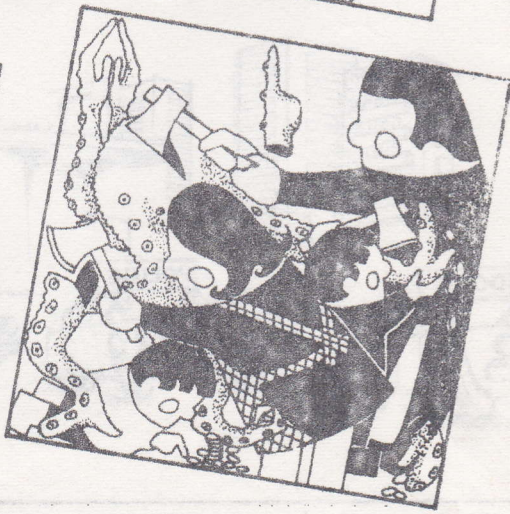
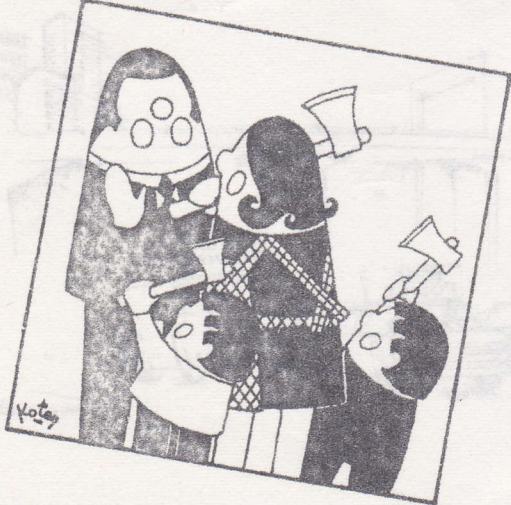
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It was all about the fact that the solution lay in their
own hands. They had to reject the idea that political parties,
trade union leaders or anyone else could be trusted to protect
very difficult for many people to understand. I still
felt as though I had been hit and was in a bit of a
frustrated view of the alternatives.



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challenging the value of the power and the nature of
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IRELAND: THE DEBATE CONTINUES

During the last three years Solidarity has carried a series of articles about Ireland. Although a number of viewpoints (from readers) have been expressed, we have never hidden our own opposition to all forms of nationalism and of religious bigotry, and to all those who peddle them. We still have copies of the issues containing the 'Theses on Northern Ireland' (vol.7, no.1), the 'Discussion with the Workers' Association' (vol.7, no.3), and the article 'Northern Ireland: a re-appraisal' (vol.7, no.7) referred to by the author of the first letter published below.

I find that L.W.'s article 'Northern Ireland Reappraisal' is simply a leftist parody of the capitalist press, i.e. the depiction of the Irish Republican movement as an anti-Protestant crusade, the argument for the continued presence in Ulster of the British armed forces, etc. Furthermore, the article contains gross errors, obvious to anyone with even a casual interest in the events in Northern Ireland.

Let me say at the outset that I am neither a member nor supporter of either wing of the Irish Republican Army. In my opinion the Provisionals are merely a bankrupt physical force movement, greatly dependent upon the financial backing of wealthy Irish-American conservatives. Their social philosophy, as expressed in their pamphlet 'Eire Nua' is a hopeless mish-mash of reformist rhetoric. As for the Officials, sincere as they are in working for a revolution in Ireland, they are complete captives of Leninist modes of thought and organisation. Some are openly sympathetic to Stalin. Official CP-style tactics have alienated large numbers of potential supporters. The Irish Republican Aid Committee, for example, here in the Boston area, has recently severed its connection with the Official IRA movement over what its members term authoritarian and undemocratic procedures.

I am writing this as a corrective to L.W.'s rather facile interpretation of a complex situation which is in great need of 'demystification'. I will try to cover merely the principal errors in L.W.'s presentation.

1. The basis of the turmoil in Northern Ireland is economic, not ideological or philosophical. Yet L.W. insists that 'it does make more sense to see the conflict as between nationalisms, with all that implies in terms of ... mythical unity of interest across class lines...'. This, L.W. says, is more logical than viewing the antagonism as between religions. Yet L.W. identifies all Catholics as Republicans and all Protestants as Loyalists. At any rate, since nationalism is the ideology of the bourgeoisie, how does L.W. explain the utter tranquillity of the middle class suburbs of Belfast and Derry, where Protestants, Catholics and Jews live

together, belong to the same country clubs, etc.? How does the author explain away the fact that the overwhelming strength of the IRA and the UDA lies in exclusively working class areas?

The reality is that religious sectarianism has been carefully fostered by the ruling classes of England and Ireland for 300 years, according to the imperial practice of dividing colonial populations against themselves. The real and imagined advantages that most Protestants enjoy over most Catholics in jobs and housing is the basis for the conflict within the Ulster working class, somewhat similar to the inter-racial problems between American workers. Each group regards the other as a competitor for the scarcity of goods and services available under capitalism, instead of confronting the social system itself as the real enemy.

2. The Republicans, whether Official or Provo, do not regard the strife in Ulster as a sectarian battle. Nor do they believe that the majority of Protestant working people are fascists or irreconcilable reactionaries. IRA propaganda repeatedly emphasises the folly of religious sectarianism for the working classes. The August issue of the United Irishman editorialises: 'Sectarianism kills workers. We have stated this hundreds of times ... We have condemned all those who promote hatred between Protestant and Catholic workers ... We now condemn those people who have organised themselves into a so-called Roman Catholic Defence League. ... paramilitary Catholic or Protestant organisations are not for defence. They are a symbol of the sectarian cancer in the North ... Each sectarian killing is a step away from the time when Irish workers will realise that their future, the only possible future, demands that Protestant and Catholic workers unite.'

As for the Republican 'myth and martyr' history which L.W. deplures, almost half the prominent names in the Republican honor roll are Protestant. The fountainhead of Irish Republicanism himself, Wolfe Tone, was a member of the Church of Ireland.

3. Irish Republicanism, in its moments of greatest success and widest popular support, regarded itself as part of an international movement. The United Irishmen of 1798, for example, were closely linked with the Directory in Paris and the Jacobin societies in England and Scotland. James Connolly and the workers of the Irish Citizen Army participated in the 1916 Easter Week Rebellion with some hope that the Dublin uprising would ignite similar revolts in war-weary Europe. At the present time, the United Irishman carries a good deal of foreign news, i.e. Tory investment in South Africa, the suppression of the Basques, etc.

4. L.W. states that the two wings of the IRA have as their 'prime aim ... a united Ireland, to be achieved through ... military campaign ... or ... negotiation, collaboration and power-sharing'. So far as the Official IRA is concerned, this is simply not so. The Officials have emphasised again and again that they do not wish Ulster to be united

with the 26-county Free State in the south. They insist that a united Ireland is only possible through a social revolution in both north and south, that the Dublin government is a puppet of imperialism, etc.

5. Whether or not the British soldiers are agents or principals of murder and mayhem, or whether or not one wishes to recognise the existence of a 'state army', none of these things will turn away bullets or tear gas, or liberate the internees in the concentration camps.

L.W.'s chief fault is in automatically reacting to the pronouncements of the Leninist left by taking the opposite side of the argument. This attitude is hardly a guide to clarity of thought or an aid to 'the massive task of demystification'.

Martin C., Cambridge (Mass.), USA.

LIZ W. REPLIES:

In my view this letter misses, or misinterprets, many of the points made in the article it criticises, and echoes the sort of attitude the article tried to 'demystify'. Thus, despite his criticisms of dominant elements in the Republican movement M.C. comes out on the side of Republicanism and implies that this is a revolutionary position.

1. The belief that 'the basis (my emphasis) of the turmoil ... is economic' rather than anything else reveals an economism which Solidarity does not share, and in any case such an interpretation can bring quite different conclusions (see 'The Economics of Partition', Irish Communist Organisation). Granted that religious sectarianism has been fostered by the ruling classes in their own interests, and that each group regards the other as a competitor, does the acceptance of such an ideology have no lasting effect on people's minds, no development of its own, no capacity to react back on events? I don't see where I have identified 'all Catholics as Republicans and all Protestants as Loyalists'. I used the terms Catholic and Protestant to designate the two communities, or sections of the community, in Northern Ireland, of which Republicanism and Loyalism are the respective dominant ideologies. Reactionary as religion is, as a social force, it is the pernicious operation of nationalist-type assumptions that can be seen here.

Certainly nationalism is the ideology of the ruling classes, but that does not mean they themselves have to swallow it whole, or fail to see that they have everything in common with fellow-rulers across the fostered divide. Nor does it mean they will have permanent control over the repercussions of the ideology they have imposed on the working classes. All the same, it serves their interests - and ruling class interests are likewise served by all those who emphasise and encourage nationalist consciousness. It is no coincidence nor historical accident that the Communist

Party, the traditional left and some clearly non-left elements can be found on the Republican side. Such a conjunction of forces does not make for socialist revolution.

2. Exactly how the Republicans present their ideology does not change its implications. My intention was not to 'depict the Republican movement as an anti-Protestant crusade', rather to underline what Catholic nationalism means, with examples from Republican sources. The view that Protestant workers are not irreconcilable reactionaries still allows them just one option in practice - to be reconciled to Republicanism. The precise import of the point about Protestants being included in the Republican roll of honour escapes me. The sectarian divide is not so rigid that no individual can cross from one side to the other, abandoning the mythology he has been brought up on for the converse one, nor is sectarianism necessarily so crude as to avoid all association with the other side.

3. Revolutionary internationalism does not consist in participation in an international movement. Indeed it is difficult to think of a social movement which is not international - including bourgeois revolution, state capitalism and, of course, nationalism itself. Recognising the existence of other places in the world and struggles going on in them is not enough, although the Republicans' choice of affinities will place them in an international context - among the forces working against libertarian social revolution.

4. M.C. corroborates my point about the IRA seeking first and foremost a united Ireland in the same breath as denying it. I did not say they wanted union with the 26-county Free State as such, nor under the present Dublin government. In the insistence that 'a united Ireland is only possible through a social revolution in both north and south', the aim of 'a united Ireland' is presupposed, while the fact that an international proletarian revolution would make that phrase as redundant as the Border, is by-passed. That the Officials are prepared to negotiate, collaborate and grab a share of power has, I think, been shown, even if they would not see this as an end in itself.

5. Examining the content of the call for withdrawal of troops from Northern Ireland is not the same as arguing for their continued presence there. We are not for their presence, as troops, anywhere. The necessity to resist physical aggression and immediate repression is not denied. What is denied is that this physical resistance can be confused with the struggle for socialism and must command automatic support on that basis from revolutionaries.

I deny the charge of reacting automatically by taking the opposite side from the Leninist left. In fact the Workers' Association is criticised precisely for being too one-sided in its anti-Republicanism. The 'Reappraisal' can be seen to have developed from previous Solidarity articles.

To sum up on my own behalf, I find the charge of 'gross errors' far from proven. M.C.'s differences are of perspective and interpretation; I hold to my attempt to deal with the complexities of the situation - imperfect as it is - as being rather less 'facile' than M.C.'s ripostes.

L.W.

LETTER FROM EIRE

It is not only in the north of Ireland that the massive task of demystification remains. In the Irish Republic itself there is an initial massive task of finding any demystifiers. Politics here are in the stone age, with two green Tory parties, an ineffectual Labour party, the clerico-fascist provos and the Officials, who can charitably be said to be struggling through to a socialist revolutionary party. The only anti-clerical paper I have found in two years is the Worker, an I.S. offshoot published in Dublin but printed, I am told, in England.

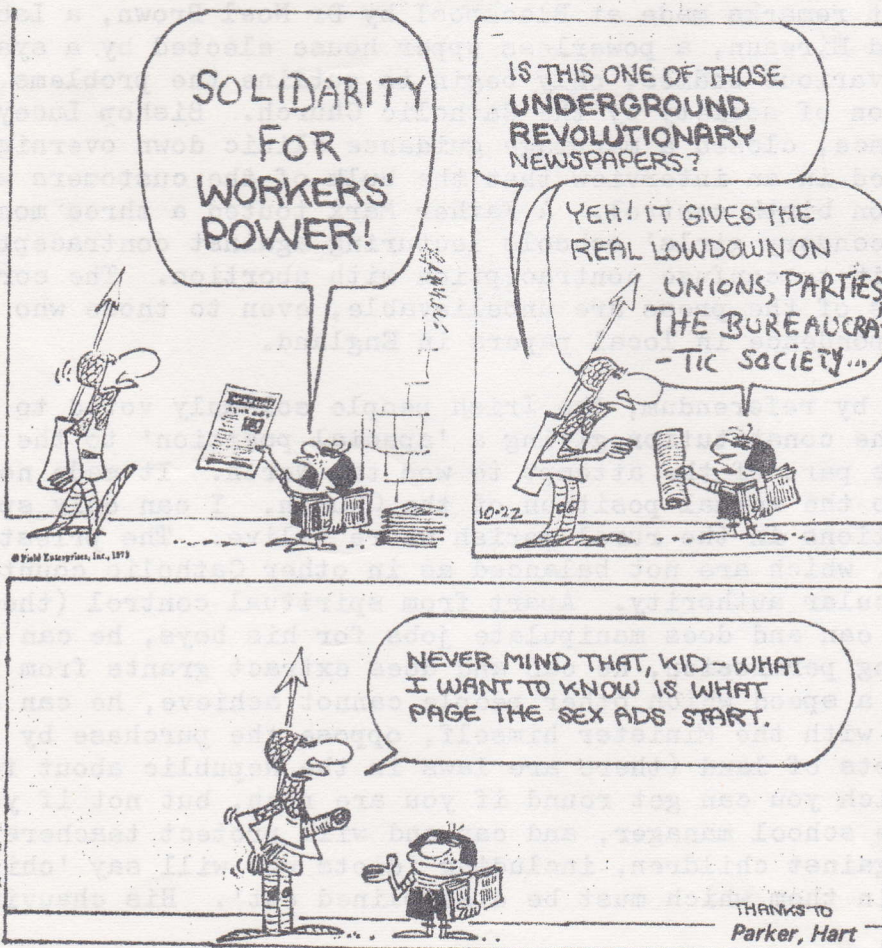
The recent remarks made at Blackpool by Dr Noel Brown, a Labour member of Seanad Eireann, a powerless upper house elected by a system of appointment by various bodies, only begin to outline the problems created by the domination of society by the Catholic Church. Bishop Lucey of Cork, for instance, closed a marriage guidance clinic down overnight when a doctor revealed in an interview that the bulk of the customers were seeking advice on birth control. A Father Marx touted a three month foetus round secondary girls' schools lecturing against contraception and using the exhibit to confuse contraception with abortion. The correspondence columns of the press are unbelievable, even to those who have read the correspondence in local papers in England.

Recently, by referendum, the Irish people solemnly voted to remove the clause in the constitution giving a 'special position' to the Catholic Church. This is part of the attempt to woo the North. It made no difference whatever to the actual position of the Church. I can only speak about the conditions in the rural parish where I live. The priest has enormous powers, which are not balanced as in other Catholic countries by any local secular authority. Apart from spiritual control (the fear of hellfire) he can and does manipulate jobs for his boys, he can get or obstruct planning permission, he can and does extract grants from the Government with a speed which other people cannot achieve, he can and does, by intervention with the Minister himself, oppose the purchase by foreigners of small plots of land (there are laws in the Republic about foreigners buying land, which you can get round if you are rich, but not if you are not). He is the school manager, and can and will protect teachers who use brutality against children, including idiots who will say 'children have some evil in them which must be disciplined out'. His chauvinist

sermons provide the ideology of the good green Catholic boys in the Provisional IRA. In fact, unless you are a devout and obedient Catholic, you keep tripping over obstacles put there by his commission or omission all the time.

The laity, as in other Catholic countries, see the priest's function as a priest as disconnected from his personality as a man, and in this area during meetings held by women (which were run on libertarian lines - no chairmen, etc.) remarks such as 'keep that bloody priest out of it', and 'a crook with a ring collar on', and so on, were common. History, one can say, is against the tyrannical country priest, but Ireland needs something to help history along. The initial need is for activists to keep the priests to their religious duties, and out of secular matters, and the Jesuits at Maynooth are even beginning to suggest the confusion of personal ideology and religion in the pulpits might be a bad thing. The first duty of the Church has always been to preserve the Church, by which it means the hierarchy.

d.s.



letter from ford

The article 'Rumpus at Ford' in the last issue of Solidarity contains one or two errors and omissions which show the convenor and the Works Committee of the Body Group at Dagenham in a bad light.

The full payment conceded to the night shift by Paul Sissons, the Plant Manager, was a one-off thing. Sissons said the only reason payment was conceded to the night shift was the threat of physical violence. Although the day shift of the metal line sat in all next day, they still didn't get full pay for the shift.

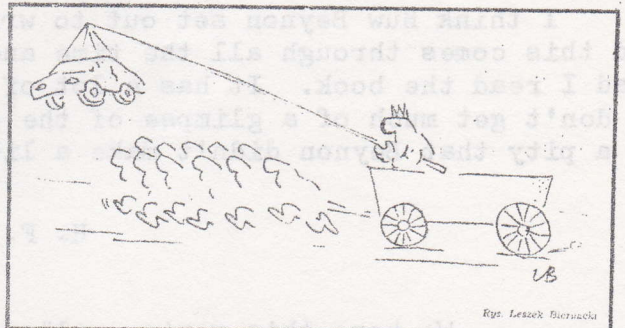
Following these incidents, meetings of production workers decided that lay-offs would no longer be accepted. This meant lay-offs caused by disputes at Ford plants, as lay-offs caused by disputes in other companies are already covered by the existing agreement.

The Winston Williams case was an example of an unjustified dismissal, and should have been supported by Body Plant workers on its own merits. The convenor was trying to make the point that the dismissal and solidarity action should be the prime consideration (and not the lay-off pay), and that in the event of a principled dispute in the Body Plant there should be solidarity action without waiting for lay-offs.

Once the A shift of department 5510 (Williams' department) stopped work they were joined by the A shift of the Metal line and a picket was posted outside the gate next morning. This led to the maintenance, Press shop and wheel departments joining in. The rest of metal assembly had already been laid off. Thus the whole Body Plant was brought to a halt - which also stopped the supply of wheels and other parts to Halewood, Southampton, Langley and elsewhere.

What happened in the P.T.A., where there was no internal dispute, was another story. However the actions in both plants have forced the Company to concede that once a shift has started work it will be paid for the whole shift, providing there is no dispute within the plant.

T. C., Dagenham.



review

WORKING FOR FORD by Huw Beynon. Penguin. 90p.

I had been working at Ford Halewood just over a month when I came across a copy of Huw Beynon's book. I decided to give it a try.

On finishing the book a couple of weeks later I really felt I had learnt a considerable amount about Ford, particularly the Halewood plant. Thinking to myself 'a bloody good book that' I then lent it to a couple of old hands in the plant.

When I got the book back, I was surprised at their reaction: 'a good book about Fords, mate, but the parts on the shop stewards are a load of bloody crap, because most of them are a shower of scheming bastards'.

Time and experience have proved my workmates right. Huw Beynon got led up the garden path as I suppose only a sociologist can be.

A great number of stewards who are portrayed in Huw's book as some sort of Robin Hoods in the forest of Halewood have in fact turned out to be sheriffs. We have a set-up here, in terms of intrigue, cliques, character assassination, open and blatant intimidation of genuine militants to outright physical assault - by the convenors on a well known militant in the P.T.A. - that would make the Mafia proud.

The union hierarchy seems to have a policy of giving its blessing to a great number of dubious moves by the convenors and 'moderate' shop stewards in running affairs within the plant, such as the yet to be properly explained exit of the convenor Eddie Roberts from the scene. (He is now a TGWU full-time official for clerical workers.)

I think Huw Beynon set out to write a genuine and sincere account, and this comes through all the time and in every page and chapter. I am glad I read the book. It has a lot of useful historical material, but sadly we don't get much of a glimpse of the ordinary lads on the shop floor. It is a pity that Beynon didn't make a little more effort and dig a bit deeper.

H. F., P.T.A. Halewood, January 1974.

We hope this review will start a discussion on the Huw Beynon book. We would welcome further contributions on the subject.

AMONGST OURSELVES

On Saturday and Sunday 13 and 14 of October a Solidarity meeting was held in Bristol. Present were members and supporters from Bristol, Cardiff, Coventry, Exeter, Lancaster, Leeds, London, Manchester and Southampton. In many ways it was the best Solidarity gathering ever held.

After the arguments and tensions of the last few months (in particular the long debate about marxism) there was now a consensus in the group not witnessed for a long time. There was also a strong resolve to turn outwards, on the basis of clear politics.

Politics, rather than organisational questions, in fact dominated the gathering. A comrade from Lancaster opened the proceedings with a statement on the ideas of Marx, of Cardan and of Solidarity. There followed a lucid and excellent discussion, of a kind only possible when religious attitudes have been discarded and there is a common wish to understand and to ascertain facts, rather than to defend this or that orthodoxy. To paraphrase a statement in the 'Theses on Feuerbach' it was felt that 'revolutionaries had only interpreted Marx, the point however was to transcend him'.

There followed a discussion on the Lump. This was introduced by two comrades with long experience in the building industry. The phenomenon, at least on the scale it had assumed, was new, complex, contradictory and unique in the degree to which it had been denounced, almost unanimously, by employers, Conservatives, trade union officials, Labour Party politicians and various marxists and even anarchists. Such a united front testified to the fact that there was nothing quite as painful as a new idea. The implications of what was happening in relation to working class autonomy, to new forms of self-organisation, to loyalty to the unions, to contempt for the law, and to the extraction of the maximum possible price for the sale of labour power were explored in depth. The traditional arguments against the Lump were examined one by one and found to be either irrelevant or frankly reactionary. It was decided to produce a pamphlet on the subject and this is already in an advanced state of preparation. The pamphlet would be produced by the new National Coordinating Group.

The Sunday morning was spent in a short but effective discussion of various financial and organisational questions. Many felt the need for regular national gatherings, in which ideas could be collectively discussed and experiences exchanged. The next meeting would be organised in Coventry early in December.

M. B.

The next national Solidarity conference was held in Coventry on December 1-2, 1973. About 20 people were present at the three sessions, including contingents from Coventry, London, Manchester and Southampton, individuals from Lancaster and Leeds, and three visiting comrades from Germany.

The two Saturday sessions discussed the Third World and the politics of 'intervention'. The former was introduced (on tape in his enforced absence) by A.O. of the London group, who provoked a vigorous discussion. There was considerable fraternal disagreement on our attitude towards traditional societies, and on the question of 'support for struggles but not for leaders'. J.J., also of the London group, introduced the discussion on intervention.

At the business meeting on Sunday morning, progress was reported on the national pamphlet on the Lump. It was agreed to attempt a wide distribution of the pamphlet among building workers, and publication was provisionally set for mid-February. Finance is still urgently needed for this pamphlet, and loans or donations will be gratefully received by George Williamson, 54 Shaftesbury Avenue, Leeds 8.

A report was given on the Solidarity presence at the Socialist Worker industrial conference in Manchester in November; a large quantity of literature had been distributed, and several useful contacts made. Several comrades expressed interest in attending a day school on economic theory; this is to be organised in Manchester in the new year. Anyone interested should contact John Walker, 14 Clare Road, Manchester 19.

There are now three thriving autonomous groups. The Manchester comrades announced that they had re-formed, and that they had held several successful meetings, and the Southampton group were formally accepted by the conference as an autonomous group. There are also loose groupings of Solidarity members and sympathisers in Bristol, Coventry, Oxford and Swansea. Anyone wishing to be put in touch with members and sympathisers in other areas or to receive information about the next national conference (provisionally fixed for Oxford in late February) should write to George Williamson; a few stamped addressed envelopes would be appreciated.

J. K.

Solidarity autonomous groups

London: c/o 123 Lathom Rd., E.6.

Manchester: c/o 14 Clare Road,
Manchester 19.

Southampton: c/o D. O'Sullivan,
59 Chamberline Rd., Highfield,
Southampton.

Loose Groupings

Bristol: c/o A. Cannan, 20 Ashley Rd.,
Bristol 6.

Coventry: c/o G. Jinks, 24 Evelyn
Ave., Foleshill, Coventry.

Oxford: c/o R. Lumley, 34 Fairacres
Road, Oxford.

Swansea: c/o A. Brown, 117 Hanover
Street, Swansea.

LIP READINGS

This article was first published in the October 1973 issue of Liaisons, the paper of our Belgian comrades (B.P. 208, 4000 Liège 1, Belgium)

F. LIP FLOPS

The Lip conflict is only one of many which illustrate the concentration of capital in France. The persistence of old industrial concerns, of family firms, of factories which, though modern in construction (like Lip), do not get used to modern mass production methods make such conflicts increasingly frequent and fierce. When such a conflict is limited to one part of industry or to a single factory it leads inevitably to an adaptation of capitalism. All sorts of reformist ideologies can then flourish.

The area, Franche Comté (near the Swiss border), is a bastion of catholicism and the pillar of the French artisan watch industry. The Lip workers, most of them catholic, are 'good' workers and believe in the reputation of the trade mark Lip. Lip pays well and keeps its qualified work force. It has built a brand new factory. The paternalism of Fred Lip (for many years the only boss of the family firm) was reflected by the so-called 'petty-bourgeois' mentality of his workers. They were a little more privileged than those in other forms of this typically provincial town (popular opinion in Besançon regarded Lip workers as 'lazy').

The financial difficulties encountered by Fred Lip when he ran the factory alone, and the manoeuvres of the Swiss trust Ebauche S.A. (who became majority shareholders in 1970-71) as they sought to integrate the firm into their industrial empire at the smallest possible cost, were both interpreted by the Lip workers as 'bad management'. The C.F.D.T.* delegates (who mostly came from the 'Catholic Workers' Action', a progressive militant Catholic movement, and some of whom now belong to the P.S.U.***) had no difficulty at the beginning of the conflict in making the workers think they were fighting to 'save the firm'.

These officials could easily present the struggle to outsiders in ideological terms, similar to those used by the Institute for Workers' Control in England. 'Progressive' trade union leaders could see in Lip the beginning of a plan for the future management of capital by the unions controlling a new adventure in 'self-management'. Not a very promising beginning one might say. But a struggle has its own dynamic. It was the attempt to transform Lip and to integrate it into a more modern industrial

* Confédération Française des Travailleurs (previously C.F.T.C., Christian union). One must bear in mind that in France only about 25-30% of the work force belong to trade unions.

** Parti Socialiste Unifié.

structure which, for several years (especially since 1968), had forged the combativity of the Lip workers. It was this same resistance to rationalisation which forced the Swiss trust into taking drastic measures. These consisted in bankrupting the firm with a view to maintaining, at minimum cost, the only part in which they were really interested, namely the watch shop.

The Lip workers were not going to accept being treated like any workers and sacked just like that. Their conviction that they were 'privileged' workers made it natural that they should resist with more than usual determination. This was the result of their brutal passage from a paternalistic regime to one governed by the implacable imperatives of profit. For these workers the struggle had nothing to do with great ideological phrases about 'self-management'... or about anything else for that matter. They had two simple demands: no redundancies and the maintenance of the present working conditions. From April 1973 the manoeuvres of Ebauche S.A. became more and more erratic. The forms of struggle used in reply were traditional trade union ones: token go-slow (renamed 'control of production speed' for the occasion). They culminated, on May 24, in a regional demonstration at Besançon of 5000 people. The socialist mayor placed himself at the head of the march. The determination to fight was already there, however, for production speeds had been reduced by 50%.

'SEQUESTRATION' OF THE PRODUCT

Such limited union-controlled action produced no change in the firm's policy. From the end of May onwards the struggle changed to another level and a process of constant interaction between the unions and the rank and file began. Rank and file pressure was to impose upon the union delegates increasingly unusual, 'illegal' forms of action.

On June 12, at a Works Committee meeting, members of the management and two administrators from Paris failed once more to give any precise information on the firm's future. One of the union men was giving a running commentary, by telephone, to the rest of the workers who had been banned from attending the meeting. This is an important point because already rank and file pressure was so strong that they insisted on being kept informed about negotiations over which they would have no control. (Later this developed into actual presence, during negotiations.) During the meeting the management threatened to start bankruptcy proceedings: to stop the factory and to stop paying wages. Immediately the meeting room was invaded by the workers who had been listening outside. The three management men were sequestered. This action seems to have been spontaneous. Management briefcases were searched and a worker found in one of them a plan for large-scale redundancies and a wage freeze in the factory. Later in the night the police arrived at the factory and laid siege. Some

workers were ready to fight with table legs, etc., taken from the canteen, but the union delegates, essentially CFDT, called for non-violence. The police freed the prisoners. Too late this produced an angry reaction from the workers, who stoned the police cars as they left the factory. Lip was occupied.

Faced with a violent situation, which they had succeeded temporarily in neutralising, the union officials had to fall back on something else if they didn't want to lose face and all control over the struggle. They came up with the 'sequestration' of the stock of watches (50,000 in all, valued at about £1 million) to replace the sequestered managers.

But between the union leaders (who hoped to use the 'sequestration' of the watches as a bargaining counter in any future negotiation) and the workers (who wanted to use it to pay their wages) there was an enormous gap. Also in rejecting violence against the police as a form of 'illegal' action, the union leaders had run straight into an even more 'illegal' action: the theft of the product (even if euphemistically called 'sequestration'). This type of illegality is much more damaging to the existing social order. It is much more unusual and potentially much more severely punishable than having a punch-up with some cop. The wording of union communiqués masked this reality.

A new demonstration took place in Besançon on June 15. Despite a crowd of 15,000 and some confrontations with the police during the night, it was only a repetition of the previous one. 'How to continue the struggle' was the problem facing the union leaders. The idea which came from some workers was to sell the 'stolen' watches. The union leaders rejected this idea as 'illegal'. The idea of making watches to sell was put forward by a worker at the next general assembly, on June 18, and was accepted by all as a compromise measure. Originally, it was considered a measure of desperation, a simple gesture. 'Nobody believed it would work' one of the strikers told us. The next day there was already a queue of about 100 'customers' outside the factory. This new form of solidarity overwhelmed the union organisers, who closed the factory on the weekend of June 23-24 to 'reorganise', and also because the most conservative union, the C.G.T., was doing its best to have the factory closed to outsiders.

The battle to keep the factory open was won. On June 25 sales began again. Orders were already arriving from all over France. The watches were put together on the firm's machinery from parts lifted from the factory stock. There were only about 40 workers involved, at any one time, in production. A maximum of 80 people were working. Sporadically, when necessary, some work was carried out in other sectors (production of boxes and packing for the watches, maintenance of machinery, etc.). Other workers took time to rest on the lawns, discussed, or took part in the various committees (largely organised by the unions) dealing with sales, propaganda, cleaning, canteen, reception, etc. An enormous push was given by solidarity

from outside. Many of course came to buy bargain watches, sold over 40% cheaper, but even so this gave an extraordinary dimension to the struggle. The union leaders and the local unions were at one and the same time prisoners of the determination of the Lip workers, and of those outside. A sort of autonomous network of struggle was built up outside union control, through decisions originally made by union officials themselves to escape from an open confrontation.

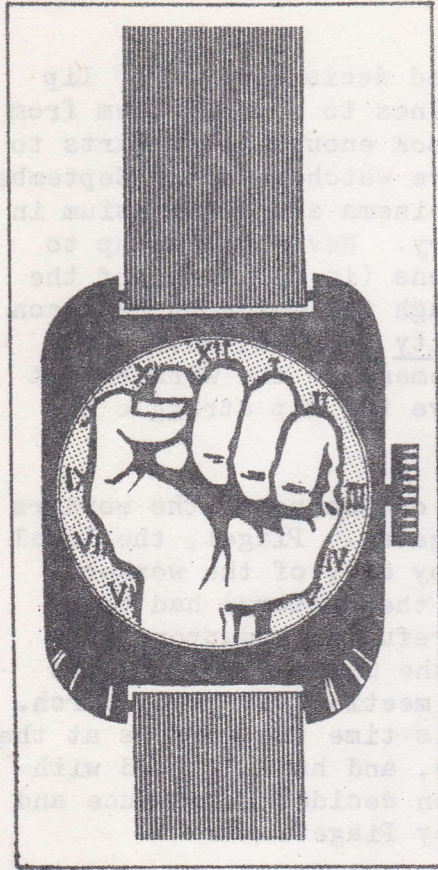
BREAKING THE ISOLATION

By August 15 the money collected from the sales had reached nearly £1 million...money stolen from the bosses (the part of this sum represented by the actual work carried out - putting the watches together and organising sales - was not very large). By the beginning of July, although the union wanted to avoid the issue, the question of what to do with this money was becoming pressing. They called this money their 'war loot'. At this stage there was talk of paying it back to the management, if...

For the Lip workers this was their money, their strike pay. They themselves pointed this out to us. The problem had been avoided at the end of June, as the liquidator had agreed to pay holiday money for the annual holidays taken every July. Many workers had taken the money and gone on holiday at the beginning of July. A lot of them did in fact cut their holiday short, in response to an appeal to return to the factory. At the end of July most workers were back. The problem of the monthly wages (for June) arose again. This time the liquidator refused all pay after June 12. There was no alternative. The first 'wildcat pay' took place. About £2000 was paid out. At a vote at a general assembly it was decided to maintain the usual wage differentials for this special pay. A motion for equal pay - about £150 a month for all - was defeated by a considerable majority at a general meeting of the strikers.

Three further months' wages were to be paid out (the last payment being at the end of October) despite considerable police harassment. There was still enough money to ensure pay for at least two more months. Since the middle of August the police had searched everywhere for the stock of watches, hidden all over the area, and of course for the cash. Successive raids on churches, private houses, searches of Lip workers, and even the use in October of a detachment of 60 police specialised in gang-busting had failed to produce any brilliant results. So far they have found 40 watches sent in for repair, and some £4000 in cash.

If we look at these events not from the point of view of capitalist legality but from the point of view of the class struggle, the sale of the watches represents two important developments. On the one hand the workers have found a way of holding out on strike (there are virtually no union strike funds in France) by their own collective activity. In other words



they have acted by themselves rather than waiting for a solution to be found by others to a very important material problem facing them. Secondly, through their methods, and without wanting to in advance, they have opened the factory and broken the isolation of a struggle confined to the factory. For nearly two months, thousands and thousands of other workers went inside the Lip factory. Coming from all over France, and even from abroad, they were able to discuss, visit workshops, attend the daily general assembly, etc., in complete freedom. Nobody intended this to happen at the beginning. But it came from the simple material necessity to have full strike pay. Such bread and butter issues swept away the usual ideological barriers and the systematic obstruction of union bureaucrats to effective contacts with outsiders.

It was precisely this position which became untenable for French capitalism. The attempt to retake the factory by the police was inevitable. The attack came on the night of August 14, the day before the biggest national summer holiday in France. Little resistance was possible on the spot. During the following days there was, in fact, little reaction. The influence of the unions was brought into full force to throttle any really effective solidarity action. This time there were few workers prepared to 'go it alone'. Some violent incidents occurred near the Lip factory for 2 or 3 nights after the police intervention. There were also sporadic solidarity stoppages (most for not more than one day, and some not even that long) in local factories and nationally on the railways and in broadcasting.

The only effective reply to police action would have been the autonomous spreading of the struggle to other industries when the factory was attacked. The still small-scale nature of much of French industry, the atomisation of work, and the lack of any recent generalised struggle partly correspond to the lack of a generalised concerted economic policy on the part of French capitalism, still very divided. This does not help large, generalised movements.

When the crunch came there was no meaningful support for the strikers. This shows the present limits of solidarity among French workers (one could compare this with the English strikes of 1972, especially the reaction to the imprisonment of the five dockers).

TWILIGHT OF A BATTLE

From August 15 the balance of power changed decisively. The Lip workers removed some crucial parts from the machines to prevent them from working when they left the factory. They also took enough spare parts to continue a token manufacture of a few hundred more watches during September and October, in secret workshops. They found a cinema and a gymnasium in which to meet. But they no longer had the factory. Nevertheless up to 80 Lip workers were present during the negotiations (in a village of the area Arc et Senans) and refused to leave. Although the march on Besançon on September 29 was very impressive (see Solidarity vol.VII, no.8) and although it temporarily gave tremendous encouragement to the workers, it did not change the balance of power. In many ways the Lip struggle had come to an end by August 14.

Until just after the 100,000 strong march on Besançon, the workers still seemed to have confidence in the CFDT delegates. Piaget, the local chief, was certainly regarded as a sort of idol by many of the workers. For a long time the CGT officials (a minority in the factory) had been regarded with suspicion, as they had explicitly refused to support any rank and file initiatives. The rupture between the CGT and the workers became definitive at the stormy general assembly meeting after the march. But the CFDT men had been more subtle. Up to this time the workers at the general assembly meetings had been mostly passive, and had accepted with little questioning or discussion all that had been decided in advance and proposed by the CFDT delegates - and especially by Piaget.

The negotiations at Arc et Senans continued with little success but with the constant attendance of some 60-80 workers. To get out of this dead-end, the firm's negotiator (Giraud) arranged a meeting for October 10, in Dijon (more than 65 miles away from the eyes and ears of the workers) and to be attended by union officials only. Giraud proposed about 160 redundancies (with early retirement, nearly 300). There would be no guarantee that conditions would remain unchanged or that those sacked would be given work elsewhere. The CGT officials accepted the offer. The CFDT agreed to the sackings in principle but said they wanted a guarantee of re-employment elsewhere. The negotiations were thus broken. Giraud put forward an ultimatum that if his offer was not accepted, the firm would shut down and the negotiations terminated. For the first time open criticisms of the CFDT were voiced.

At the beginning of 1973, the CFDT had supported the creation of an 'Action Committee' by a small group of workers, mostly CFDT activists. It seems that the object of the CFDT was to control a group which would have a freer hand than the union branch to carry out certain material tasks (propaganda, direct action, etc.). But progressively many workers gathered around the Action Committee and gave it a totally different

character from that originally intended. While in calm periods it had only comprised some 5 members, in the crucial periods of the struggle, and in times of tension between unions and rank and file, as many as 80 to 100 members had attended, all of them Lip workers, not outsiders. It was this Committee which had effectively organised the 'March on Besançon'. Its role became essential when the CFDT dropped the most important demands of the Lip workers at the Dijon meeting.

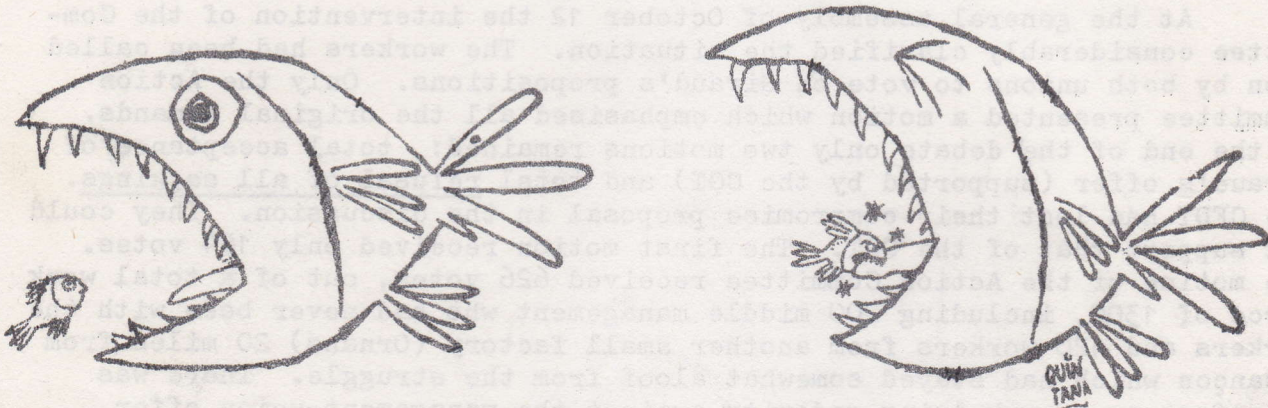
At the general assembly of October 12 the intervention of the Committee considerably clarified the situation. The workers had been called upon by both unions to vote on Giraud's propositions. Only the Action Committee presented a motion which emphasised all the original demands. At the end of the debate only two motions remained: total acceptance of Giraud's offer (supported by the CGT) and total refusal of all sackings. The CFDT had lost their compromise proposal in the discussion. They could not support that of the CGT. The first motion received only 164 votes. The motion of the Action Committee received 626 votes, out of a total work force of 1300, including 200 middle management who had never been with the workers and 120 workers from another small factory (Ornans) 20 miles from Besançon which had stayed somewhat aloof from the struggle. There was therefore an overwhelming majority against the management-union offer.

This was an all-or-nothing decision. The workers no longer had anything to lose. There is little more they can do now, isolated as they are. Frantic propaganda efforts (largely organised by the CFDT) in which Lip workers were sent up and down the country attending leftist meetings, although enthusiastically supported by large sections of the population, could not replace the effective and active support of other workers. At the present time the Ornans factory has been reopened. Attempts are being made, by one of the interested firms, to transfer the armament section of Lip to another factory in Besançon. 105 workers (out of 108 in this section) refused on November 19 to be transferred to another factory. The workers have more or less accepted defeat by signing on at the Labour Exchange. They are still meeting regularly and they have refused to release the stock of watches and the money they have collected. But newspapers in Paris have stopped talking about Lip.

The Lip events were not a waste of time or energy. Even if the management and government could not accept the 'no sackings' demand in this crucial struggle, the reaction of the Lip workers has forced them to think twice about allowing 'Lip' to happen again elsewhere. In a shoe factory south of Lyons (Salamander at Romans) workers went on strike at the beginning of August against 84 redundancies. After a fortnight the Employers Federation of the shoe industry agreed to re-employ all sacked workers in other factories of the town at the same conditions. A similar event occurred in October in a textile factory in the Vosges (Duceux at

Saint Dié). It is a sign that workers cannot be pushed around so easily any more. This is one of the points that the Lip struggle has stressed and reinforced. This could only have been achieved by the emergence of a self-organised struggle. The attempts at truly autonomous action by the Lip workers, another sign of the times, explains why their struggle has fired popular imagination.

H.S. and J.J.



NOW OUT

SOLIDARITY MOTOR BULLETIN No.1 (Ford Struggle 1973)

Articles about developments in the Ford plants in Amsterdam, Antwerp, Bordeaux, Cologne, Genk and Melbourne. The rank and file speaking to the rank and file. 5p + postage

VIETNAM : WHOSE VICTORY? (Solidarity pamphlet No.43) 25p + postage

This is a much expanded version of Bob Potter's previous pamphlets VIETNAM (1965) and THE RAPE OF VIETNAM (1967). Contains a lot of new material, including details on the joint suppression by the British and the Viet Minh of the Saigon insurrection of 1945. (This material was first published in English in Solidarity vol.V, no.5, and has long been out of print.)

NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS : The Vietnam pamphlet (25p) will count as five issues of your sub. If you receive it, it will mean that your sub. still has an adequate credit. If you don't receive it, it will mean that your sub won't stand up to a further 5 issues and needs renewing.