

BRENT MARXIST INDUSTRIAL GROUP

**BRITAIN'S CRISIS,
the NATIONAL INTEREST
and CLASS STRUGGLE**

A STUDENT IN INDUSTRY

PORTRAIT OF A DISPUTE

M. Hickey

BOOK REVIEWS

JIMMY REID

REFLECTIONS OF A CLYDE-BUILT MAN

Souvenir Press

HEALTH FOR 1,000 MILLION PEOPLE

A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

The Socialist Medical Association

NUMBER THIRTY-ONE

PRICE 10p

THE MARXIST

PROGRAMME

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. The liberation of the proletariat is the task of the proletariat itself.
2. The proletariat cannot liberate itself without liberating all the classes which are oppressed by finance capital.
3. The liberation of the people can only be achieved by the people themselves.
4. We are opposed to the creation of elites who see themselves as liberators of the people. Such concepts arise from a lack of faith in the ability of people to liberate themselves.
5. The people can only liberate themselves under the leadership of the industrial working class and that class can only fulfil this role when its most politically advanced elements are brought together as a collective leadership which understands and applies the laws of historical development as discovered by Marx and Engels and further developed by Lenin, Stalin and Mao.

Applying these general principles to conditions in Britain, we draw the following conclusions:

1. The basic task is to win the working class for revolutionary ideas and struggle.
2. This means that a resolute and consistent fight must be waged to defeat the reformist and revisionist ideas which dominate the industrial working class at the present time. This domination is expressed in many ideological, political and organisational ways, including the approach towards industrial struggles on basic economic issues such as wages and employment.

Continued on back cover

Editorial Correspondence to:

T. Hill,
11 Barratt Avenue, London, N.22

Subscriptions to:

S. Graves,
5 Woodfield Avenue, London, N.W.9
(Cheques and Postal Orders payable to THE MARXIST)

Subscription rates (6 issues) British Isles and Overseas (surface mail) - £1.00

BRITAIN'S CRISIS, the NATIONAL INTEREST and CLASS STRUGGLE

BRENT MARXIST INDUSTRIAL GROUP

Throughout the world, in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the movement for national independence is growing in strength and gaining Victories every day.

It is just the opposite as far as Britain is concerned. The constantly recurring crisis and ever more frequent recourse to foreign loans is taking us further and further down the road where all major decisions concerning the running of the economy will have to be vetted by foreigners.

The latest indignity is the team of experts from that international bankers' organisation known as the International Monetary Fund that has come to London to 'investigate' the situation and thereafter lay down the conditions that must be met if the loan requested by the Government is to be granted.

How can we pretend that Britain retains its national sovereignty when its Government must submit its decisions to an outside body for vetting?

Callaghan, Healey, and practically the whole bunch of Labour, Tory and Liberal politicians make no bones about the reason for this situation. "We are consuming more than we are producing", says Jim.

In terms of external trading relationships this is indisputable. The persistent and growing gap between imports and exports

is proof. As usual, 'we' are called upon to make sacrifices (temporary, of course) and, as always, the sacrifices fall most heavily upon the working class. Increases in food, rent, press most heavily on the working class because a bigger proportion of their income is spent on these items.

Wage restraint also presses most heavily of all on industrial workers for the reason that, for the most part, their wages are the subject of collective agreements and alterations to the wage schedules are fairly easily detected. The formalised wage structure which is an essential part of labour's defence mechanism is thus used as a means to control wages. This is one of the ironies of the class struggle.

In many other occupations such tight wage schedules do not exist and, in addition, perks are considerable.

The situation at I.C.I. with regard to the perks of some executive grades has been publicised but that is only the tip of the iceberg. House repair and decoration by the maintenance department of the firm and the provision of fridges, freezers, and other domestic hardware to management grades is far from rare. Many office workers escape the restrictions by divers means such as re-categorisation of the job.

Adding insult to injury, the 'problem' of insufficient exports is usually reduced to

the low productivity and proneness to strike of the British industrial worker. If only he did not indulge in strikes and worked as hard as his German, French and Japanese counterparts, then all would be well - or so it is suggested by some know-alls who can't even mend a dripping tap.

Some of the more 'enlightened' people - those who have some experience of industry point to the fact that the higher productivity per worker in those countries is due to higher capital investment. Most workers, being far from stupid, know this to be true, therefore the conventional wisdom of those in authority is to accept the point and pledge to move heaven and earth to remedy the position - sometime in the future, but in the meantime, accept worse conditions.

The 'wise men' of the T.U.C. speak correctly about the need to modernise British industry and restructure the economy, but then come up with the Social Contract as the means of achieving it. The top and bottom of this is the acceptance of the position that the wages of the working class must be held down in order that industry can become more profitable and therefore undertake a higher rate of investment.

The observant reader will no doubt note that whereas the working class must sacrifice 'to put the country on its feet', the capitalist class needs incentives in the form of higher profits.

So much for their patriotism.

Having obtained the restraint on wages with promises to refrain from cutting Government expenditure and increasing unem-

ployment, the Government then proceed to renege on their part of the Social Contract yet Trade Union leaders still mouth (some-what hysterically at times) their support for it.

It is now painfully obvious that Government, Opposition, the Left, and the Trade Union leaders are now floundering. They are smatching bold words ('Grasp the nettle, Jim', as Scanlon said at the T.U.C.) with stop-gap measures in the hope that, like Mr. Micawber, something will turn up.

Castig our minds back to the birth of the Social Contract, we remember that the centre piece of the whole thing was the prevention of a higher rate of unemployment. Experience already shows that this has not been the case and it illustrates the danger of the working class accepting the abolition of unemployment as the main practical task at the present time.

Unemployment is endemic throughout the capitalist world and is inseparable from a market economy. Unemployment will exist as long as capitalism itself exists. This is due to the inherent tendency within capitalist economy for productive capacity to grow faster than the market, but its incidence in each country depends upon several factors, the main two being the general standard of living, and the productivity per head of the population.

Country A, with a low standard of living and a high level of productivity, will be able to sell its products more cheaply than its competitor B which has a less favourable combination of these two factors.

As a consequence, country A would, everything else being equal, tend to have a low-

er rate of unemployment than B because it would be able to export more of its surplus products.

Productivity per head of the population depends upon three main factors:

1. The proportion of the population actually engaged in production;
2. The efficiency of the machines at their disposal;
3. The speed at which the worker performs his job and the interest which he displays in increasing production.

All wealth is created by the workers in the production industries. (We are ignoring agriculture for the purpose of this argument.)

They provide not only for their own consumption but also for the consumption of the whole of society, whether it be in the form of rent, interest, profit, or that of the people engaged in non-productive employment, as well as the old, the sick, and the unemployed.

In Britain we have the situation in which the amount of fixed capital per worker is less than that of its competitors and, in addition, the proportion of the population (excluding agriculture) engaged in industry is much lower.

We are quite clearly in category B.

The capitalist class is trying to establish a competitive position and thus increase its profits by lowering general living standards, and in particular by reducing labour costs in industry.

Devaluation is one method of achieving this.

A sterling devaluation will (theoretically) allow British manufactures to be sold more cheaply abroad and so (again, theoretically) open up the possibility of increasing the volume of exports. This is the theory behind the Healey 'plan' for 'export led growth'. That this has not taken place to anything like the expected degree shows how far theory has deviated from practice.

It is an open secret that the 'export potentialities' created by the fall in the value of sterling since January have been largely nullified, at least up to mid-1976, by the fact that the majority of exporters have chosen to increase their profits by increasing prices rather than expanding sales at the old price.

There is, however, no such escape for the mass of the people from the rise in prices resulting from the devaluation.

The capitalist class, through their control of the mass media, by means of Government pronouncements, and declarations by tame trade union leaders, tell us that these reductions in living standards are unavoidable because we are living beyond our means. They perform the sleight-of-hand trick of giving the impression that the 'we' who produce are identical with the 'we' who consume, but then go on to single out the industrial workers as the villain of the piece. When we look into the matter, however, the opposite is the case.

In 1962 there were 11,749,000 employed in industry, and 11,537,000 in non-industrial employment.

In 1973 the numbers employed in industry had decreased to 9,915,000 but those in non-industrial employment had increased to 12,747,000.

A smaller number of industrial workers are now having to produce a bigger total surplus than they did ten years ago in order to provide for the increased army of non-producers.

It is argued that this relative increase in the non-industrial sector is an unavoidable consequence of developed capitalism but even if this was true (and there is every reason to dispute it) it does not explain why the increase in this sector in Britain was 29% whilst the corresponding figures in other countries were: U.S.A. 19%, France 15%, W. Germany 8%, Italy 7½%, and Japan 7%.

In most of these countries the rate of investment has been higher and the rate of inflation and unemployment lower than in Britain. Further, overall living standards have increased faster in those countries.

As the cost of the non-productive sector goes to make up the final selling price it can be seen that at least part of the 'competitiveness' of the goods those countries produce is due to what may be termed lower national overheads.

Productivity per worker has increased considerably over the period in question and it is obvious that we are producing a considerable surplus over that which we industrial workers consume ourselves.

The point is that this surplus is being squandered by those who wield the power and we are expected to endure further falls in our living standards (in the national interest, of course) in order to continue sustaining this state of affairs.

Of course, some non-producers (for ex-

ample, street cleaners, sewerage workers, hospital ancillaries, nurses, doctors, teachers, transport and retail distributors) are socially necessary and the services which they render are legitimate charges on production; (so are the sick, the unemployed, and the O.A.P. s.)

In some of these categories, notably transport and retail distribution, there has been an actual decrease in numbers. The biggest increase has been in employment by Local Authorities (42%) and Central Government (11%) over the years 1962-1972. It is a well-known fact that a large percentage of these have been in administration - the Bureaucracy.

During the 'boom' this was financed by increases in rates and taxation, and also by borrowing from the money market at home and abroad. Now the chips are down.

Borrowing on the previous scale is out because it will increase inflation. Increases in rates and taxes are becoming politically explosive, therefore cuts in Government spending are unavoidable, and this at a time when the level of unemployment is necessitating greater expenditure on unemployment benefits.

In essence, the Government is borrowing money to pay back the loan with interest which it borrowed to pay back the loan with interest, which it previously borrowed This would be farcical if it were not we who will be designated to foot the bill.

Dr. Paul Neild, chief economist of Pearson and Drew, estimates that one quarter of the £2,300 million which Britain is seeking to borrow from the I.M.F. will be used to repay the standby

loan taken out to support the £ in June of this year, and the remainder will be used up in meeting the deficit in the Balance of Payments for the rest of the year.

The high Minimum Lending Rate which has been introduced in an attempt to attract money back into the London banks in order to stop the depreciation of sterling will not only lead to higher mortgages but will also put up the cost of borrowing for industry and so hinder investment, the very thing that the Government pledged itself to encourage as part of its side of the Social Contract.

Further international loans will not solve the problem, they will merely postpone the crunch.

Although there is a large measure of understanding that the productive base of the economy must be strengthened, there are differences, depending upon the class interests involved, regarding the structure of the industrial sector in terms of its orientation. Similar differences arise when the question is considered of how the industrial base can be strengthened.

To illustrate this we now consider some of the major proposals contained in the document put forward by the C.B.I. entitled

Cuts In Unproductive Expenditure

The C.B.I. concentrates entirely on cutting public expenditure, i.e. that incurred by central and local government. It suggests there could be scope for economies under four main headings:

1. Less state intervention in private industry.

2. More commercial charging for public services.
3. Economies in administration.
4. Cutting out of waste.

The first one is clearly aimed at the National Enterprise Board to which it says it is fundamentally opposed because of its powers of intervention. But later in the document it makes clear that the C.B.I. is not opposed in principle to accepting state aid in circumstances which involve "strategic considerations, research and development, regional policy, transitional aid, foreign competition, and short term support for major enterprises".

In short, cut government spending but not that part which goes to make up industrial profits. This is an area which requires investigation in order to determine which specific aspects of aid to industry correspond with working class interests.

There is a complete identity of interests in principle on the question of cutting out waste and reducing costs of administration.

More commercial charging for public services - this certainly means higher fares on public transport, but can also be taken to mean that there should be higher charges for prescriptions, dentures, and spectacles.

Our general attitude should be to fight to maintain services, no increase in charges or fares, but join with them in demands to cut administration costs and waste.

Profitability of Industry

The report maintains that real profitability of industry has declined from 10% on

capital employed in the 1960s to 2% in 1975. This does not seem to be borne out by published company returns but, as is well known, accountants can juggle figures to show that which is politically desirable. But even accepting that there has been some reduction in the rate of profit in this period, it does not mean that there has been any reduction in the surplus value created by the workers, in fact the rise in productivity points to the opposite conclusion.

A substantial part of the reduction referred to is due to a redistribution of this surplus value in the economy as a whole. Where else did the money come from to build the shopping centres, office blocks, etc. if not from the surplus created by the industrial workers.

Further, it ignores the higher interest on loans which have inevitably syphoned off some of the profit which would otherwise have shown itself on the balance sheets of the industrial enterprises.

In addition, the growth of the non-productive element has taken place in industry itself. Every worker in industry can testify to the mushroom-like growth of parasitic elements such as advertising, management consultants, and just plain 'empire building'.

They do not wish to admit these things for the reason that a struggle on these points would sharpen the contradictions within the capitalist class itself and would hit at the hangers-on who provide political support for the capitalist system. Consequently the industrial employers try to remedy the situation by increased exploitation of the manual workers.

As the report says:

"There must be a constructive response from all employees on such questions as manning levels on new plant; the replacement of skilled men by less skilled men; when production processes are simplified, more flexible use of manpower, removal of restrictive practices and the ending of demarcation disputes between unions."

"Government's activities should be limited largely to helping in the creation of a constructive atmosphere in which change can take place."

This can be done in the following ways:

"By helping to redress the balance by which public service jobs are more attractive than those in industry; by reducing the legislative restrictions on employment; by making sure the welfare system does not discourage people from taking paid employment; by encouraging mobility, by training programmes, and by some sensible short-term alleviation of unemployment."

Left to its own inclinations there is every reason to suppose that the capitalist class will follow the same course that it has done previously. In the main it will continue to concentrate on gaining short-term advantages without much concern for the long-term interests of the British people.

When Heath was Prime Minister he was, on more than one occasion, moved to castigate the leaders of industry for their refusal to invest in industry in Britain despite the financial encouragements given to them

by his and previous governments.

The provision of investment incentives now will not, on their own, be any more successful in this respect than those in the past. Likewise, the acceptance of wage restraint by the industrial working class will not result in greater investment, only greater profits.

Cuts in Government Spending

The reaction of the social democratic left to the cuts being made and proposed is simply to put forward the demand that there shall be no cuts. They generally rationalise this by claiming that the correct thing to do in the present situation is to increase expenditure by central and local government in order to increase demand thus, so they say, stimulating production.

This sounds very plausible until it is realised that the practice of this economic theory has been a major factor in bringing about the present situation where the non-productive sector of the economy has grown to the detriment of the productive sector. This could not be allowed to continue under any type of economy, be it capitalist or socialist.

The objective conditions which are compelling these cuts to be made are so strong that, given the present state of the working class movement, there is not a cat in hell's chance of preventing them; and secondly, if it were possible it would not, in some areas, be advisable from the standpoint of the interests of the working class.

Working class opposition should be concentrated on two main areas: we should oppose cuts which will lead to higher unem-

ployment in the productive sector, such as cutting back of housing programmes, the postponement of modernisation of the public transport system, telecommunications, etc. We should also oppose cuts in the social services which are of value to the working class.

This will only be effective if unity in struggle is developed between those who actually operate the social and educational services, such as nurses, doctors and ancillary workers in hospitals, workers in public transport, teachers, street sweepers, refuse collectors, etc. on the one hand, and workers in the productive sector on the other.

It goes without saying that we are concerned with protecting jobs as well as services. We must not be involved in projects to make two nurses do the work of three under the pretext that this will safeguard the service.

Where, then, can cuts in expenditure be made?

There is plenty of scope for reductions in the vast administrative network which has developed in the Health Service and all parts of Central and Local Governments.

For example, between June 1975 and June 1976 administration in the public sector increased by 47,000 and this at a time when cuts were already being made in some essential public services. This is no longer a secret confined to a select few, it is increasingly becoming a sore point with the workers in the productive sector, as well as the operative staff in the educational and health services.

The 'Left' tend to brush this feeling of

indignation under the carpet, as it were, on the grounds that it is divisive.

Whilst a lot of noise is being made about opposing reductions in government spending, the cuts in services are continuing. Hospitals are being closed and trained nurses told that their services are not required but the administrators have plenty to do deciding where and how the cuts in services will be made.

It is clear in whose interest the kind of unity practised by the 'Left' operates.

Come what may, this indignation will find expression in one way or another and the more politically conscious people can choose to either stand in the forefront and give leadership, or be by-passed. For our part we consider that this indignation is justified and expresses a fundamentally correct attitude.

The economic reason for cutting back on administrative costs are self-evident but there are equally sound political reasons why the working class as a whole should take up this question. This behoves everyone to define their attitude towards state bureaucracy, both now and in the long term.

Here we are referring to the complex administrative machine which is so much a part of present day government, both at central and local level. This machine is just as much a part of the state apparatus as the police, the armed forces, and the Law Courts; furthermore, it intrudes on every part of our lives. That it appears to be neutral, and in some cases even benevolent, does not alter matters one little bit; it is there for the express purpose of preserving the present economic and political

system in all its main essentials.

Numerically it provides a considerable political base of support for what is often referred to as the Establishment.

State Capitalism

As the contradictions within capitalist society grow, and the deficiencies of the free market economy become impossible to ignore the state is compelled to intervene on an ever increasing scale in an attempt to counteract the imbalance caused by the market forces. Thus monopoly capitalism develops into state monopoly capitalism.

This is an historically inevitable phenomenon which carries with it both the opportunity to move forward to socialism and the danger of developing into a corporate state of a fascist type.

One of the factors which favour the development of the latter is the existence of a growing army of state servants employed in its administration. Their present and future prospects are inseparable from a continued growth of the administrative machine which, in practice, means that they have a vested interest in the creation of a corporate state.

The other side of the coin is the way in which the Tories have used this development to weaken the appeal of socialism for the mass of the people. On the whole, the Tories represent that section of the capitalist class which regards its interests as being threatened by the encroachment of the state in economic affairs, that is, the development of state capitalism. For this reason they hold strong reservations about the greatly enlarged administrative machine

which is part and parcel of it.

They have been able to associate this in the minds of many people with the claims of the social democrats that this form of state intervention is synonymous with moves towards socialism.

This, coupled with the awareness of what has happened in the Soviet Union, has helped to confuse people into equating socialism with the existence of a vast bureaucracy; they tend to see socialism as being little more than exchanging one set of bosses for another. This is a big stumbling block when discussing the socialist alternative with workers.

Whilst we make no secret of our opinion that the only alternative to capitalism is a centrally planned economy, we must also make it abundantly clear, not only in our propaganda but more importantly in our actions, that we are resolutely opposed to any society, no matter what it calls itself, which is dominated by bureaucrats or elites of any kind.

Prospects

In the short-term, even if correct policies are followed, it will not be a question of whether living standards fall but of which classes will bear the main brunt. In addition to the internal reasons for this, there is also the fact that the prices of imported fuel and raw materials will continue to rise as the third world countries establish their right to fair prices for their products.

Unless there is a drastic switch of manpower and resources to the productive sector, there is only one way for everyone

and that is down. This will undoubtedly be unpalatable for those who have carved out for themselves a comfortable niche in the unessential part of the non-productive sector, but some are bound to be hurt in the process and the industrial working class has already borne its share.

The political leaders of the capitalist class know what the score is. They also know that to bring about this switch of resources they will have to take measures to direct capital. This will go against the grain with the banking and financial fraternity. It will entail a struggle within the capitalist class itself, one that will only be resolved in a positive way if the working class is resolute enough to prevent any other solution.

It will be seen that, whilst there is a similarity between the aims we espouse and the aims of the T.U.C., there the similarity ends. The latter, after the manner of social democrats, rely on the good intentions of the employing class to 'keep their side of the bargain'.

We, on our part, maintain that the capitalist class must be faced with the clear alternative of either moving in a direction favourable to the working class, or having their whole system reduced to a shambles by direct action particularly at the point of production.

Sooner or later the crunch will come; in the meantime we should be pursuing policies which will, over a period, unite the mass of the people around the industrial working class. This kind of unity will only develop if the working class demonstrates its power and readiness to make the alternative which they present to the capitalist class

become a reality.

As the struggle develops there should be contingency planning for either eventuality. People can best be mobilised around positive aims and perspectives, both short and long term.

In our opinion, the mid-term perspective which will most appeal to the mass of the people is one of an economy which is primarily geared to the needs of the British people with minimum dependence upon outside sources of food, fuel, raw materials, and manufactured goods and is capable of sustaining an independent economic, political, and military stance.

Popular demand for an economy structured to meet these requirements will inevitably bring the people into conflict with different capitalist interests and ethics. For instance, the Government and the employers are forever complaining about the shortage of capital with which to modernise industry, yet millions of pounds have been poured into the car industry, an industry which, on a world scale, is almost at saturation point. The reason given is that "it is a big export earner, it brings in much needed foreign exchange".

If this were only a stop-gap measure to buy time whilst the economy was restructured to make it more self-reliant, that would be understandable. All the signs are that this is not so.

The dangers of this present course can be better appreciated when it is remembered that a great deal of employment in Britain is dependent upon the car industry and that there is an environmental, as well as a financial, limit to the numbers of cars

that can be absorbed in Britain.

It is fine when foreign markets are expanding but as saturation point is reached and the inevitable cut backs take place, it will lead to massive unemployment superimposed on the already high figure. Of course, we will be 'invited' to accept still lower living standards in order to 'remain competitive' in foreign markets but where is the future in that?

Contrast this approach which concentrates everything on attempts to increase exports with the alternative where attention is paid to those parts of industry which are capable of producing the things needed by the British people but are presently being run down because foreign imports are better value for money.

Aid for the purpose of reversing this situation would have the advantage for the British people of reducing imports and creating jobs here. It would also help save certain industries which are necessary in terms of maintaining our national independence; the electronics industry is one example.

In addition, there are many instances of nominally British made goods which are, in fact, largely composed of imported sub-assemblies. These all add to the cost of imports but when one company director known to us was tackled with this question, he smoothly replied, "It's good business". So much for the patriotism of the businessman.

These contradictions which reflect on the one hand the interests of capital which seek short term gain, and on the other the longer term interests of the British people, if correctly handled will enable the work-

A STUDENT IN INDUSTRY

PORTRAIT OF A DISPUTE

M. Hickey

Last summer I took a job as a building labourer in the City of London. I had just completed one course of study, and had to wait eight months for the next course to begin. A struggle developed on the building site, first to organise it and then to negotiate pay and conditions. I helped initiate the struggle and I was involved until I had to leave.

The following is an account of the experience. The purpose of the article is not to reminisce but to draw the lessons learned from our successes and failures, particularly by illuminating the tactics we adopted. Although I had worked in the industry before, I was hardly a 'veteran' (nor am I now). Seasoned activists will no doubt find the report pedestrian and will learn little from it. But it is hoped it will be of some use to younger comrades who, like myself, may find themselves in the deep end before they have properly learned to swim.

The Background

The job on which we were employed involved the modernisation of an occupied office block. The main contractor - a middle size building firm - prided itself on the absence of 'labour trouble' on its sites. The reasons for this were manifold.

In the first place the firm pays almost the lowest rates in the industry in London (marginally above the Working Rule Agreement rate and bonus.) So it attracts both inexperienced workers and those who are

'filling time' while they seek better jobs elsewhere. This results in an unstable workforce in which there is a rapid turnover of labour.

Secondly, most of its contracts are conversions rather than new buildings, paid for on a 'time and materials' basis rather than at a price which accounts for the more relaxed working atmosphere and narrows the opportunities for negotiating bonuses. (Moreover on this site complaints about the low rate were muted as the firm offered a lot of overtime on which the men relied. This gave rise to the ironic observation often made in full seriousness: "The pay may be lousy - but the hours are great!")

Of vital importance also was the fact that most of the skilled work was performed by sub-contract labour. Thus not only were the directly employed workers in a minority, but it was impossible to get cohesion amongst the tradesmen on the job.

There had been a dispute in June which arose from the sacking of one of the three T.U. members on the site. The other two regarded this as victimisation and widened the issue to include not only a demand for the sacked men's reinstatement but also for the removal of 'lump' labour from the site and an increase in bonus earnings; these had been cut by the firm to offset the Joint Board (cost of living) Supplement which it was bound to pay under the W.R.A.

The other men on the site had no stomach for a fight and had ignored the call for a

strike, so the help of the local T.G.W.U. and U.C.A.T.T. organisers was recruited and a large picket, drafted in from other sites, was placed on the gate, causing a shut-down for three days. Although the firm nominally conceded the first two demands it was an empty victory. The sacked man did not return and one of the other members was shortly transferred. But most importantly, the majority who had been brought out against their will were now decidedly hostile to the Union, regarding the strike as a lockout imposed by outsiders.

The remaining member - the steward - was thus powerless to enforce the firm's pledge concerning lump labour. Inevitably he had developed a 'left' attitude, seeing his main allies in the militants from other sites and regarding the contradictions between himself and his workmates as antagonistic. This was exacerbated by the "I'll shut the site" threats used by the officials during negotiations.

The First Steps

In August I was transferred along with other men to the above site. The Steward recruited me into the T.G.W.U. and we attempted to persuade the other newcomers to join us - with little effect. Naturally without the majority behind us, demands would be meaningless. The first phase of our struggle was therefore directed at winning this support.

I soon recognised two errors in my approach; first, general exhortations are purposeless - they provide no ground on which one can take a stand. Second, but compounded by this, was my failure to seek out the most positive elements within the workforce. Indiscriminate agitation had brought me to

the attention of the site management who were informed early on that I was a communist. (My only saving grace was that I worked at a fair pace - which is essential if one is to avoid being labelled a 'doser' and thus lose the respect of one's workmates).

From close contact with the men it became evident that they were divided into advanced, middle, and backward elements. For practical purposes, no new approach would be made to the backward elements - whose loyalty was in question - until we had consolidated our position. Secondly, the method of 'the general moan', whereby the low wages and poor conditions are constantly bewailed in the hope of raising the consciousness of others, was discarded in favour of the more active method of teaching by example.

I first worked on the fares allowance which the firm showed great reluctance to pay. After several approaches to management - including a threat to take it up with the National Joint Council of the Building Industry - I received my fares duly backdated. Heartened by this, the Steward adopted the same tactic and received his, even though the firm had previously told him he was not entitled to any. Pointing to our own modest success we encouraged the others and where encouragement was insufficient we jibed at them good-humouredly, exclaiming that if they wanted to give money away, they could throw a little in our direction.

Similar approaches were made over 'dirt money', 'tool money', and safety equipment.

All this time sporadic negotiations which were leading nowhere were being conducted

between the T.G.W.U. and the firm on the bonus issue. The Trade Group Secretary introduced the figure of 25p p.h. as a minimum standing bonus (we were then receiving less than 9p p.h.) with a spot target incentive scheme to augment the bonus earnings. The firm expressed interest in the spot target idea but refused to discuss a fallback bonus, which they insisted would not be permitted by the client.

The Trade Group Secretary offered the firm more time to consider his proposal with a threat of "shutting the job" if the reply was still unfavourable. I suggested later that this would be premature, that we did not have the support on the ground and would be isolated. "I wouldn't worry about that" came the response. We were even promised £40 per week in donations in the event of a strike - which of course neither of us took seriously.

We now raised the point with the middle ground workers that we would eventually have to take action of some kind to further our claim. On one occasion our approach to these elements looked like paying off - there was an unexpected rash of demands for union tickets - but this collapsed just as suddenly, for these men felt we were about to force a precipitated conflict with the firm.

This phenomenon was to repeat itself many times. The middle ground elements are by virtue of their position far less stable than either the advanced or backward sections; because of their tendency to vacillate even on basic issues it becomes very difficult to judge when they have finally been won over.

Consolidation

Thus it seemed that no further development through which we could consolidate our base was imminent. But such 'order' is always temporary and now the objective conditions were changed by the arrival of three new directly employed men.

These men - two of whom were improvers, i.e. trainee bricklayers - were brought in to undertake work which had been done by sub-contract labour. Our firm had, in attempting to cut its costs, given the sub-contractor an ultimatum: reduce your rates for day work or take your men off the site. The sub-contractor had taken the latter course and the improvers were to replace the now redundant bricklayers. The other new man, a labourer (whom we had recruited into the T.G.W.U.) and myself were now instructed to labour to the new improvers.

Not only were the improvers being paid a lower rate than the bricklayers but we were to be paid no extra for labouring to them. We regarded this as cutting the rate for the job and we refused. Summoned by the site management, I was given a paternalistic lecture, the tone of which can be conveyed by repeating the question asked of me: "If you don't like it here, why don't you go down the road?"

What I was being asked to do was strictly in accordance with the W.R.A. and this enabled them to issue the verbal warning. As I had no support present I indicated that I would relent, subject to the steward's advice. But as the foremen had relied on section and paragraph of the W.R.A. to enforce their authority I was able to turn the situation to some advantage.

I raised every other matter which I could recall on which the W.R.A. was not observed on the site - principally regarding extra payments for special work. The foremen were forced to yield on these matters and promise that everything would be rectified and duly backdated.

The lesson here is the obvious one; it pays to be conversant with the relevant collective agreements and with procedure.

In the ensuing discussion among the men the steward advised me not to back down and pledged his support. This forced those on the middle ground to declare their stand. After some prevarication two more decided to take our side and join the Union into the bargain. Those remaining, now in a minority, voiced their support yet were still not prepared to join the Union. These were the 'backward elements' referred to above.

My position, based on the principle that organisation is more important than Union membership, was to support these 'backward elements', whether members or not. The steward, on the other hand, warned them that we could defend no 'nons' against reprisals. In retrospect, I believe my position was 'leftist' because although the principle is sound, it would be idealistic to attempt to apply it there. By the end of the day all eight labourers had refused and all had been warned.

On the following morning the management presented written warnings but only to the Union members. The steward immediately contacted the local organiser who appeared in the afternoon. He advised us that we were on shaky ground and on his recommendation we changed our demand from refusing

to work with ~~improvers~~ to refusing to work with non-members. By this stage one of the improvers had joined us. We were now in the majority.

So while the Organiser negotiated with site management to get the warnings withdrawn, we approached the other workers and informed them of the change. This, of course, was construed by the 'nons' as a threat - as it was intended - and it caused a lot of heated argument.

It is to be noted that this coercive measure, the threat that we would force out the 'nons', was employed only when we had the power to enforce it and only when persuasion had demonstrably failed.

By the time the Organiser emerged from the meeting, having obtained withdrawal of all the warnings, management was faced with a 100% shop. This was our first real victory. A qualitatively new situation now obtained and it was time to exercise our newly won power.

Taking the Offensive

The feeling of elation at having won a concession from the firm spread even to the hitherto most recalcitrant. At our first meeting three factors combined to ensure a lively discussion on the next steps to be taken. The most important factor was that the shop had only just been established; all were thus committed to make it work. Secondly, almost all the members were young. None were completely soured by adverse experience with trade unions. Finally, the shop was small, enabling me as chairman to guarantee full and democratic discussion by everyone. Having elected a deputy steward we discus-

sed the imminent unemployment march (November) and unanimously decided to call a stoppage that day in support of it. As it was an 'outside' issue I impressed upon those present that the resolution in support of the march was a recommendation, not an instruction, that there would be no compulsion on members who voted against, but that all those in favour were bound not to renege on their decision.

In respect of the immediate situation, we resolved to take the offensive against an inexperienced management that had patently been caught off guard. Within a fortnight we had obtained a limit on the amount of overtime to be worked; an agreed overtime roster to eliminate favouritism, coupled with abandonment of the practice of bringing in 'good' workers from other sites for overtime; and a pledge to introduce an incentive scheme within two weeks. (Although a fallback bonus would have been preferable the Union had resigned itself to the management's refusal and this we accepted).

In addition, when the firm had failed to summon their safety officer to discuss measures with us we called in the Factory Inspectorate. Although no Inspector ever materialised his distant footsteps were certainly heard by management. Such fear was induced that within a day or so three safety officers, from the different contractors on the site, were hurriedly brought in. In one day of frenzied activity dangerous exits were barred, gangways cleared, foot-traps covered, shaky scaffolding replaced and safety notices appeared in abundance.

One felt that things were going too smoothly.

Test of strength: Advances and Retreats

The promised introduction of the incentive scheme was repeatedly postponed and when it was two weeks overdue we requested the firm to put the promise in writing. This it was unwilling to do.

A meeting of the men was immediately called, as a result of which we gave the firm 24 hours to introduce a backdated incentive scheme or else to give us a written guarantee that such a scheme - whenever introduced - would be backdated. At the meeting on the following day the firm still refused to concede, although it tried to forestall action by vague reassurances that "if that was what was promised, then we stand by it." These were, of course, unacceptable and we notified management that from the end of the day we would be on indefinite strike.

The organiser was informed and he congratulated us: "The best news I've heard all week. I fully support whatever action the lads take."

With this moral support in mind we all proceeded to District Office on the afternoon of the strike to press the officers for a recommendation that the strike be made official. (This demonstrated our ignorance of procedure and also our lack of confidence. As the 'strike' in June had been official we erroneously believed that with greater numbers the present stoppage would surely be given the same status. Had we investigated the matter even superficially we would have recognised that official strikes in the building industry are very rare. The error was cardinal but did not prove fatal.)

At District Office we got our first taste of manoeuvring by the officials. The T.G.S. did not support our action; we had disregarded his advice to wait until the New Year before we made a move. In other words he wanted to call the tune and was upset that we were already dancing to our own.

In line with this the Organiser now withdrew his support - reneging on his earlier declarations: "The lads all want a few bob in their pockets coming up to Christmas ..."

On the other hand he was correct to rebuke us for not incorporating figures into our demand. We were thus unable to compute in money terms what we were on strike for! I was more guilty for this error than anyone else. I had believed that we should progress step by step, forcing the firm to concede first the principle before money would be discussed. It was indicative of my student background in which the principle and the practice are regarded as quite separate. This failing was, as we later learned, costly.

When we left District Office a general feeling of despondency had set in. We examined the union's antipathy towards the strike and with official support lacking, the men foresaw the possibility of standing 'outside the gate' for weeks. The organiser was to meet the firm the following day to discuss a resumption and a proposal was voiced that we follow his advice - whatever it might be. I opposed this, arguing that to allow the initiative to pass so easily from our hands could be suicidal, but I was on my own.

Thus the error of relying on official support lay fully exposed. We had led ourselves into the position where the offic-

ial's yea or nay was the decider.

Yet complete self-reliance in our case was impossible. The other tradesmen on the job who were not party to the dispute would not respect an unofficial picket line. But most of them were ticket holders of their respective unions and could thus refuse to cross an official picket line without the risk of being victimised. As their presence on the site was of more importance to the firm than ours it was essential that a prolonged strike should lead to the closure of the site.

However the strike had worried the firm. The Organiser was told the following morning that the directors "cannot understand our impatience". The targets would be ready for our inspection by the end of the day.

On this basis the Organiser recommended a resumption. He was opposed only by the steward who seemed to forget the feelings of the men expressed the previous evening. In fact, in view of the firm's undertaking to continue the stoppage would indeed have justified the epithet 'mindless militancy'.

By 4 p.m. we had received the targets, together with an undertaking that whatever earnings we made during the first week of the scheme's operation would be backdated to the original date. On inspection, the scheme proved inadequate and many of the targets set were physically unobtainable. Having cut most in half, we presented the new figures to the Projects Manager who, surprisingly, accepted them.

We were to receive 2/3rds of base time rate saved on targets (e.g. an hour's extra pay for a 3-hour job completed in 1½ hours).

I had insisted that the bonus be a pooled - as distinct from an individual - bonus so that no favouritism regarding the allocation of jobs could be shown. The men saw the validity of this demand and management reluctantly accepted it.

Round two to us - or so we thought.

The Price of Inexperience

In the New Year the results of the test week for the scheme were out. Surprise, surprise! We had not overreached the targets; we had earned nothing, so nothing would be backdated.

The failure to think out our demands coherently and account for such deviousness by incorporating a demand for fall-back pay had resulted in a tactical defeat.

The firm now requested that we postpone the meeting with the Organiser and discuss the targets afresh. Our earnings from the following week "which are bound to be better" would be backdated. We refused. We had implemented the scheme in good faith and, as we suspected, the volume of continuous work was not there to make it pay. We made it plain that whatever scheme was introduced we would not settle for a bonus of less than 25p per hour.

When the Organiser attended the meeting with management he affirmed our stand that the scheme was unworkable. At this there was disagreement among management who eventually declared that they would have to seek advice from Head Office. Discussions would be renewed the following week.

The Build-Up

At our meeting this was received as a crude delaying tactic by management; as the firm would not meet us again for a week we determined to apply pressure on other fronts. A decision was taken to hold a card inspection of all men on the site following which we would refuse to work with all confessed 'nons'. This would affect the other contractors whose men we often assisted by ferrying materials and preparing their work areas.

As we had no accredited convenor this presented problems of authority. Only a convenor can call a general card inspection.

The feeling of frustration had all but stopped discussion when suddenly the ganger made an unannounced entry to enquire how much longer our deliberations would take. Being bid a less than cordial farewell, he left as abruptly - and immediately became the brunt of all the anger. We had already instructed him to get a Union ticket but mindful of the potential dangers in this had not pursued the matter. Now he could be used as a convenient bargaining lever against the firm.

As expected, he had no ticket and we informed management of this. No doubt impressed by the tranquillity which a 100% shop can bring, they reprimanded him for his negligence but asked us for a few weeks' grace to enable him to mend his ways. (naturally enough, the ganger decided to join U.C.A.T.I. which had no organisation on the site.) This we refused and declared that we would take no orders from him from the end of the day (Friday).

In that case, retorted management, there

will be no Saturday work. This prompted a spontaneous walkout by the men. The couple not in favour were asked by the steward and myself to join us. I stressed that it was not an instruction, that the decision lay with them. They came out.

This riposte was a particularly effective snub to the firm's directive, issued that same day, that we clean up after every job as the client was complaining A Walk-out, I learned, can be a messy event.

On Monday morning the site agent and foremen entered the changing hut. Either we would accept the ganger's authority or be sacked. One by one we told them to sack us. They did so. In front of the foremen I assured the men that this constituted an unfair dismissal and egg would be on the firm's face, not ours.

Both foremen looked suitably abashed, claiming that they were only operating under instructions. (In fact such a blanket sacking is not unlawful; only selective dismissals, e.g. of ringleaders are 'unfair' under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act.)

As we stood outside the site the steward contacted District Office. Some men were worried: a dismissal has a finality about it. I saw no reason for fear and explained that this was just one weapon in the management's armoury. If we prevented new labour entering the site they would have to reinstate us.

We determined that we would only return to work when the ganger had obtained a ticket and on condition that we would be paid for the full time lost.

When the Organiser arrived he criticised

us for taking such a drastic step, reminding us that we could better fight the employer from inside, by operating a go-slow which would cause the firm to lose money. Although generally this is sound advice, here the realities of the situation demanded otherwise. A go-slow would only delay the inevitable clash when the firm would attempt to pick us off one by one.

By lunchtime, after a meeting in which management had first stood upon its dignity and then backed down, we were not only reinstated but paid for all time lost. In the meantime, a U.C.A.T.T. ticket had been procured from a convenor on a site nearby for the ganger - courtesy of our T.G.W.U. organiser!

Animosity towards the ganger was by this time so deep that we hoped management would settle the issue by removing him from the site. So the organiser's efforts to resolve the matter were received badly. In objective terms, however, we had achieved all we sought.

Skirmishes

The victory caused some of the men to forget realities. The steward and deputy voiced a proposal that we should stay out until management acceded to the main demand on the bonus. This was a 'left' position; it would have pre-empted discussions which were due to take place on Friday.

On the other side were those who felt enough had been achieved for one day and that now was a time for rest.

I took a middle line, saying that although we should maintain pressure on the firm we should not overreach ourselves. We resolv-

ed that if management did not yield on Friday we would begin an indefinite stoppage. Until then it was proposed that an overtime ban be observed. Not all were in favour of this, so I suggested that it be made voluntary.

In many situations a decision by the majority after full discussion may rightfully be imposed on the minority. However, here lay the danger that the backward elements would be left behind by the pace of events. This, I believed, was a practical problem of 'uniting the many' even though at the expense of a more militant position.

The management were now beginning to fight back. We had held meetings to discuss each new development and the foremen now tried to curtail these. The steward replied that what was left unsaid at meetings would be said on the floor, anyway. Acknowledging this simple truth the foremen then demanded that we inform them whenever we were about to hold a meeting. This involved no sacrifice and we agreed to it.

Other attempts to frustrate us had a similar measure of success. One ploy was to apply the timekeeping rule strictly - a departure from the norm. Suddenly we were all formally warned as we reported late one morning. Unhappily for the firm, the ganger had indiscreetly let slip that his own unpunctuality had been ignored. We demanded an explanation from site management, which naturally could not be provided. We were troubled by diligent timekeepers no longer.

Perhaps the funniest episode arose from our decision not to notify the firm of the overtime ban. Shortly after the meeting the foreman approached with a look of

scarcely concealed mirth to inform us that the firm was cutting overtime by $\frac{1}{2}$ hour per day. He returned to the office looking distinctly peeved.

The Strike: Official or Unofficial?

Site level management were no longer playing a role in the bonus negotiations. The big boys from Head Office had moved in and at the meeting on the Friday they obviously decided to dig their heels in. The scheme, which incidentally had added not one penny to our wages, was good enough, they insisted. There would be no new offer.

This uncompromising attitude surprised us all. We had expected at least token improvements. So we foresaw a long struggle ahead. With this in mind some of the middle elements began to vacillate. One who had latterly taken the most adventurist line at meetings decided to withdraw altogether. He could no longer support us and as he was not prepared to scab, would ask for a transfer. This we accepted, with the rider that he would not be allowed to return when the dispute was over.

Nevertheless the other workers were persuaded that no new course was open to us. The firm had forced a showdown and we had no more room for manoeuvre.

That same afternoon we stopped work and some of the men went to other sites to sound out support.

The question whether the strike had official T.G.W.U. support was the key issue during the first two weeks. As explained earlier we were a minority of men on the site. The other tradesmen, employed by several firms, had intimated that they

would be putting their necks on the block if they refused to cross an unofficial picket. This was understandable and it made our task of getting support from the officials all the more urgent.

Thus on the evening of the first day we went to District Office and obtained 'official strike' notices. As the strike had been 'put in procedure', i.e. referred to the Building Group Committee, this was legitimate. Had we been refused them, there was no doubt that morale would have sagged but with them it was boosted considerably.

The following days, although exhausting, provided much light relief. As the management had received no formal notice of a stoppage from the T.G.W.U. they notified every sub-contractor that the strike was unofficial and warned that unless the tradesmen came to work the sub-contractors would be in breach of contract. By this the firm hoped to wear down the sympathy which we enjoyed from the other men on the site.

The electricians, however, failed to be impressed by this threat; at the first sign of official placards - they were off.

Other tradesmen who had only nominal membership (as was the case with the heating and ventilation engineers) faced stiff pressure from their firms. To take the decision off their shoulders we instructed them to advise their firms that we would 'black' any worker who crossed the line. This shifted the problem onto their management who spent many anxious hours attempting to negotiate a compromise with our firm.

However, the carpenters, U.C.A.T.I. mem-

bers to a man, did cross the picket line, the result of inter-union rivalry, as did the ganger. We realised that to intensify and thus to shorten the dispute we would have to open a new front.

Throughout negotiations management insisted that the client's intransigence and not their own was the stumbling block. The firm could offer us no more money until the client authorised it. Whether this was true or not it provided us with an additional weapon: we now proceeded to block deliveries to the client firm itself.

Ostensibly we were taking on another enemy - usually a disastrous tactic in struggle. But by making the client a party to the dispute we hoped to aggravate the contradictions already existing between it and our firm, thus helping to isolate our firm as the cause of all the trouble.

In the short term this produced widespread confusion inside and sullen glares from the hitherto polite office workers who had been, at best, indifferent to our antics. More importantly, the client was beginning to feel the pinch. When we turned the postmen away it called in two managers from the G.P.O. who vainly tried to impress upon us that in "hindering the passage of the Queen's Mail" we were in grave danger of being locked away.

Moreover, on several occasions the client summoned the police with complaints of obstruction, harassment and intimidation of delivery workers. The police needed little persuasion that two men on each gate (the maximum permitted under City of London byelaws) were hardly capable of intimidating anyone. We remained on friendly terms with the law throughout the dispute; this was

later to rebound to our advantage.

At the weekend the picket was again in evidence, much to the surprise of the firm which had invited men in from other sites 'for overtime'. These men were ignorant of the dispute and when the situation was explained, they left, one taking membership forms away.

Yet we were unable to prevent a group of lump workers, also summoned by the firm, from scabbing. Only force would impress these men, so we set about recruiting it.

Leafleting

By Monday the steward and myself, with the help of comrades in the Brent group, had produced a strike sheet which I then distributed around other big sites in the area. The leaflet listed our long-standing grievances, exposed the firm supplying scab labour and appealed for support.

I was duly castigated by the Organiser for the contents of the leaflet which "should stick to the money issue"! Although it brought us to the attention of other workers in the area the leaflet produced no contributions for the fund. But at least the scabs never reappeared.

At the same time it was decided to produce a separate leaflet for the office staff who had graciously tolerated us so far. But now, the fifth time we 'wreckers' had taken to the streets since last June, things really had gone too far! (Especially since the blockade had been extended to all deliveries save food.)

We had no illusion that a sole leaflet could win them over; we would be happy if

we only neutralised them, thus isolating management even further. In addition the leaflet was sure to be read by the client's managerial staff who, hopefully, would be sufficiently embarrassed by the allegations as to lean on our firm to effect a settlement.

To distribute a leaflet on a highway in the City one needs permission of the Commissioner of the City Police, under the obscure Metropolitan Streets Act 1867. Here our good relations with the law paid off, for within two days permission was granted.

The leaflet, detailing our grievances in point form to suit its audience, was purely explanatory. Its 'agitational' purpose was implicit in the allegations that the client was frustrating negotiations and had failed to check the credentials of the firm's operating on the contract.

Yet though few refused to read it, the hoped for serious discussion with the staff did not immediately take place. Most appeared quite bemused that we had a reason for being on strike.

On the steward's advice we now pinned sample wage-slips to the placards at the main entrance. This did engender debate through which we attracted some moral support from the lower clerical grades. Of the others, the few who came out to "talk some sense" into us invariably lost the argument. Moreover, the fact alone that we were prepared to stand in mid-winter for several hours a day gained us a measure of respect.

From Stagnation to Settlement

By the third week, displaying our offic-

ial strike placards, we had cut off all supplies to the firm. There was no attempted introduction of new labour and even the carpenters had left. In similar manner we continued to harass the client. However, on our side resolve was failing.

In such a struggle one should strive for many little victories rather than one massive one, as morale is far better sustained by the former. Here we had nothing by which to measure the success of the strike and with the leafleting over and the pickets in place we mistakenly thought that it was now a question of 'sitting it out'.

This attitude whereby you wait for developments rather than initiate them tends to defeatism; after all, the other side can 'sit it out' in far more comfort than you. It also, understandably, tends to boredom.

Thus demoralisation had set in. Some, re-affirming support for our stand, said they could no longer afford to stay out with us and left. Only the hard core remained and we all had less enthusiasm for picketing. No one, however, suggested a return to work.

On discovering that the strike had not yet been granted official status, the initiative was now grasped by management. Having refused to meet either us or the Union, they brought the issue to the local conciliation panel (set up under the national agreements). This move was, however, an act of desperation than of strength, reflected in the presentation of their case at the hearing.

Site-level management was made the whipping boy for failing to implement the scheme properly. They would be replaced,

the panel was assured. Moreover, the men had obtained an increase from the scheme (an absurd assertion which implied we were all falsifying our wage slips).

The panel recommended a return to work and advised the firm that a 'realistic' earnings level would have to be set. This recommendation had to be formally endorsed by the steward (whose credentials would otherwise be withdrawn).

The recommendation was, of course, ignored by us; we had expected a more positive finding with an award based upon the general level of earnings in the area. So we were disappointed that stalemate prevailed once more.

(At this late stage, half-way through the third week, I had to leave as my course of study was to commence the following Monday. It was frustrating to leave at so crucial a time, and even though I had warned the others months in advance, I still felt guilty. I tried to mitigate this by keeping my departure secret from management).

At the beginning of the fourth week, however, the I.G.S. arranged a meeting with the firm, whose resistance suddenly collapsed. The full demand of 25p per hour increase was conceded and by the middle of the week the men were back to work.

Aftermath: Important Lessons

The victory was complete. The men had gained all they asked for after a struggle lasting several months.

Yet within a month all had left the firm. My first reaction at this news was astonishment but on analysis the reasons were clear

BOOK REVIEW

JIMMY REID

REFLECTIONS OF A CLYDE-BUILT MAN

Souvenir Press

It was, as the cover notes point out, the work-in at the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971-72 that made the subject of this book a household name over the whole of Britain.

But, as the 'Autobiographical Sketch' makes clear, from his earliest days as an apprentice in engineering, Jimmy Reid established himself as an active leader of outstanding ability in the working-class movement.

In 1951, at the age of 19, he occupied a leading role in a national strike of engineering apprentices.

This book endeavours to give some depth to the superficial image created by the mass media. Its constituent parts are the autobiographical sketch referred to above, which covers a period from early childhood to 1971, a final chapter in which he reflects on his reasons for leaving the Communist Party and in between a collection of speeches and essays expressing his views on a variety of subjects including "The Case for Nationalism", "Sport, Leisure and Culture", "Christianity and Communism".

The U.C.S. episode is covered with a brief outline of the dispute by Ruth Wishart, followed by three speeches made by Jimmy Reid during the campaign. The first was at the beginning in August 1971; the

second in January 1972, reaffirming the basic aims of the campaign and surveying its progress; the third was made in September at a moment when, with a satisfactory settlement covering three of the shipyards involved, proposals for the fourth included some redundancies and caused a split in the ranks of the workers.

Jimmy Reid was, as he recalls

"Born in Whitefield Road, Govan, Glasgow, a slum clearance house. It was hardly luxurious. My father would be out of work more often than not. My mother would send us to the butchers for a ham bone for soup, or broken biscuits and bread from the bakery. They were all weapons in the endless battle for survival. All part of the amazing ingenuity shown by the working class mother in trying to nourish her family."

In referring to the struggle as one of survival, he does not in any way overstate the case. He was one of seven children, three of whom died in infancy. He reminds those of us old enough to remember of terms like diphtheria, tuberculosis, and pneumonia, words that struck fear into the hearts of working class families.

"My father tried to earn casual money from the docks. But the men with

badges always got first choice. The badges passed down from father to son.

Some memories of childhood are very vivid. Memories of the time I went to find work as a child wearing my father's jacket trailing at my knees. Memories of my mother standing at the window watching for my father, knowing that if he came early it meant no extra money.

The community at large was poor. Materially very poor. Yet my recollections are not unhappy ones, rather of people and families rich in character."

He goes on to recall the community spirit that prevailed in the slums and how, when the politicians set out to eradicate those "affronts to human dignity", they also destroyed that spirit.

"In those days, Govan life was rough and tough but there was that all-important community. In the tenements where I was raised, it would just not be possible for an old age pensioner to die and lie unnoticed for weeks."

Towards the end of his schooldays he developed a considerable appetite for reading that was not precipitated by his home environment nor by any effect from his secondary school education.

As is the case for many working-class children who become involved in the Left-wing movement, his childhood experiences set him seeking some alternative form of society.

"Even at twelve I had been aware of class injustice."

So he followed a well-trodden path; Shaw, Emyln Hughes, Emile Burns, Marx, Adam Smith.

Equally typically, his first political commitment was as a member of the Labour League of Youth. It was a brief encounter, ending around 1947.

The date is relevant to one of the two reasons that he gives for leaving the L.L. of Y. These were the fact that the Labour Government had begun to move to the right, and that he found himself in the company of those who rated their personal ambitions first and their political principles a poor second.

"Till then the Labour Party had always seemed to me - both by upbringing and tradition - the party within which my own desire for a better Britain would best find expression.

But I had begun to feel an outsider. Politics wasn't, after all, a career. It was a mission, a dedication. Careerism was a poison that would finally corrupt the body politic of the Labour movement.

I still hold that opinion.

Had I then been in touch with some of the thousands of good socialists within the Labour Party I might never have left. But all I could see was the petty careerists and a government lurching rightwards."

The pattern continues when he takes up an apprenticeship in engineering and meets members of the Communist Party.

"I was prepared to accept Marxism as

an important element in the development of socialist consciousness, but still not prepared to accept its apparent practitioners, the Communists. For the image of Communism instilled in childhood persisted. I was suspicious.

Yet I had met my first Communists now. They worked with me, they were human and sociably listened to what the other had to say before replying, not stridently, but with reasoned argument.

Life is full of maybes.

Maybe, as I said, if I had met more genuine socialists in the Labour Party there I would have remained. Maybe if my first encounter with communists had been with the dogmatic sectarian communists

He joined the Young Communist League.

As a working class child will often seek knowledge of an alternative society, so the working class environment encourages the development of a concern for people.

This is not to say that it is a quality exclusive to the working class, but whereas the conditions of existence provide a favourable climate in which it may flourish, for other classes it is a liability, conflicting as it does with other 'essential' considerations such as profit, status, business success, etc.

Jimmy Reid has a full measure of this quality, it is a thread that runs through the entire book. It is especially evident in the chapter on Robert Burns and in the speech which he delivered on his installation as Rector of the University of

Glasgow.

In 1958, at the age of 26, he was asked to accept a full-time position as National Officer of the Y.C.L. A year later he was elected to the National Executive of the Communist Party and then on to the Political Committee.

Here he met and worked with many of the old-stagers, Willie Gallagher, Harry Pollitt, Peter Kerrigan, J.R. Campbell and R. Palme-Dutt. He makes the following somewhat enigmatic comment:

"Looking back at the leadership of the Party when I joined it as a comparative youngster, one thing stood out. They were leaders, mass leaders, in their own right. The old guard, as the Press would have described them, were almost without exception products of the struggle of the British people.

In my experience they were not unresponsive, in the light of new information and knowledge, to new ideas or new concepts. But they could not implement them. Even if the will was there, age, and in some cases death, made sure of that."

Later, in the chapter dealing with his reasons for leaving the Party, he offers what may be an explanation of the "New concepts" that the old guard were incapable of implementing.

"Doubts, confirmed over and over again by experience, arose about the ability of the leadership to open up the Party. To turn it outwards towards the people.

The concept of a democratic advance

to Socialism with all that entails is not simply a matter of an insertion in a Party programme. It required fundamental changes in approach, in the very structure and organisation of the Party as compared with the thirties and forties Without such changes the British Communist Party will not establish its democratic credentials to the British people. And this is the Party's Achilles' heel."

In making any kind of political evaluation it must be borne in mind that, as with so many who have displayed notable qualities as leaders of rank and file struggle, Jimmy Reid became the victim of the 'siphoning' procedure.

This is a process whereby active leaders are drawn into the ranks of full-time officers in a political or trade union organisation. Whilst the Communist Party is by no means alone in this practice, it is certainly the leading exponent of the art.

Workshop organisation has, as a result, been emasculated by the continual removal of the most promising cadres from the arena. But by far the most serious aspect of this practice is the fact that those removed are deprived of the discipline that is a part of their normal environment and at the same time subjected to pressures that are, at best, diversionary, eventually destructive.

In the case of Jim Reid, many of the basic ingredients required of a working class leader are present.

There is his concern for and belief in people. In the 'Chalfont Interview' he states his view that dissent is

"..... a necessity in any society that wants to be creative and grow unanimity is really a characteristic of the graveyard."

He expresses the need to be in the ranks of those involved in struggle when he relinquished his full-time posts in the Party.

"To be frank I was not unhappy to leave leaders cannot lead from behind. You can't inspire or orientate others towards mass work among the people if you yourself cannot work amongst them. And if the style of work prevents you from doing so, then change the style of work."

He has an aversion towards careerism and dogmatism and believes that to be truly internationalist one must first be a nationalist.

Yet without a firm political commitment and a clear understanding of the class question all these qualities will amount only to a militant liberalism.

And that is also a definition of what the Communist Party policy statement 'The British Road to Socialism' amounts to.

So it is that in 1967, after seven years on the N.E.C. and the Political Committee of the Communist Party, he can speak of Britain as a country in which the working class

"..... constitutes the great majority of the people."

It follows, too, that he finds himself in full accord with, and can express that accord by quoting from, the above mentioned

policy document, the statement that

"In the era of state monopoly capitalism, above all, the crucial battle must be the battle for state power; and in that battle, the winning of a majority in Parliament, the supreme organ of representative power, is an essential step."

To render this assertion digestible, the complex class structure that constitutes British society must be conveniently reduced to two groups, the 'exploiters' and the 'exploited'.

This in turn makes the former statement, that the working class in Britain constitutes the great majority, possible and at the same time, politically sterile.

But it is the following extract from the 'Chalfont Interview' that best illustrates the political disorientation that takes place as the direct result of any long exposure to the 'British Road to Socialism'. In this, Jimmy Reid is making the point that Socialism must develop in any given country in accordance with that country's history and traditions.

"Let me give you one example from contemporary history of a genuine socialist government that emerged from an election - from more than one election - and that is in Chile. Now that socialist government, emerging from a democratic process, involved in its socialist policies a high degree of democratic rights for the Chilean people. There wasn't a political prisoner under the socialist government in Chile, which included Communists. There wasn't one political prisoner, there wasn't one

political party banned including the parties of the right. There wasn't a newspaper banned, there were no journalists in jail.

Then we had the coup, the junta, the re-establishment of capitalist policies. The jails are packed with political prisoners, political parties are banned, newspapers are banned, journalists are in jail and being tortured.

Now I would say to you that that's worthy of thought. That as Socialism emerges from a democratic process, that lays its stamp on the socialist government and state that emerges. When socialist government emerges from an almost complete denial of democratic rights, that must put a stamp on the type of government that emerges."

It is clear from the example given here that the 'law' being expounded in no way inhibits the opposition from employing murder, torture and oppression in order to regain power.

Now that is worthy of thought, particularly since universal experience to date also shows that wherever an attempt is made to establish a Socialist regime, the forces of reaction use every means at their disposal to destroy those who would deprive them of their power and privilege.

The simple fact is that no one in possession of all their faculties would wish for a violent transition. But that is a totally different thing to committing the forces of the Left to destruction in the attempt to find a peaceful way.

In working towards the dawn of a Social-

ist era we do so with the aim of avoiding all unnecessary violence.

If there is any way of realising this aim it will be in the way we develop our forces and conduct the struggle.

↙ In our endeavours to avoid becoming dogmatic and sectarian (the ivory tower syndrome), we must be equally determined not to drift to the opposite extreme and become populist.

To become isolated from the masses is to become politically ineffective. To merely listen and obey is to surrender leadership and political purpose.

Our task is to strive for a principled unity based on the highest common factor, not the lowest common denominator.

This can only be achieved if we develop our understanding of the relationship - the contradictions and the nature of the contradictions - existing between the different classes and sub-classes in our society.

Only then will it be possible to build our forces so that they may be equal to the tasks facing them at each stage of the struggle and have the strength to defeat the counter measures that must be expected along the road.

For the only thing that will deter the forces of reaction from resorting to violence will be the knowledge that they are likely to lose the battle.

↖ Only in this circumstance can we offer the hope of a peaceful, or relatively peaceful, transition.

Finally, from the end of the book in "Reflections, 1976" I quote the following:

"On a broad canvas I assert as my belief that Socialism is the future for Britain and for all countries... For my part I want to see it materialise without civil war and through democratic means. To make possible and keep open the option for fundamental social change with the assent of the people concerns all democrats. This is why any shift towards authoritarian government in Britain would be disastrous. For then the change, even if willed by the majority, can only come through violence.

The Left must be the custodian of progressive economic and political change. It must also be the watchdog of democracy."

When Jimmy Reid speaks of us as being the watchdogs of democracy he refers to the democracy of the ruling class in Britain. It is a system devised by them with the intention of extending the span of capitalism, and therefore their rank and privilege, for as long as possible.

Just as soon as it becomes apparent that this arrangement is being rendered inadequate for its purpose it will be 'modified' and 'strengthened'.

So the more successful we are, the greater the opposition. Therefore whilst any shift towards authoritarian government will make our task more difficult, it is something we must expect, and to call it disastrous is to countenance defeat before we have got started.

In undertaking this review we have been

BOOK REVIEW

HEALTH FOR 1,000 MILLION PEOPLE

Health Care Today in China and Russia

The Socialist Medical Association

This discussion document, published by the S.M.A. at 20p, arrives at a moment when attention is focussed upon the proposed cuts in Government expenditure. It is therefore of particular relevance to the issues being debated.

It opens with a brief reference to both the historical conditions from which the British National Health Service emerged and some of the developments that have led to its present deficiencies.

But the main content is an outline of the health care services as they exist in China and Russia today and the conditions from which they have developed.

The contrast between them and the British N.H.S. is sharp and fundamental for, whatever the politico-economic differences between China and Russia, the gigantic strides made by both countries in their health services can only inspire an awesome and respectful admiration.

Such advances were possible only by rejecting any motivation of private gain and devoting the available resources in science, people and finance to the purpose of providing the best health care possible for all people, regardless of wealth or rank in society.

Recent reports suggest that an element of

pecuniary persuasion has invaded the health service in Russia. If this is true, it is no more than may be expected in a society whose leaders accept and promote the role of material incentives.

Such a development should, it is to be hoped, serve as a warning against the insidious and pervasive nature of economic 'lollies'.

Dr. David Stark Murray contributes the section on the Soviet Union and Joan Sohn-Rethel that on China. Both stress the importance of fostering the concept of 'community medicine' in the development of an effective health service.

What better way can there be of initiating the development of 'community responsibility' in other aspects of life?

As the authors point out in the final paragraph of their 'conclusions':-

"How can we make our demands known? In the first place we can all work for a real form of socialism where our demands would not appear utopian. Secondly, there exist throughout the country Community Health Councils to whom we must present our views. We have more power than we know but we must learn to exert it on those who make the decisions."

S.M.A. Newsletter

The September/October issue of the S.M.A. Newsletter contains an informative account of the Government versus Junior Hospital Doctors dispute.

It provides a concrete example of the basic contradiction between private gain and public service, a contradiction which leads to exorbitant expenditure on an inferior system.

We reproduce the item in its entirety under its heading -

"A Disreputable Affair"

The present cease-fire in the Government's disputes with the Junior Hospital Doctors allows us to take stock and examine the gains and losses.

There are four groups of people involved, one of which - the patients - has hardly been considered at all. The others, the Junior Doctors, the Government and the Health Service all emerge from the dispute the worse for it in many ways.

The basis of the new contract was very simple: Junior Doctors would be paid for work and on call hours beyond 40 hours in the average week. In our Newsletters we have criticised the fundamental wrong thinking in principle involved, but the implementation of the award has been even more disastrous.

Every medical job is different, and so is every doctor. Such a contract was bound to be a rate fixer's nightmare and the Govern-

ment and the N.H.S. administration chickened out of trying to sort it out. They did not insist on clocking in or on any system of measurement of what the doctors actually did. The Government simply told the administration to ask the doctors how hard they worked, but they failed to take into account two very important points. In the first place the N.H.S. administration are gutless; they largely fail to challenge the claims made by the doctors. Secondly the medical profession display massive hypocrisy; while their leaders repeatedly claim the country is being held to ransom by other militants they stood by while the Junior Doctors claimed that they work far harder than they actually do. When the Government was presented with a vastly inflated bill the doctors' leaders then claimed with true 'Catch 22' logic that their own inflated claims, subjected to no checks by the administration, proved that they deserved the massive rise the Government were now called upon to pay.

The mechanism by which overtime pay was calculated is hard to believe for those in normal employment. In the main the process was as follows: each consultant was asked to agree with his juniors how much overtime each needed to do in order to carry out the job properly. This tended to lead to massive over-estimation in several ways.

It is much more convenient for consultants to have junior staff available whenever possible so that though nominally in charge the consultant is seldom called. At the same time, since his junior posts attract large overtime pay there is keen com-

petition for his jobs, so that he can select the best available staff. If the overtime pay was reduced the money could be spent on other services in the N.H.S. - a magnanimous gesture that few consultants are prepared to make. For the junior staff concerned there is a direct financial interest in maximising the overtime money to which they are entitled. It is important to realise that the overtime estimation is an assessment intrinsic to the job; it has nothing to do with the way it is performed. If it has been agreed that the house surgeon on Firm B should work 60 hours overtime (and this of course might include sleeping time at home or hospital) he must be paid whether he works or not. Even if he fails to put in an appearance when called he must nevertheless be paid.

The true situation is made clearer if we regard an overtime unit as a unit of currency and not of work. It is the unit for assessing the premium attached to certain jobs. It could possibly be used to benefit the patient instead of the consultant. For instance, it has for some time been the accepted practice to pay General Practitioners high rates in unpopular areas, and this has successfully spread the distribution of doctors more evenly. There has, however, been no such system within the hospitals though the needs for better distribution are as great. Doctor J. Tudor Hart in the Lancet has drawn attention to this phenomena of what he calls the inverse care law. "Where the need is greatest the number of doctors is least". This is true between specialities such as geriatrics which has many patients and few doctors, and the more esoteric specialities with many doctors and few patients. It is also true regarding hospital medical staff in different areas; few in the industrial north with its many

problems; many in the well off areas of the south east.

Hospitals soak up about 70% of all our Health Service spending, mostly controlled directly or indirectly by the doctors. In these circumstances it is vital that these doctors are working where they are most needed.

The new contracts which, in effect, price every junior hospital post individually, give us a mechanism for paying more money for necessary jobs, and less to those doctors who merely follow their own whims. This opportunity to change totally and beneficially the distribution and training of junior doctors lies before the N.H.S. administration and the Government. If the opportunity is taken we might find the whole basis of the N.H.S. revolutionised within five years as doctors would be trained for the jobs we really want them to do.

The crucial question in the months ahead is whether the Government and the N.H.S. administration will have the guts to do this. If not, we shall continue to see the N.H.S. run by the doctors for the doctors in disregard of the needs of the mass of tax-paying patients.

* * * * *

The Head Office of the Socialist Medical Association is at 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1H 9BN

TRADE UNIONS

Our Views On Workshop Organisation

BRENT MARXIST INDUSTRIAL GROUP

Below we publish the considered views of the Brent Marxist Industrial Group on a number of questions concerning Trade Union organisation. Like the General Principles published on the inside covers they are in a condensed form but represent some considerable experience and discussion.

Much of the background from which they emerge has been published in past issues of THE MARXIST and will form the framework for future articles on trade union and industrial issues. They are not intended to be comprehensive but deal with what we believe are the questions uppermost in the minds of trade unionists in industry today.

We would welcome questions, criticism and comment from readers.

The Working Class

In accordance with the historical role which this class is destined to play in destroying the present society which is based on the exploitation of man by man, and in creating a new society in which it will be abolished, priority must be given to the development of cadres from within this class who understand Marxist theory and are able to apply it in concrete situations.

The place of work is the best school in which these cadres can gain practical experience in the application of Marxist ideas with the objective of raising the level of class consciousness, political consciousness and class struggle of the workers and, in the process, discover and train new cadres.

In the course of this work cadres must at all times encourage a spirit of independence

and self-reliance among the workers, listening to their opinions, offering guidance, and showing willingness to subject our activities and opinions as well as theirs, to criticism aimed at learning from past mistakes in order to avoid future ones.

Applying the mass line and learning how to unite the many to oppose the few must be basic to our methods of work, but also recognising that this imposes on us at times the need to go against the stream.

The organisational framework in which we can best take part in mass activity at the place of work is provided by the shop floor organisation created by the workers themselves.

Most of these are recognised by the employers because they go a long way towards

fulfilling the need of modern industrial management to deal with the labour force in an organised way.

The leadership of these rank and file organisations is a major factor in deciding whether they are used by the employers as a means of keeping the workers in check, or whether they are used to further the interests of the workers themselves.

The political quality of this leadership is decisive in determining whether the decisions taken by the workers correspond with their long term as well as short term interests.

Shop Stewards

Shop stewards play a very important part in workshop struggles and Marxists must be prepared to undertake this task and prove their suitability for it by the example they set of devotion to the interests of the working class, their selflessness and their ability to unite the majority in struggle against the employer.

This does not mean that they try to 'hog' all shop stewards positions; on the contrary, they must pay great attention to encouraging mass participation in decision making and encouraging new potential leaders of the working class to come forward as shop stewards.

Shop Stewards' Committees

These are essential to co-ordinate policy and activity within a particular factory, but the tendency for them to become organisations standing above the workers must be resisted.

Policy differences should be argued out

at mass level and not become the basis for power struggles within the committee.

Combine Committees

These are composed of representatives of the Shop Stewards' Committees in a Company and can play a useful part in formulating policies which will unite the workers in the individual factories, but we oppose raising them to the level of negotiating bodies.

Our experience is that this tends to undermine the initiative and fighting spirit of the individual factories because of the strong tendency for the factory in the strongest position to make the running and the remainder to get the improved conditions automatically.

We favour the situation in which each factory is responsible for its own wages and conditions but receives support from the others when it is in confrontation with the Management.

Relations between the Workshop Organisation and the Official Trade Union Machine

The broad principle here is that the workers must rely on their own strength but be willing and capable of using the official machinery to their own advantage.

Official Trade Union Organisation

At the national level in particular these are adapting themselves to the changing needs of capitalist society.

Nevertheless we should persist in the struggle to make them respond to the needs of the membership and the class.

We support 100% membership but insist that it is under the control of the workers in the enterprise where it applies.

Policy making and executive bodies should be composed of workers currently working with the tools.

Elections to these bodies and for the necessary full-time officials should be conducted by ballot at the various places of work within the constituency.

Wages paid to full-time officers should be related to the average for the industry or industries covered by the union membership.

All officials should stand for election periodically (say) every three years.

Finance

The level of union dues should be sufficient to ensure the payment of wages to officers and staff and the general costs of administration.

It should also cover payment for lost time from work by lay-officers when delegated on union business.

We do not favour high union dues for the purpose of amassing strike funds. In the event of a nation-wide dispute they would be so quickly exhausted as to be valueless.

Political Levy

We recommend union members to contract out of paying the political levy. Its sole purpose is the provision of funds for the Labour Party.

Relationship between Manual Workers and other Employees

In most establishments all grades from Works Manager downwards are employees who have no shareholding in the Company. This means that in a purely economic sense they can be classed as being in the ranks of the exploited.

However, due to the different position which each grade occupies in the productive-administrative structure, their class position varies relative to that of the manual worker. As a consequence their class outlook tends to be less clearly defined and they are more susceptible to capitalist propaganda and ideas.

Unprincipled unity with (for example) supervisory grades will lead to a position where the shop steward allows himself to become an arm of management for disciplining the workers, and the workers themselves become demoralised as a result.

On the other hand there are many issues on which the interests of workers and supervisors co-incide. It would be politically incorrect to reject the possibility of joint action through fear of creating such a situation.

To avoid both kinds of error, unity must be on a principled basis. This means that the manual workers must recognise the objective position of the other grades in the productive-administrative set up and give them support when the edge is directed against Capital.

Likewise, a determined struggle must be waged against any of these grades if the edge of their activity is directed against

Continued from page 28

concerned with countering what we believe to be a serious political inadequacy. This we consider an inevitable consequence that follows upon the acceptance of what should be called "The British Road to Slaughter" as one's political creed and guide to action.

Nevertheless, the "Reflections of a Clyde Built Man" constitute an enjoyable-to-read portrait of a working class leader with considerable potential.

It is also a prime example of uneven development. The ability to lead in action has not, to date, been matched by a political concept that would enable the former attribute to be utilised to its fullest extent.

On both counts it is recommended reading particularly since he intends to continue with his involvement in the working class movement.

At 44, there is yet time for him to make a very considerable contribution in the campaign to bring to an end a society that is based on greed, corruption and envy and replace it with, as the A.U.E.W. initiatory address has it, "..... a just and equitable one."

The struggle to raise our political comprehension to the level demanded by the pursuit of that aim is a constant one for all of us so involved. Therefore there is no reason why any political distortion resulting from the past should not be conducted in the course of future activity, thus enabling him to realise the full potential of his capabilities. But this will depend upon the path that he chooses to take from this point on.

We would earnestly wish him success, if only for the reason that, as he quotes Harry Pollitt saying,

"Mass leaders don't grow on trees, as well I know."

Continued from page 10

ing class to gain mass support from other sections of the population for social change, even though only of a limited character.

This is not a question of choosing the peaceful or the violent road but of pursuing policies which will mobilise people in preparation for the use of overwhelming force against reaction when the crunch becomes unavoidable.

An essential condition for the creation of this type of broad unity is that the industrial workers shall themselves be united on the basis of their class (as distinct from craft and sectional) interests. For only the industrial working class can provide the firm foundation on which progressive unity with other class can be built.

An opportunity to continue the struggle to forge unity of the industrial working class is presented by the need to destroy the wage restraint aspect of the Social Contract. This latter is the immediate task, for without the destruction of the false unity between labour and capital imposed by the Social Contract it will not be possible to build anew.

December 1976

Continued from page 22

Our fundamental mistake was to regard the claim as a thing in itself; indeed, for the steward and deputy it had assumed the qualities of a moral crusade. Consequently when the crusade was over, a vacuum arose.

To return to work, numbers depleted, in a hostile environment presents its own problems. But when this is compounded by the attitude that nothing remains to be done, morale inevitably disintegrates. Had the point been driven home that there is no such thing as 'a time for struggle and a time for rest', that struggle is continuous and that inaction means dissipation, then disintegration could have been avoided.

This is to be distinguished from the Trotskyist outlook which equates the absence of a strike with the absence of struggle. It manifests itself in attempts to promote strikes in quick succession. This is equally as dangerous an approach and it rapidly leads to the separation of the 'leaders' from the 'led' as the former move too far in advance. (For a recent instance much in the public eye, witness the events at B.M.L.C.'s Cowley plant.)

The second lesson learnt was the corollary to the maxim that the Left regards as a commonplace: Go only so far as you will be followed. The corollary is that the fullest participation in decision-making should be encouraged so that no group may frustrate a policy on the grounds that they did not make it.

The logic that a 'moderate' decision acceptable to all the members is preferable to militant posturing by the leaders alone is so basic that one never ceases to be amazed by the antics of both the revisionists and Trotskyists who equate this with abro-

gation of leadership.

But the main lesson I learned from the Brent Group comrades themselves. I had become so immersed in Trade Union issues that I regarded the dissolution of the workforce as negating the whole struggle. After all, the firm could hardly be expected to honour the new agreement when all those involved in the conflict had left.

I was reminded that it is the lessons learned by the men in struggle that is most important. One must, of course, aim for success in the claim, but the method by which the claim is won or lost is the real issue for Marxists.

"MONTHLY REVIEW"

- Socialism in Poor Countries - Paul Sweezy
Stagflation - Douglas F. Dowd
Critique of Illich - Vicente Navarro
Polish Workers on Good Course
-

"POLITICS AND MONEY"

- Already the next slump?
The Gold Dollar Battle
Mao Tse Tung
-

Continued from page 34

the workers. For this reason the manual workers must retain their independent organisational identity and freedom of action. This, coupled with a resolute struggle to inject the class outlook and psychology of the manual worker into the other grades will bring about the only worthwhile kind of unity - a fighting unity.

Worker Participation

Taken literally, this describes an ingredient without which industry would cease to function. In current usage it refers to the general involvement of workers in the 'decision making' process and, in particular, the integration of shop stewards and convenors into the problems of production, productivity and the application of disciplinary procedure.

The principle aim is to enmesh workers and their organisation into the function of management, thereby clouding the predatory nature and class character of capitalist society.

To defeat this aim we must consciously strive to maintain our class ideology and pursue our working class interests ruthlessly.

Workers' Control (Worker Directors, etc.)

This could be called responsibility without power. The legalised concept of workers' control is designed to create the illusion of judicial recognition of our rights. In fact it gives us nothing that the workers have not achieved by their own efforts.

By formalising these hard won gains, the intention is to provide a strait jacket

that, hopefully, will restrict further advances. In addition, by persuading us to put our trust in the legal process the way is prepared for the employing class to recoup past losses.

We reject such concepts and will continue to place our reliance upon the kind of control which emerges from the day-to-day struggle by workers to regulate their conditions.

Priorities

At all times attention must be centred on building leading groups at the places of work. In the foreseeable future cadres must be retained at this level.

Working from these bases it should be possible, particularly in times when widespread mass activity is on the agenda, to influence the various union district committees, area committees, Trades Councils, etc. which are composed of lay members, in such a way that a unified leadership is established which will, if necessary, challenge the official trade union leadership.

THE SUPERPOWERS, THE THREAT OF WAR, & THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS

Copies from -

Second World Defence,
c/o 27 Priory Avenue,
London, N.8

In lumping reformism and revisionism together in this way we do not lose sight of the fact that there are contradictions as well as similarities between them. These must be given due attention when formulating policies designed to unite the many against the few, one of our cardinal principles of struggle.

CLASSES

Society in Britain is composed of two main classes: the industrial working class and the class of finance capitalists whose interests determine the policies to be pursued by the Establishment, irrespective of which political party is in office.

We reject, however, the view that there are only two classes in Britain. We consider this to be a vulgarisation of the Marxist theory of classes which will lead to serious political errors.

Between the two main classes are other classes and sub-classes, the majority of them having basic interests which are, or will increasingly become, objectively in contradiction with the interests of finance capital.

The immediate economic interests of these classes do not at all times coincide with those of the industrial working class. This being so, it is unrealistic to assume that mere repetition of the idea of common interests with the industrial working class will automatically unite them around it.

The middle positions which these classes occupy in society are reflected in the policies which they espouse. The task of a proletarian leadership in this respect is to take whatever steps are possible at any particular time to strengthen the tendencies within those classes to embrace ideas and undertake activities which will objectively undermine the power and influence of finance capital.

On an international scale we see the application of the principle of uniting the many against the few expressed as the need to unite the smaller imperialist states as well as the developing countries with the aim of opposing the two superpowers in their quest for world domination.

We recognise that the most potent force on a world scale is the developing countries which are, in the main, pursuing policies aimed at breaking free of imperialist domination by relying on their own efforts and uniting to serve their collective interests.

These policies will inevitably weaken the economies of the imperialist states and sharpen class antagonisms within them. In the economic field this is already expressing itself in a drive to reduce the living standards of the mass of the people.

Retreat in the face of this offensive will only lead to further demands of a similar kind. Resistance to these attacks will sharpen the class struggle and lead to greater and more widespread strikes, lockouts and civil disturbances but this is inevitable.

An end, satisfactory to the majority of the people, can only come with the creation of a society which caters for their needs.