

WORKERS VOICE

**COMMUNIST
WORKERS
ORGANISATION**

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5th March to 23rd April

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SOLIDARITY NOT LEGALITY!

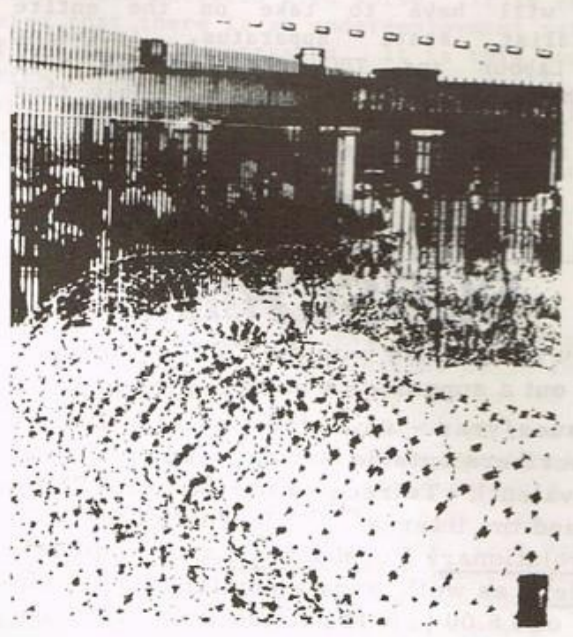
If proof were needed that the bosses offensive is still alive and well then the sacking of 6000 striking printworkers by Murdoch's News International group is sufficient evidence in itself. Since the end of the miners' strike the closure of pits and factories as well as the sacking of workers (most notably the rail guards last summer and the Mirror workers in February) has proceeded apace. Now Gartcosh steelworks in Scotland is to close with hardly a fight. Overall the number of days "lost" in strikes is at its lowest level since the end of the Second World War. Nor is this simply a British picture. The miners strike of 1984-5 was the culmination of a number of struggles in the capitalist heartlands which involved French and German steelworkers, Swedish carworkers, Danish public sector workers and Spanish shipyard workers. How internationally significant the miners strike was can be seen from the massive decline in major struggles in the capitalist metropolises. The printworkers fight, especially since it is taking place in a major multinational with huge interests in Australia and the USA, is therefore another important test of whether the working class is yet ready to retake the initiative in the global struggle between workers and bosses.

Lets start by disposing of some powerful myths. The law that protects Murdoch by allowing him to sack the printworkers with impunity isn't a Tory law. It has never been anything else but legal for bosses to sack workers on strike without any form of compensation or redress. What the mountain of Tory laws have done is to make it illegal to take solidarity action. How have they been able to get away with it? Following the Labour Party's failure to get laws to limit classaction to work, the Heath Government of 1970 tried to do what the Tories have done today. But Heath's Industrial Relations Act collapsed in the face of massive demonstrations and strikes by workers to free the five dockers imprisoned for "contempt" of these laws. The present Tory laws have been successful for two connected reasons. Neither the Labour Party nor the TUC has any real interest in opposing them but workers still look to these organisations, despite their long and dishonourable histories, to defend them in ruling class circles. But workers will wait in vain for these organisations to defend them since they act simply as the left factions of the capitalist classes. Indeed the role which the Labour Party plays for capitalism is to get workers to postpone their struggles and wait for reforms. By inveighing against the "Tory laws" and promising that Labour will repeal them they con workers into playing the parliamentary game and into obeying the laws which guarantee the power of the bosses. This legalistic stand is echoed by the TUC whose latest star is the SOGAT boss, Brenda Dean. Faced with the ideological barrage in favour of legality on top of the demoralisation created by the enormous material difficulties of threatened redundancies in their own sectors it is not surprising that the one factor which can defeat the Government - is, with a few brave and notable exceptions, absent. That factor is class unity. The Tory laws against "secondary picketing", solidarity action etc. can only work if each struggle remains isolated. It

is the role of the trades unions to ensure that this is precisely what happens.

WAPPING DIVERSIONS

In isolating the miners the NUM leaders were relatively subtle and simply putting the interests of "their trade" before that of the working class. With slogans like "Coal not Dole" and "Save Pit Communities" it was difficult for the working class as a whole to find a common platform for united action. Brenda Dean however has no inhibitions about declaring what the real nature of trades unionism is. Murdoch himself expressed confidence in her in the Times on Jan. 27th. "So long as Brenda Dean is in charge I think things will be fairly peaceful". And after the mass picket of Feb.15th she made it clear that she wanted no "outsiders" to come to assist the printers. But the working class can't be an outsider



Murdoch's barbed wire is not the only obstacle facing the printworkers at Wapping...

in the struggles of other workers. Dean isn't a representative of the "new realism" as Fleet St calls it but the old smell of union sectionalism, the very craft mentality which has done so much to destroy working class unity in the past. By keeping the struggle on the sectional terrain, by keeping it as a mere "trade" dispute the unions are preventing each of these potentially subversive movements from leaving the framework of capitalist control.

A token fight with token pickets is just what the unions want as they then have time to negotiate another defeat for the workers. The alternative is not simply to break the laws but to bust them wide open by mass pickets and more importantly, by solidarity action. This is why the CWO called on printworkers to "extend the struggle to Fleet St and the provinces". Brenda Dean's argument that letting News International's rivals carry on printing will bring Murdoch to his knees commercially is a lie and a diversion. Already the other newspaper publishers are ready to follow Murdoch. The Guardian has issued an ultimatum to its workforce over manning as has the Express whilst Maxwell has sacked Mirror workers who won't scab. A seizure of the Fleet St. presses (especially those no longer used by Murdoch!) would not only shut up anti-working class capitalist hacks like Hugo "they had it coming" Young of the Guardian but would also allow workers to print a strike paper. this could not only fight the media lies about the printworkers but could also lift the veil of censorship over other struggles which are taking place up and down the country (like, for example, that of the Silentnight workers of Barnoldswick who have joined the picket line at Wapping). A mass picket of thousands might close Wapping but if it remains a ritual battle on police terms then it will simply be another Orgreave. "Picket Wapping" which is the slogan of all the leftist groups is, on its own, not enough, and risks becoming a diversion away from the real issue of extending the struggle to other workers. As we wrote in our leaflet, "The miners lost because the NUM made sure that they were isolated. The same will happen to the printworkers unless the working class takes the initiative."

SELF-ORGANISATION

Obviously the unions that are scurrying to obey the law aren't going to give a lead in this. In the nineteenth century workers paid into union funds in order

Inner cities unrest continues

As the crisis deepens the deliberate and concerted suppression of information by the capitalist press is becoming more blatant by the day. After the riots of 1981 when the spokesmen of the Government blamed the press for the fact that riots spread to so many cities the Fleet St hacks have become more faithful guardians of capitalist law and order by ignoring both strikes and riots as much as they can. Where events are reported it is usually after they are over (as in the case of strikes) or in a way which distorts the significance of the incident. It is thus important for the revolutionary press to try to fight this blackout with the limited means that they possess. Whilst this blackout is particularly acute in terms of international class struggle (the present Indian general strike against price rises has merited a single paragraph in the most "serious" of the British press) it is also true of Britain. We therefore appeal to comrades and sympathisers to send us short items which are on local struggles but which are of general significance for all workers. The example which follows was sent to us by a comrade in Bristol.

"During the week-end of 7-8th February fighting broke out between police and black and white unemployed youth in the St Pauls district of Bristol, scene of the 1980 riots. The resentment, frustration and anger felt by the unemployed members of the working class in Britain's inner cities is not confined to hot summer nights. An "uneasy calm" to quote the

local police, exists permanently in St. Pauls and has done for a number of years now. As in other inner city areas (like Toxteth in Liverpool where the police station was besieged after a youth was murdered on the steps) numerous minor "disturbances" have been blacked out in recent months. But they could not cover-up the night when two policemen were badly injured, a police car was overturned and set on fire, petrol bombs were thrown from surrounding houses, a press photographer was attacked and a fire engine was pelted with stones.

The fighting started when two whites were being arrested by police following a car chase. The police car having careered onto the pavement, rammed a car being driven by a local man with his child as a passenger, narrowly avoiding seriously injuring them. The police withdrew without their "prisoners" as a crowd of about 100 gathered. A white youth poured gallons of fuel on the police car turning it into a blazing inferno. A local black youth said "...this trouble started because the police started to get heavy and people will just not stand for that any more round here."

With all the eyewitness accounts the local media had a difficult job painting the revolt as a "race riot". The *Western Daily Press* called it "MOB LAW" in its headline, preferring to lay the blame on a 'criminal minority' but, as it said in *Workers Voice* 25, this is because "the ruling class sees all class struggle as criminal".

What we witnessed in St. Pauls was another spontaneous response by black and white unemployed youth against the increasingly intolerable conditions under which they live. Unfortunately these revolts, in themselves, change nothing. They are elemental expressions of the capacity and will of young working class people to fight back but this anger can be recuperated or dissipated into an anomic response unless it takes on a more explicitly political form. This means first of all a recognition that the struggles of the unemployed must be linked to those in work, particularly those threatened with the sack. Such links are becoming increasingly vital. In the past few weeks alone in the South West redundancy notices have been given out at Westlands in Yeovil and Weston-super-mare, Walls in Gloucester, Norsk-Hydro in Avonmouth, and at Robert Maxwell's BPPC printing works at Paulton near Bath, affecting almost 2000 workers in total.

The unemployed may have been discarded by a system which produces only for profit but they have a vital part to play in the struggle for a working class society of the future.

In immediate terms their task is not to fight for the state capitalist demand of "the right to work" but for the communist demand of "a right to a decent life". Such a demand cannot be granted by a capitalist system which creates such a waste of human potential. The unemployed and the employed at present struggle in different ways against the capitalist system but the deepening of the crisis is laying the material basis for their future unity. The organisation which can best unite the most politically conscious workers both employed and unemployed is the political party of the working class. By forging links between all workers who are fighting capitalism rather than its effects this party will be taking the first steps towards the creation of the future communist programme."

WAPPING

continued from p.1

to prepare for strikes. When they did fight they struggled until the fund was exhausted or victory won. But what happens today? Unions are so integrated into the financial and legal structures of capitalism that workers can't even get a decent strike pay because it is all tied up in pension funds for union bureaucrats. Instead of paying out for the miners, the NUM let their funds become state property. The same old arguments about the need to preserve funds (for what...?) and their inaccessibility are being trotted out in this fight by Dean and Co. The NGA's Tony Dubbins has already said he's against militant action by printers because "the public wasn't enamoured by what went on in the miners' strike". Thus to protect union investment both he and Dean hope to stir "the conscience of the nation" to support the printers cause. This is the same line that the US airline workers sacked by Reagan in 1981 followed. They remained sacked. Instead the NGA has disorganised attempts at backing by its own members by holding a ballot after telling the workers taking part that the blacking might still be illegal. Not surprisingly they got the "no" verdict they wanted. The NGA's sabotage of the struggle is generally more subtle than that of SOGAT. They are calling for more on the picket line at Wapping as a means of avoiding the real need to extend the struggle. The NGA are in any case ill-equipped to become the apostles of solidarity amongst workers since they have been instructing their members to cross NUJ picket lines at Portsmouth and Sunderland for months.

Thus, if workers are to unite, occupy Fleet St., produce a workers paper etc it will only come through their own efforts. A strike committee of all workers, irrespective of trade or union distinctions, will have to be formed to coordinate such an enterprise. Such a committee will have to be answerable to the workers in struggle as a whole, not through the capitalist mechanism of the secret ballot which isolates workers with their individ-

ual problems but in an open vote of a mass assembly which will be able to direct and control the course of the struggle. These are the fundamentals of proletarian democracy and only with these forms will the workers give themselves the means to unite against the capitalist state and its lackeys in the trades unions.

Already workers in Glasgow docks have refused to unload paper bound for Murdoch's presses whilst printers at the Manchester works of the Daily Express have refused the scab contract for the News of the World (despite all legal threats). Equally not all Murdoch's journalists have voted with their mortgages to go to Wapping just as not all EEPTU members support Hammond's scabs. Internationally it is reported that Belgian workers have shown their solidarity by refusing to load ink bound for Wapping. These actions need to be repeated on a massive scale if the printers are to squeeze anything out of this struggle. But to be successful they are beginning to recognise that they will have to take on the entire capitalist state apparatus, including its Labour and TUC watchdogs as well as the police and the Tories. Only then will we be able to say that the workers have retaken the initiative.

Philippines

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either supported the Aquino faction or abstained. The class has not asserted its own interests but looks to the new government to alleviate the worst effects of the world capitalist crisis. But a government of bosses will carry on forcing down the pay levels of the workers in the interests of defending "the nation". As the crisis worsens it is likely that workers will then transfer their hopes to the NPA, the super-nationalists under the banner of anti-imperialism. This will lead to useless sacrifices by the workers - useless because they will be on behalf of a new ruling class and an alternative imperialism. As we wrote in our *Draft Theses on the Tasks of Communists in Capitalism's Periphery*;

"Proletarian tactics absolutely exclude any sort of alliance, however temporary with any faction of the bourgeoisie. A proletarian policy does not recognise any of them as progressive or anti-imperialist." [Thesis 9 in *Communist Review* 3]

The way forward for the Filipino working class is not to follow the immediatist struggle to replace one set of imperialist gangsters with another but to reject all calls for social peace from the ruling class as they try to make the workers pay even more for the capitalists' crisis. By opposing all sacrifices and maintaining the continuing struggle for the immediate proletarian interests of higher wages and better living conditions the workers will be able to develop their own self-organisation, independent of all capitalist factions. But the only permanent guarantee of the growth of that independence is the formation of a Filipino section of an international party of the world's workers, the only instrument which can take on capitalism everywhere. Only then will the Filipino proletariat be in a position to fight a genuine anti-imperialist struggle.

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Philippines / Haiti : imperialism changes the guard

INTRODUCTION

Communists have often faced ridicule when talking of the leaders of every nation as US or Russian "stooges". But not even the capitalist press is attempting to hide that fact after the February fall of both "Baby Doc" Duvalier in Haiti and Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. Not only did the announcement of their flights come from the US (in the case of Duvalier before he had even flown) but the safe conduct and the C141 transports which spirited them away were planned by the US (giving a new meaning to "American Express"). By allowing them to keep the millions of dollars which they looted from their years of power the US in effect bribed as well as threatened them into leaving. And this orderly transfer has ensured that there is little threat to US interests in either country.

There is also no real change in either country. The Aquino clique is just another faction of the Filipino ruling class which spawned Marcos whilst the Haitian Army is in charge of a Government made up of ex-Duvalier ministers. Only the hideous Ton-Ton Macoutes have been sacrificed to the anger of the masses.

But why should the US ditch regimes which served its interests loyally for a total of over 50 years? Basically it is because the world economic crisis is raging with greater intensity in the capitalist periphery and the needs of US imperialism demand a changing of the guard from above before it is abolished by a mass movement from below which would lead to nationalist regimes that would confiscate the property of US multinationals. This was the lesson the US learned from supporting both the Shah in Iran and Somoza in Nicaragua until it was too late. Events in the Philippines today therefore foreshadow what will happen in other countries tomorrow.

For the past decade the Philippines has been racked by economic crisis which has led to bitter class struggles, divisions in the ruling class and a burgeoning guerrilla war in the countryside. Since 1983, when Marcos assassinated the leader of the rival bourgeois faction, Benigno Aquino the corruption and brutality which had sustained Marcos in power for over 20 years was clearly no longer enough. Investment plunged by 38% and it was clear that the Philippine upper classes were deserting Marcos. This Marcos could have survived but the failure of the army in the guerrilla war had led not only to a collapse of its morale but the exhaustion of the USA's patience with their faithful client's corrupt army bosses. Despite the fact that he had been feted by Reagan at the White House he was told to clean up the regime or go.

COMMUNIST REVIEW

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In October 1985 Marcos was ordered by Washington to hold an early Presidential election. Despite Reagan's kneejerk comments in favour of Marcos, the State Department and the CIA threw its weight behind the only alternative faction of the ruling elite now led by Aquino's widow, Cory. The CIA channelled funds to the Aquino campaign and orchestrated personal attacks on Marcos. The US Congress was suddenly informed that Marcos had embezzled \$350 millions of US aid for property speculations in New York. The US Army revealed that his supposed heroic war record fighting the Japanese was a complete fraud. In reality the Aquino faction is little different from the Marcos one. The main issue between them is that Marcos has gone too far in cheating them of the spoils of exploiting the Philippine masses. Aquino herself is an immensely rich landowner and her Prime Minister Laurel was, until recently a member of Marcos' own party. The Aquino faction stands for the same interests and policies, in particular in its devotion to the US, as Marcos. Benigno Aquino himself once worked for the CIA.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

During the last decade South East Asia has been sheltered from the full effects of the world economic crisis because of its rich supply of raw materials, cheap labour and plentiful supply of US and Japanese capital. However in the 80s the "terms of trade" have turned against these countries as the prices of their raw materials have crashed. The Philippines have suffered a gradual decline since 1974 but which has accelerated in the last three years as the prices of its main exports, copper, sugar, copra, and palm oil have collapsed. The same goods which were exported for \$100 in 1974 now bring in \$45 in real terms. The value of gross domestic production has fallen 10% in the last two years and is now equal to what it was in 1972. All this has resulted in a foreign debt of \$26.2 billions, approximately equal to that of Poland, devaluation of the currency and inflation of 25%. Officially unemployment is 15% but in reality it is much higher. Recently the country failed to satisfy IMF conditions for further loans and these have since been delayed and reduced. It is hardly surprising that the ruling class could no longer afford Marcos.

However it is the industrial working class, which is about 25% of the population, which has suffered the most dramatic increases in the cost of living since wages, which are low even by local standards, have been held down. During the period of martial law strikes were illegal and since then outbreaks of open struggle have met with brutal repression. The agricultural proletariat and dispossessed peasantry, who make up over 50% of the population, have suffered even worse. It is estimated that there is an underemployment rate of 40% in the countryside. It is this sector which forms the backbone of the guerrilla army. Overall 60% of the population now live below the poverty line. It is of course vital for US imperialism that this state of misery is maintained.

DEMANDS OF IMPERIALISM

The US multinationals have invested \$2.5 billions in the Philippines, which yield a high rate of profit. As a client of US imperialism the country is obliged to buy US goods and technology. An example of this is the Bataan nuclear power station, designed by Westinghouse, for which interest payments alone now amount to \$350,000 a day. In addition a large part of the country's debt is with US banks. Despite this considerable financial stake in the Philippines economy, the real concern for the US is over its military bases of Clark Field airforce base and Subic naval base, the largest US bases outside the USA. They are manned by 18,000 troops, strategically placed opposite the Russian Cam Ranh base in Vietnam and they guard the sea lanes through which 80% of the West's strategic raw materials pass. Since the US withdrawal from Vietnam these bases have assumed enormous importance for the US.

The commander of the US Seventh Fleet, Rear Admiral Chatham recently commented; "Withdrawal from the Philippines is tantamount to abandoning the South China Sea to the Soviets."

For the US that would mean the abandonment of a domination which they have held since they seized the Philippines from Spain in 1898. After granting independence to the Philippines in 1946 they maintained their hold over the bases through an agreement which expires in 1991. Marcos was replaced by Aquino precisely because the US believed the corruption of a regime which was so closely identified with the USA would give rise to a nationalist movement along Iranian lines or worse a Sandinista-type movement which would emerge from the present-day guerrilla struggle of the New Peoples Army.

The New Peoples Army (NPA) is the military arm of the Maoist, so-called Communist Party. It represents the ultra-left wing of the Philippines bourgeoisie and looks to state capitalism and the seizure of the assets of the multinationals as the solution to the problems of the Philippines. It's biggest source of weakness is that China, which used to support it materially now looks on Maoist revolutionary parties with some embarrassment since China now seeks an accommodation with US imperialism itself. Neither is the NPA yet backed by Russia. Thus it has to operate at present with captured weapons and by imposing taxes on the so-called 'liberated' areas. Its fighting strength is drawn from the peasantry and its leadership from the urban petty-bourgeoisie. The success which the NPA has achieved so far is an indication of the total incompetence of Marcos' Army commanders like General Fabian Ver who was replaced only a few days before Marcos fell by the US nominee General Ramos. It was Ramos' defection which sealed Marcos' fate. With Marcos gone US aid to the Philippines Army is likely to increase and make it increasingly effective, thus forcing the NPA onto the defensive. Its only hope of winning the war is to become a client of Moscow and thus the war will be converted into the more orthodox kind of inter-imperialist conflict which we have seen in Vietnam, Angola and elsewhere in Africa, and in Central America. As events in Nicaragua also graphically illustrate there is no such thing as a successful struggle for national liberation today. The Philippines can only escape from the vice of US imperialism if another social force ousts the present Manila ruling class with the aid of Russian imperialism. The Filipino bourgeoisie cannot play an independent role. Any faction which gained power would be forced to carry out the same policies of exploitation which worldwide have created nothing but starvation and war on the periphery of capitalism. The only solution is a long-term one and rests in the hands of the working class both in the Philippines and throughout the world.

TASKS OF THE WORKING CLASS

In the February elections the working class

Continued on p. 2

OPEN MEETINGS

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| ABERDEEN | South Africa and the Tasks of Revolutionaries Thursday, April 3rd 7.30 WEA, 163 King Street. |
| GLASGOW | Lessons of the Print Workers Struggle Wednesday March 19th 7.30 Woodside Halls, St George Cross Subway. |
| MANCHESTER | The Present Period and the Tasks of Communists March 15th 3.00 p.m. Star and Garter (behind Piccadilly Station). [Debate with the ICC] |
| LEEDS | The Present Period and the Tasks of Communists Wednesday March 19th 8.00 Leeds Trades Club Savile Mount Leeds 7 |

For meetings in LONDON, BRISTOL and BELFAST write to the group address or see local advertising.

INTRODUCTION

The following article is a contribution from one of our comrades on the question of "female emancipation". It deals only briefly with the main aspects of the issue and is thus necessarily schematic. As the comrade says at the beginning, the article is heavily influenced by Engels Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. Despite the dated nature of Engels factual basis and the fact that he doesn't discuss the first form of civilisation known to humanity, the so-called "Asiatic mode of production", this article demonstrates clearly the historically conditioned nature of women's position in society. The conclusion that the liberation of women can only come through the liberation of all humanity which means an end to class society is the starting point for all marxist analyses. We would however welcome any correspondence which expand the issues raised here.

As marxists we are against all forms of oppression. Oppression of immigrants, women, religious and national minorities etc is all part of the capitalist game of divide and rule. Nearly a century and a half ago, Marx wrote in the Communist Manifesto that "The organisation of the proletarians into a class ... is continually being upset ... by the competition between them". The bosses aim is to cut the cost of the workers' only saleable commodity - their labour power. Thus white male workers jealously attempt to guard their exploitation from women and blacks in an attempt to head off wage cuts and speed ups. This competition between the workers occurs not only across racial or sexual differences but also across trade and sectional barriers. And as each part of the working class scrambles to prevent their class comrades from sharing their crumbs, the capitalist laughing up his sleeve at their competition, chides them for being racist, sexist or narrow-minded whilst he quietly swallows the profits from the bakery. It is because communists seek to unite the working class in taking over that bakery and creating a society of equality for all that it is not enough for them to simply express solidarity with the oppressed. For communists it is essential to understand exactly why oppression exists. A marxist analysis is not however simply an attempt to understand the world. The task is both to understand and change the world. For this reason we are forced to take a political position on feminism which, in its myriad forms is based on those very attempts by capitalism to divide the working class. Take for example the following statements from two feminists.

"Poverty is a crucial issue for women and black people" Dianne Abbot, Labour candidate for Hackney North talking to 7 Days.

"Over the past few years poverty has been associated specifically with African women. Spare Rib December 1985.

The idea that poverty or oppression are visited only on the female half of the population under capitalism is the platform of feminism. Not only does this ignore class differences between women, it is also explicitly reformist and entirely compatible with the existence of the continuing exploitation of the capitalist system. However feminism not only attempts to divide the working class but it cannot, by calling only for equal rights for women even guarantee equality for women in a non-sexist society. This can only come about by the abolition of private property and wage labour, i.e. the establishment of communism.

THE ORIGINS OF PATRIARCHY
A MARXIST ANALYSIS

A marxist analysis locates the origins of female subordination in the development of surplus wealth as a result of the development of the productive forces of society. This analysis sees any oppression of women arising, not from the biological differences existing between the sexes, but from the acquisition of private property. Patriarchal ideology of feminist mythology is an ahistorical abstraction.

Up until the nineteenth century, historical thinking was very much under the Biblical

influence of the five books of Moses. Thus the patriarchal family was assumed to be only historical form of the family. From 1861 the works of Bachofen challenged the assumption that lines of descent had always been reckoned in the male line. He advanced the idea that unrestricted sexual relations had existed amongst early palaeolithic societies, and that such relations therefore excluded any certainty of paternity, descent could only be reckoned in the female line and consequently women held positions of high respect and authority. This was followed by further studies including that of Lewis H. Morgan who showed that the patrilineal gens of civilised peoples was preceded by matrilineal gens in primitive societies. This revolutionised all thinking on the family and influenced Frederick Engels who published

The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State in 1884. Despite the limitations of a book based on research over a century old Engels basic analysis still holds good today. He argued that any oppression of woman is clearly not the result of "Human nature" * but has material roots in the Patriarchal family, which itself is not an invariant form of social co-existence but a form of the family which coincided with the rise of class society.

Throughout history certain types of the family unit have existed, in each case corresponding to the given levels of development of the productive forces. The monogamous family existing within civilisation today is no exception to this rule.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Until about 10,000 years ago all human societies were based upon hunting and gathering. The size of the group was limited due to the limited supplies of food, and these groups were forced to move about from place to place frequently. During this period of development of society, i.e. within what nineteenth century anthropology called Savagery there existed two main forms of the family. The first, the Consanguine family, developed, according to the research carried out by Morgan, from unregulated sexual relations to marriage groups which were arranged according to the generations. All grandparents were the husbands and wives of each other, as were their children, children's children etc. So marriage existed within but not between generations and the consanguine family existed as the necessary preparatory stage for the future development of the family.

Also within Savagery was the Punuluan Family. This form of the family excluded sexual relations between brothers and sisters of the same mother, extending this later to include cousins. Inbreeding did not exist within all tribes and it was just these tribes that advanced and developed. The essential feature of the Punuluan family was the mutual common possession of husbands and wives within a strictly defined family circle.

With the introduction of the period classified as Barbarism about 10,000 years ago, peoples in some parts of the world gradually discovered how to produce regular crops. This allowed groupings to grow in size and to remain in one area for a longer period of time. They also started to domesticate animals. Following the period known to

anthropologists as "Horticultural Society", or as Engels called it "Lower Barbarism" the plough was introduced and we had arrived at "Higher Barbarism" or Agricultural society proper. This stage of development provided the material basis for the growth of large villages, professional armies, writing and full-time priests. In short it laid the foundations of civilisation. It was within Barbarism that the Pairing Family arose extending further the restrictions on sexual relations between blood relatives. In fact group marriage became increasingly impossible.

"...the evolution of the family in primitive times consists in the progressive narrowing of the circle originally embracing the whole tribe, within which a common conjugal tie between the two sexes prevailed. The continuous exclusion, first of nearer then of more remote relatives, and at last even of relatives by marriage, ends by making any kind of group marriage practically impossible."
Engels The Origin of the Family p.53

Stages similar to lower and higher Barbarism have been discovered since the expansion of capitalism as a world system. Some feminists have, in discovering male dominance in these societies, jumped to the conclusion that male dominance is a part of "human nature". What they have failed to understand is that today's primitive societies have all, in varying degrees been integrated into the capitalist system and have thus been influenced by capitalist forms. A sexual division of labour existing within primitive societies is not to be confused with male domination. The myth of "Man the Hunter" rests on the false idea that hunting is more important than gathering nuts and rearing children. The rearing of

children, many of whom die in infancy is the most important part of labour on which the whole future of the group rests. In most hunter-gatherer societies the evidence suggests a general equality between the sexes but within a distinct division of labour. A classical illustration of the above points can be seen in the social organisation of the !Kung people of the Kalahari Desert. Meat only constitutes a third of their diet and the male hunters were only successful once in four days whilst women could gather enough food for the group for 3 days within a few hours. In such a situation it is not surprising that they "have economic prestige and political power, a situation denied to many women in the 'civilised' world." (Richard Leakey The Making of Mankind p.105) Within Savagery and Lower Barbarism exploitation of one section of the population by another is not possible. The total product of the labour of these societies is not sufficient to provide a minority to live by non-productive tasks or by idleness. It is only in Higher Barbarism, where a surplus product exists that we begin to see the systematic exploitation of one section of society by another. This is civilisation.

Civilisation has contributed to society the force with which to underline and intensify the existing divisions of labour. Civilisation introduced a class, concerned, not with production per se, but only with the exchange of it. It created merchants. For the first time we can see a class which, whilst quite separate from production itself, does nevertheless direct the production process and subjugates the producers. The wealth created by the toiling masses who have been directly involved in the production process ends up being directed and utilised by a parasitic class which has contributed nothing at all to the production process. The goods (commodities) produced are bought and sold. Money comes into the process as do money-lenders, interest rentiers etc. Land itself becomes a commodity to be sold and pledged and not far behind comes mortgages. The centralisation of wealth and the growing concentration of it in the hands of a small parasitic class paralleled by the growing masses of impoverishment is one of civilisations contributions to history.

COMMUNISM

The advent of trading surpluses saw the need to develop armies for protection of travelling merchants, rulers, etc. This trade involved long arduous journeys which were carried out by men not burdened with children. The armies, used for the express purpose of defending surpluses were also controlled by men. The rise of class society was thus paralleled by the introduction of the patriarchal family and the oppression of women.

With the narrowing down of the extent of sexual relations between men and women, Mother Right, which had been the necessary rule in establishing the parentage of children, was no longer essential. Women were no longer regarded as equal human beings as under Savagery and Barbarism. The essential feature of the monogamous family is paternal power. With patriarchy we see for the first time the incorporation of unfree persons into the family unit. The very word 'family' comes from 'familia' or slaves. And slavery itself was the first form of exploitation known to humanity. Slavery developed fully under civilisation and was the precursor of the eventual "great split": not as the feminists would have it between the sexes, but the division into two classes - an exploiting and an exploited class.

THE STATE AND MODERN CAPITALISM

In Europe the feudal state rose out of the collapse of the Roman Empire. With the consolidation of the power of the feudal lords came the strengthening of the patriarchal family as part of the establishment of aristocratic property rights, including the right of inheritance (e.g. primogeniture, laws of legitimacy, etc.). Women's position in turn became that of a mere chattel.

As feudalism gave way to capitalism the merchants who had built up their economic power within feudal society came to realise the need to take over State power and wield it in their own interests. The patriarchal, monogamous family of classical laissez-faire capitalism mirrored exactly the private property relations which the capitalist state existed to defend. The height of the classical bourgeois state was also the height of the monogamous patriarchal family. In nineteenth century Britain the legal position of married women reached its nadir: no property rights, no rights as a citizen, no rights over their offspring, etc.

Capitalism is now in its period of historical decline. The nineteenth century liberal state has been forced to give way to the modern "interventionist" state which we know today. The legal and social ties of patriarchy have loosened. But still the monogamous family unit remains in its most 'developed' form - the nuclear family. Despite all the attempts of feminists to escape its thrall by individualistic and private solutions and despite the attempts (successful and unsuccessful) to introduce reforms to ameliorate its effects (creches, improved maternity pay/leave, etc.) the position of women remains essentially the same. While the feminists see the cause of women's oppression in men's eternal drive to dominate the female sex marxists recognise the historical basis for their servitude. The root of female oppression today lies in the bourgeois family which has to be destroyed. But the conditions for its dissolution can only come about with the destruction of the state on which the family depends and at the same time supports.

The State isn't a body imposed on society from outside. It is a result of the irreconcilable antagonism between exploiting and exploited classes. The State, as a power apparently standing above society, appears to mediate between classes using its public forces paid for out of the taxation of all the citizens. But in reality the State is the "state of the most powerful, economically dominant class which by its means becomes also the politically dominant class". And the State, like the family, has taken different forms corresponding in general to the different modes of production. "The ancient state was

above all the state of the slave-owners for holding down the slaves ... and the modern representative state is the instrument for exploiting wage-labour by capital." (Engels) Like male domination the state only exists in class society. Thus, even in their own terms the feminists, by seeking to win reforms within the capitalist state are in fact only dealing with the symptoms of male domination not with its root cause which is class society. And in practice we have seen how the capitalist state, when faced with some particular crisis like the First World War or the shortage of labour after the Second World War always will make concessions towards equal civil status for women. In the First World War it was votes for women to keep them producing weapons whilst since the Second World War the influx of women into the labour force to cheapen the cost of labour power has been a significant element in the post war boom. As a result of the increasing economic importance of female labour in the British economy the State finally granted women an Equal Pay Act in 1970 and a series of Sex Discrimination Acts from 1975 on. However the fate of these reforms provide in themselves sufficient evidence to show that despite gestures the capitalist state cannot deliver meaningful reforms today. Sixteen years after the Equal Pay Act women's pay in both manual and non-manual jobs is (still only three fifths of men's.

AVERAGE GROSS EARNINGS		
Manufacturing	MEN	WOMEN
F/Time manual	£172.6	£104.5
F/Time non-manual	£232.0	£126.6
F/Time all occupations	£192.6	£114.7
All Industries and Services		
F/Time manual	£163.6	£101.3
F/Time non-manual	£225.0	£133.8
F/Time all occupations	£192.4	£126.4

Source: Employment Gazette [December 1985]

Paradoxically the failure of these reforms and women's continued low pay has been useful to capitalism in the recession and made women, at least in the first part of the recession more employable. Whilst officially unemployment is 14% numbers of women in work have increased in absolute terms whilst 1½ million men have been expelled from the labour force.

	EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK (Seasonally adjusted figures)	
	WOMEN	MEN
June 1977	9,036,000	13,077,000
June 1985	9,280,000	11,519,000

Source: Employment Gazette [November 1985]

In addition to low pay and lower National Insurance and redundancy payouts for bosses women workers form 84% of the 4½ million part-time workers who have few real employment rights. And as the crisis deepens a few bureaucratic measures such as the change in the National Insurance regulations of Sept. 1982 which wiped 160,000 married women off the unemployed figures since they were not entitled to benefit has been of enormous propaganda service to capitalism. It is now estimated that some three quarters of a million married women are now unemployed without officially entering into the figures of the unemployed.

In short the capitalist state can manipulate any "reform" in its economic interest (and indeed, as the examples given here show, only grants reforms when they are of use to its accumulation process) and becoming a wage slave is, in any case, hardly a step towards real liberation.

REAL LIBERATION

Today we live, in global terms, in a society of abundance yet two thirds of the world's

population are undernourished or starving. Never before has humanity had the potential capacity to exert some control over nature and yet it is destroying rather than conserving the ecological balance of the planet. All this is a result of capitalist class society which demands for its continual functioning the obscene accumulation of wealth by the ruling class of the capitalist metropolises at one pole with the increasing spread of grinding poverty of peoples whose economies have been devastated by the rapacity of imperialism and monopoly capitalism at the other. Today the only way forward for the whole of humanity is for the exploited class, the proletariat, to throw off the shackles of the capitalist state in an international revolution which will free production from the dead hand of capitalist profit needs and create a free association of producers dedicated to production for social needs.

This transfer of the means of production into common ownership will also mean that the monogamous family will cease to be the economic unit of society. Society will care for all children alike and with the end of any form of economic supremacy of one section of society over another any supremacy of man in marriage will vanish. But this vision can only be achieved by a united working class which is collectively fighting capitalism. Individual philosophies of salvation which feminism and other marginal movements spawn are themselves the fashionable products of present-day capitalism acting as barriers to class unity.

The last resort of the feminist is to argue that communism won't automatically rid society of patriarchal attitudes to which we would agree but the point is that without a communist revolution there will be no basis for any real change in attitudes. Human beings,

"must, in the course of their development begin by themselves producing the material conditions of a new society and no effort of mind or will can free them from this destiny." (K.Marx Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality)

In fact it takes a revolution to sweep away the muck of the old society as can be seen in the experience of the bourgeois French Revolution and the proletarian Russian Revolution. In these great events it was not simply the fact that women played key roles (in October 1789 it was the sansculottes women of Paris who prevented a counter-revolution by marching on Versailles whilst the Russian Revolution actually started with an International Women's Day demonstration which would not disperse) but that the collapse of state authority for a brief period opened up a glimpse of a new role for women in a new society before the capitalist state reasserted its authority in every sense of the word in both Paris and Petrograd. Whilst Russian women never went back to the same position as under the monarchy this was only because they had an important role to play in capital accumulation under Stalin. But the fact that this first attempt at proletarian revolution was isolated and defeated does not mean for an instant that the proletariat is defeated for ever. What the last sixty years of counter-revolution shows is that only a communist revolution can create the conditions for the liberation of all humanity. Providing of course the world working class can rid itself of all divisive ideologies...

A.W.Franks

* Human nature. The period Engels termed "Savagery" accounts for about 90% of human existence. Therefore if such a thing as a suprahistorical "human nature" does exist, this is the period in which its roots are to be found.

RCP : FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE.....OF CAPITALISM

Under the relentless offensive of the right wing of the ruling class over the past six years, all those leftist groups who operate essentially within the orbit of the Labour Party, Britain's prime mouthpiece for a state-capitalist program are - as we documented in WV26 - beginning to show signs of political and in some cases physical fragmentation. In the event of these outfits being unable to fulfill their necessary role as foils in the face of sudden upsurges of class struggle, capitalism requires to fill the breach by spawning organisations whose revolutionary pretensions have a fresh, new, radical aura. One such potentially dangerous group is the self-proclaimed "Revolutionary Communist Party", a 1970's split from the present SWP.

The growth of the RCP is the function of a combination of factors: the disaffection of those demoralised by what, in their parlance, the "Old Left" had to offer, and the radicalisation of a layer of petit-bourgeois elements by the recent intensifications of the crisis, especially those attracted to marginalist politics dressed up with a 'revolutionary' appeal e.g. gay rights, anti-racism, 'womens liberation', and so on. The following analysis of key aspects of the platform of the RCP will show that this group has never been a political expression of the proletariat and that moreover, their modernist image is, even on their own terms, a specious one, nothing more than a rehash of old recipes, some of which are even more reactionary than those of the "Traditional Left" whom they aspire to displace.

THE RCP TAKES ON THE LABOUR PARTY!

In a major statement of their strategic intentions for '86 - "Breaking the Grip of Labourism" The Next Step no32 - the RCP spell out why for them the "Old Left" is now a spent force and why the goal of their political David is nothing short of a face-to-face confrontation with the Goliath of the Labour Party:

"The RCP's strategy is determined by our perspective of developing a party-to-party relationship with the LP." After dismissing the "Chelsea Pensioners" of Labourism - "Tony Benn and Eric Heffer often seem simply old fashioned or out of touch..." - we read: "The left's lack of confidence in its own policies confirms its irrelevance!" Casting an imperious eye over a scene of political and moral desolation, the RCP discover an inflated confidence in its new found 'relevance' and with characteristic modesty tell us: "British politics today make for a more direct confrontation between the RCP and the remnants of the traditional left." (quotes pp 6&7).

In common with their confraternity of the "ancien regime" of leftism, however, the RCP share one very important political and hence methodological fallacy: that the LP remains a reformist party of the working class - a rather weary illusion, considering that the LP has served to administer the national capital on no less than seven occasions this century. For us an historic rubicon was crossed by all the parties of European Social Democracy who supported their respective ruling classes on the outbreak of the first generalised imperialist war of 1914. Since that time all the parties of the 2nd International, together with their unions, have been part of a process of integration into capitalism's state apparatuses; so that today it is an axiomatic starting point for the Communist Left that the LP is a tried and tested organ of capitalism. This determines our tactical attitude to the so called "Labour Movement" and is an element of a class line which demarcates Marxism from leftism, of whatever vintage. (seeWV26).

Just how revolutionary is the RCP's perspective is demonstrated by their wholehearted embracing of bourgeois electoralism, when they take the next unequivocal step of saying: "Over the coming months the party must get into full gear for the run up to the next general election. We need

to work out in detail the strategic and tactical implications of taking on the LP on a wide range of issues." In other words for the RCP it's the ruling class that calls the tune; the primary principle of instilling the need for proletarian autonomy is manifestly quite foreign to their outlook. The sheer opportunism involved in these 'tactical implications' is hinted at in the same article (TNS32) - "From a tactical point of view it is always better if we are seen to be taking on our opponents from the left.."

THE R.C.P. AND THE UNIONS.

The whole spectrum of leftism, RCP included, work on the assumption that trade unions are implicitly working class organisations and that their capacity to defend their members interests is continually thwarted by a cowardly bureaucratised leadership. None begin from the understanding that it is the capitalist terrain on which the unions operate i.e. the negotiation of the terms of sale of the commodity labour-power, which renders this form of organisation unsuitable for the defence of workers' interests in the permanent crisis of capitalism's decline. Once the leadership is ousted, they argue, and replaced by a 'revolutionary' one, the objective role of unionism will be somehow magically transformed.

While going along with this general line, the RCP seek to build 'independent union organisations' - whose specific nature is never defined - which will "make the unions into the organisations they ought to be". In the present period the logic of this position can only mean that the RCP want to make the unions more thoroughly capitalistic i.e. more effective means for derailing class struggle.

The January edition of TNS contains a balance sheet of unionised struggles for '85, where an attempt is made to assess the retreat in class struggle by simplistically reducing a complex problem to "the irrelevance of the strategies of the left". The 'relevance' of the RCP's 'modern strategy' in relation to the most bitter struggle of the post-war period; the miners' strike, was one where the miners heard from the RCP nothing but calls to go back to work so that they could have a ballot, on a strike which the miners themselves had launched and held firm for an entire year! In attempting to freeze the movement of the miners into a form of capitalist democracy i.e. to kill it, the RCP were aligning themselves with that whole battery of forces which the ruling class had pitted against the miners - from the TUC to the right wing of the Tory Party. The tactic propagated by revolutionaries in order to break the miners isolation, was for an immediate extension of the strike, particularly to power workers.

The RCP is very concerned about the emergence of 'scab-unionism': "The split in the working class and the emergence of scab-unionism on a wide scale is a serious threat to the labour movement." In the absence of a communist policy or analysis, however, the RCP finds itself drawn back into the fold of the "official labour movement", so recently pilloried for its anti-quarian image and methods, in order to make a strident defence of the NUM against the breakaway UDM and against those right wing unions that have been formed among ambulancemen, railwaymen and teachers. What the RCP cannot grasp is that all trade unionism in the present historical period is in itself tantamount to a form of scabbing in relation to the whole class and its struggle for emancipation.

A strain of libertarian anarchism, never very far from the surface of the RCP's thinking, re-emerges in the same article when discussing ways of circumventing "workers cynicism about militancy": - "These sentiments are often strongest among workers who are most alienated from the time-honoured traditions of the official labour movement - women, blacks, youth,

unskilled workers." The opportunist logic of this approach can be translated more honestly: "Since we can't seem to do much with the organised workers, the main body of the class, let's see if we can influence the unorganised i.e. the marginal strata."

MARGINALISM: THE RCP'S NATURAL STOMPING GROUND.

"The RCP has always emphasised the importance of moving beyond the narrow trade union focus of the traditional left and taking up the struggle against all forms of repression." - TNS no32 (p7) Seeking shortcuts to Marxism and looking for 'catalytic agents' outside of the revolutionary class has been the stock-in-trade of the "New Left" from Marcuse to Gorz, as well as a variety of radicalist neophiliacs temporarily thrown into prominence by a middle class in a process of decomposition.

Again p7: "Because of the RCP's record of anti-state propaganda and activity - and here they include agitation for 'womens rights' and 'international solidarity' - we are in a strong position to develop these sentiments into a wider anti-capitalist outlook." The following quote from 'Revolutionary Perspectives' no2I illustrates very aptly the RCP's political and tactical myopia on this question:

"It is quite wrong to say that all social questions are potentially revolutionary. Capitalism has proved on an empirical level that movements based on secondary aspects of capitalist oppression are not the slightest threat to capitalism. They are its healthy diet. Sexual and racial discrimination are banned by bourgeois statute and the squatting movement has made its peace with bourgeois councils and now actually administers a sector of their housing for them...these movements are inter-classist and don't challenge the basis of capitalism at all. The limited reformist aims of these movements simply reinforce the body of bourgeois ideology.. To challenge single aspects of capitalism on their own is simple reformism.. Mostly those involved are led to cynicism and demoralisation."

THE "RIGHT" TO BE "OPRESSED".

A central and recurring theme of the RCP's platform is the defence of 'rights' e.g. "Some trade union officials are prepared to sacrifice everything that trade unionism stands for - the right to strike, the right to work, the right to decent wages and conditions." The demand for the right to work has never been a clear expression of the interests of the working class. It is a con-

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- Analysis of the Miners Strike

Theoretical Journal of the Communist Workers Organisation

ULSTER : ELECTIONS AGAINST THE WORKERS

In late January the working class of Northern Ireland was once again offered the dubious "privilege" of participation in the capitalist electoral circus. Brought on by the resignations of Unionist M.P.s, the series of by-elections were billed by the Loyalists and the media hacks alike as an unofficial referendum to establish opposition to last November's Anglo-Irish Agreement - a show of strength to Thatcher and her Northern Ireland Office ministers.

It is a basic communist position to stress the irrelevance to the working class of such ruling class faction fights and indeed the positive dangers of workers even grudgingly participating on capitalist terrain. However, what has been exceptional about this election and its aftermath has been the lack of impact even within the terms of capitalism's politics. The central ploy of the Unionist Parties in the 'Parliamentary phase' of their opposition to the Agreement was a non-event.

The subsequent contortions of the Unionists serve only to confirm the analysis we made in *Workers Voice* no.26 (available from group address) when we stressed their relative weakness against the British Government's determination to implement the Agreement as part of its attempts to cut the financial and military burden of Ulster. Even as the results were showing a decisive majority against the accord, Thatcher's ministers were on television contemptuously dismissing any suggestion that they should scrap or modify a strategy which has the backing of the entire Western Bloc (e.g. Irish Government, the EEC, the USA).

In any case, the mechanics of cross-border co-operation have already been set in place, with the Irish administration supposedly taking on a larger burden of security, and the possible political benefits being demonstrated in the by-elections by the erosion of support for Sinn Fein/IRA to the advantage of the SDLP (pro-Agreement national-

ists). At the same time the British media has more or less 'bought' the accord, and personally it gives Thatcher and her supporters the chance to re-assert "the resolute approach". However, it is clear that there is a crisis of sorts looming in Northern Ireland, as the Unionists shift the emphasis of their campaign to civil disobedience (e.g. the possibility of a rent and rates strike) and confrontation. The next few months will undoubtedly see attempts by the Government to placate "moderate" Unionists with offers of semi-devolution, exploiting their demoralisation and widening the split with the "extremists" such as Paisley and the Loyalist para-militaries. In fact the obvious and well publicised divisions over tactics within the Unionist camp are one of the many factors which make this



The workers must not fight their bosses battles! movement much weaker than that which caused the Labour government to U-turn in 1974.

It goes without saying that these developments in the political superstructure in Ulster have been accompanied by the strengthening of the process by which social questions are seen in terms of "national identity" or religion. The fact that Protestant and Catholic workers have apparently responded to the language of outright sectarianism is perhaps the most worrying development, for communists, of the whole affair.

This is nothing new of course, but it is particularly sickening to see the discontent created by rising unemployment and cuts in the social wage (which have hit both "sides" of the community) being channelled into futile and reactionary nationalisms. Today it is absurd to talk about the "privileged status" of Protestant workers in Ulster when the province boasts some of the highest unemployment levels and lowest living standards in Western Europe. Similarly it is idiotic for Republicans to claim that Irish unity is a necessary first step in solving Catholic social problems.

Instead, communists point to the irrelevance of both Loyalism and Republicanism in this era of global economic crisis and imperialist domination, and we call for workers' unity in their resistance to the attacks of capitalist austerity. An independent Ulster (an idea which has again re-surfaced) or a united Ireland would be just as subject to U.S. domination as Eire and the U.K. are today, and they would be just as prone to the austerity packages forced on all national regimes by the crisis of capitalism on a world scale.

The Communist Workers Organisation supports all the struggles of the working class where its independence from capitalism and capitalist institutions is asserted. Therefore in Ireland not only do we support the 'economic' class struggle but especially welcome fights which shatter the myths of nationalism/religion which have been so prevalent and destructive for generations.

In this light, the hysteria around resistance to the Anglo-Irish Agreement must be seen as purely negative, and this goes as much for those Catholics who are rallying around Irish nationalism as for those Protestants who are involved in Loyalist demonstrations, etc. It remains the difficult task of communists to proclaim that the only road to meaningful liberation lies not down these reactionary dead-ends, but in the international class struggle which for too long has stayed in the background of Irish social life.

RCP continued from p.6

fused demand because it assumes the working class can have 'rights' under capitalism. Workers as individual petit-bourgeois citizens i.e. as social atoms, formally enjoy rights as 'equals' before the law, but in its collective struggle for political power our exploited class can have no legal expression which is not at the same time a negation of capitalist law. Ruling class law and morality are always expressions of the domination of capital over labour i.e. are an ideological camouflage of actual power relations. The capitalist class has the 'right' to exploit workers and then throw them on the dole; workers on the other hand are driven by dire need to sell their labour power - their so called 'right to work' is determined by the blind mechanism of the market.

The fact that 'rights' have always been secondary aspects of a Marxist program is nothing new. In 1884 in a letter to Bernstein, Engels wrote: "If one demands the right to work in this society, one demands national workshops, workhouses and colonies!" In the throes of capitalism's decadence, the workhouses have been superceded by giant state-run projects - today's 'Youth Training Schemes' are the embryonic form of the slave labour camps of the type of Stalin's Russia or Hitler's Germany. The real motive behind the 'right to work' slogan is the demand for work camps and the militarisation of labour.

'Oppression' is a favourite item in the RCP's terminology. This concept has a limited status in a Marxist vocabulary i.e. it is an indeterminate abstraction. Unlike the term 'exploitation' which is scientifically quantifiable, oppression is nebulous and emotive, in a word, ideological. Because all black people in S.Africa e.g. are oppressed, for the liberal leftist there is only a difference of degree, not of kind between the black proletariat and the nascent black bourgeoisie. Marxists, on the other hand, always seek to explain and base their policies on qualitative i.e. class differences.

IRELAND AND THE "NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE"

As a forum for the expression of the bad conscience of British left-wing liberalism in relation to the charnel house that is N.Ireland, TNS is hard to beat. The RCP's moral indignation at the repression of N.Irish Catholic workers - (their policing by the IRA is never mentioned) - is exceeded only by the misconceptions which inform their reactionary position on the Irish Question in particular and the national question ingeneral.

"For the RCP support for the cause of Irish freedom has always been central. We put top priority on support for the Irish liberation struggle because it is the single greatest threat to the stability of the British state." (TNS 3rd Jan)

On the contrary, Mssrs RCP, the so-called 'liberation struggle' is no threat to either the British, or for that matter the Eirish ruling class, because it is part of their 'solution' to this peculiar legacy of the decline of British imperialism. The only danger to these states will come through struggles which transcend sectarian, border and industry divisions, in a generalised unification of the workers of both nations in a struggle for communist not nationalist power. By the use of its regular police and military and through the 'irregular' para-militaries, the IRA,UVF etc the various factions of the bourgeoisie have been able to impose a reign of terror, partly as a consequence of the weakness of the Irish working class, riven as it is with ideological divisions. The necessary fillip to the struggles of the latter will probably come from the internal dynamic of those larger, more homogeneous concentrations of the class in Britain and W.Europe.

Today, in the era of capitalism's totalitarian domination of the globe, a group's position on the national question is one of the acid tests of its true political nature. In all past issues of WV we have articles demonstrating that 'national liberation' from imperialism in the modern epoch is neither a political nor an economic possibility. As all factions of the world bourgeoisie have ceased

to be progressive, the tactical grounds for proletarian support of nationalism no longer exist. What Marx said over a century ago is today ten times more true: the working class has no fatherland; its very existence as a global class is the living negation of nationalism.

In the light of this, the RCP's 'unconditional adoration' of Sinn Fein is an opportunist obsequiousness of the most odious sort. According to the RCP, the Hillsborough Agreement was aimed at defeating the 'nationalist community'. In reality the ulterior motive was the political isolation of the Protestant bourgeoisie, whom the British, over a period of time, are preparing to ditch. At an estimated £1.5bn per year for its upkeep, N.Ireland is a huge financial drain on the Exchequer. This is one of the reasons why it is proving so difficult to 'sell' to the Southern ruling class. However, as we intimated in RPI5, the long term objective of British capital remains that of a unified capitalist Ireland under British and EEC informal economic control; in this their perspective coincides with that of Sinn Fein and ipso facto the RCP.

"By supporting the struggles of oppressed countries against the Western powers that oppress them, workers in the West can hasten the defeat of the system that degrades us all." TNS 17thJan. The RCP put this erroneous Trotskyist theory into practice during the Falklands War when it came out in support of the 'oppressed' Galtieri regime of Argentina. By abandoning Lenin's position of 'revolutionary defeatism' which calls on workers to turn all national wars into civil wars, the RCP once again shows its true stripes.

The 'RCP', then, is the opposite of what its name suggests: neither 'revolutionary', 'communist' and certainly not a party which represents the historic interests of the class of the future.

THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS

To paraphrase Disraeli's dictum, there are lies, damned lies and bourgeois statistics. The latest volume of *Social Trends* (no. 16, pub. HMSO) contains a wealth of statistics, some of which mislead because they are compiled by people working within a bourgeois conceptual framework, and some which appear to be designed to mislead.

An example of the latter are those figures which enable the authors to conclude that pensioners are now about 50% better off, relative to the population as a whole, than they were in 1951 (by a truly amazing coincidence, this "fact" comes to light at precisely the time when the government is awarding the magnificent sum of 40p a week to single pensioners and cutting the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme!).

But a closer look at this "fact" shows that it is based on the "Total Personal Disposable Income" (TPDI) of pensioners relative to nonpensioners. On average, in 1951 a pensioner's TPDI was 41% of a nonpensioner's; now it is 68%. However, the TPDI suffers from two defects: although it is called a disposable income it does not take account of rent or mortgage repayments or other unavoidable expenditure as it is just income from almost all sources (see below) minus income tax and National Insurance contributions - so it ignores the social trend away from pensioners living with their offspring and the consequent increase in their accommodation costs; and it does not include any income from within the pensioner's family, and there is almost certainly a social trend away from such "transfers of capital" as *Social Trends* calls them.

Thus the "fact" that pensioners are better off dissolves into a very shaky conjecture.

Despite the inclusion of the above statistical jiggery-pokery, most of the figures of interest to Marxists in *Social Trends* are perfectly honest but conceptually flawed. In practice this means that the statistics must be re-interpreted and the new results must be treated with caution as the re-interpretation will introduce errors as well as eliminating them.

For example, *Social Trends* claims that "from the end of 1982 wage-earners on average improved their take-home spending power". Does this mean that workers in work have become better off, as some have claimed?

At first sight this appears to be the case, as the Tax and Price Index (TPI) was, for example, 2.94% in 1982 and manual workers' earnings increased by about 9% in that year.

However, this (i) assumes that inflation is the same for everybody; (ii) ignores increases in the rate of exploitation brought about by productivity deals etc.

The TPI is obtained from the Retail Price Index (RPI) by taking into account income tax and NI contributions.

First let's have a closer look at the RPI. This is based on the cost of the "basket" of commodities purchased by the average household in the year in question. But different classes consume different amounts of different things (as an example, in 1983, the 20% of households with the highest incomes spent 4.71% of their income on fuel, light and power, whereas the next 60% of households spent, on average, 6.83%) and so capitalists and workers have different "baskets", and different "RPI's". Assuming that the upper 20% of households represent the capitalists and the next 60% represent the employed section of the working class (unfortunately, errors are unavoidable here, as the available statistics only come in sufficient detail in terms of the top 20%, the next 20%, etc, of households. A more appropriate figure for capitalists would be the top 10%, and it's clear that the bottom 20% contains many workers in work. Also, working class households with three or more waged members can quite easily find themselves in the "wrong" 20%), we find that the 1982-3 "employed workers' RPI" was 5.2% and the "capitalists' RPI" was 4.94%, a difference of over 4% in employed workers' and capitalists' price inflation. (This is not just a temporary phenomena: the average figures over the past ten years are 15% and 14.7% respectively).

When we come to the TPI we find that tax cuts for the very rich have an enormous effect on the overall index. Consider 3 households, A, B, and C, where A's income is equal to the average for the middle 60%, B's is equal to the average for the top 20% and C's is twice B's. Assume A, B and C consist of married couple's, and only one partner works in each. Let A's income be entirely earned and let 10% and 60% of B and C's income be investment income respectively.

Then we have the following table:

	'82-3			'83-4		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
Income:						
before deductions	£6340pa	17,820	35,640	6340	17,820	35,640
after NI ¹	5785	17,063	34,890	5789	16,946	34,767
after income tax	4617	12,179	18,535	4706	12,396	20,486
adjusted for inflation since '82-3	4617	12,179	18,535	4473	11,812	19,512
individual's TPI ²	-	-	-	3.12%	3.01%	-5.27%

¹B and C are assumed contracted out

The row above the bottom one contains the households' real net incomes in 1982-3 terms (before any wage increases); the bottom row shows the percentage decrease (so a negative figure represents an increase) in those incomes in 1983-4.

The published figure for the TPI is an average of all households, weighted according to their net incomes. This means, for instance, that a household like C counts for about 4½ times as much as one like A in the final figure.

Although the cumulative effect of the

difference between the inflation rate experienced by workers and capitalists is important, this difference between pales into insignificance when compared with the 5% difference between the workers' rate and the increase in manual workers' average earnings, which we take as indicative of all workers' earnings. So it appears that workers in employment are better off.

This appearance is shown to be deceptive when we consider the price paid by the working class to the bourgeoisie: in 1981 the average industrial concern (including, of course, nationalised companies) made £10,500 per worker; by 1982 this had risen to £11,869, an increase of 11.3%, well above the alleged improvement in "take-home spending-power". (As the wage-bill of the companies concerned rose from £47.206M to £48.875M and the total surpluses rose from £79.818M to £84.614M, we can make low - because taxes should be subtracted from wages and added to the surpluses - estimates for the rate of surplus value of 169.08% and 173.12% respectively).

What about unemployed workers? Here there is no question of an improvement of living standards. The average weekly expenditure of households in the bottom 20% fell from £59.21 in 1983 to £58.45 in 1984, reflecting both an increase in the numbers unemployed and increase in the length of time spent on the dole. The number of workers unemployed for a year or more rose to 1.2 million in 1983, and the number unemployed for two or more years rose to ½ million. Despite several attempts to fiddle these figures by re-defining "unemployment", these figures were 1½ and ¾ million in 1985.

Another statistic reflecting the absolute impoverishment of a section of the working class is the increase in the number of homeless households from 89,000 in 1983 to 94,000 (this does not include the 44,000 households which were accepted as being homeless without being "priority" cases, nor the 53,000 who only thought they were homeless - as if homelessness was simply a matter of being without a home!) a year later. No wonder that the suicide rate has increased by 3% from 1979!

In conclusion, we find that the slightly improved living standards of employed workers have been more than paid for by their increased exploitation, so overall they are worse off. But this worsening in their conditions is not so great that they have no choice but to fight collectively. Individual and sectional solutions to the effects of the capitalist crisis still appear possible. But just as the crisis is working its way like gangrene from the periphery to the heartlands of capitalism, its full effects will spread from the unemployed to the employed workers in the heartlands themselves. The bourgeoisie will be forced by the falling rate of profit to attempt to further increase the rate of exploitation without maintaining living standards. In doing this it will inevitably use the employed workers' fear of unemployment to force down wages, that is, it will use the difference between the material conditions of the employed and unemployed to reduce that very difference. The more successful the bourgeoisie is in doing this, the more obvious the common interests of the employed and unemployed will become. Thus the material basis for a communist intervention pointing out that the entire working class has the same interests will become firmer and firmer. This intervention will use the fact that capitalism has no choice but to attempt to overthrow workers' living standards to drive home the necessity for the overthrow of capitalism itself.

C.W.O.

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