

711
solidarity
FOR WORKERS' POWER

VOLUME 6 NUMBER 1

WILDCAT AT FORD'S MAHWAH

THE NEW PROLETARIAT

Ulster

ULSTER: WITHDRAW THE PRIESTS (AND PARSONS)

'Solidarity' is not given to handing out gratuitous advice to the ruling class on how best to solve their problems - or on where to dispose their troops (we are opposed to the very existence of these troops, whose ultimate function is the armed defence of class society). We shall therefore not be joining with the Civil Rights Association, the People's Democracy* and the Primate of All Ireland in calling for the despatch of more British troops to Ulster.

The role of the Army in Northern Ireland is twofold. On the one hand by 'containing' the situation it succeeds momentarily in freezing unstable social relations, based on discrimination, gerrymander and exploitation. But while the situation is thus 'frozen' the British ruling class has already started to drag the Orange bourgeoisie, kicking and screaming, into the 20th century, instituting a 'modern' system of exploitation, pruned of the cruder anachronisms which generated such explosive and potentially uncontrollable tensions.

British troops were sent to Ulster to prevent an extension of popular self-administration, not to suppress an Irish nationalism long devoid of any revolutionary content. The dismantling of the Falls Road barricade by the joint efforts of the 3rd Battalion of Light Infantry and of the I.R.A. irregulars in the Belfast Citizens' Defence Committee should leave no one in any doubt on this score. The collusion against the people initiated by religious spokesmen** of all denominations is now complete.

What is new in the Irish events of the last few weeks? Firstly, 'our own' liberal, trendy, democratic, British Labour Government - so different from all those nasty, violent foreigners - had to send the Army to take charge of part of its own metropolitan territory. People have been detained without trial. The troops have set up road-blocks guarded by machine guns, prevented citizens from moving freely within cities and searched houses ... which is more than happened in France last year, or has happened in Czechoslovakia (so far) this year. Moreover, despite Mr. Callaghan's assurances of July 4, 1968, CS gas (sorry, tear smoke) has been used against civilians.

* Bernadette, current pin-up of I.S., is on record as welcoming the British military intervention. In a T.V. interview soon after her election she said: 'I get my religion from Rome, not my politics'. Where does she get her politics from? Sandhurst?

** Perhaps the 'correct' slogan is to demand the despatch of a mixed force of Rabbis and Orthodox Archimandrites.

But the positive features are even more important. The fact that people have taken control of their own living areas, driven out the police, defended themselves with barricades, is profoundly heartening. In Londonderry the presence of Radio Free Derry, of the Citizens' Press and of the 'Barricades Bulletin' shows that people are ready to establish their own means of communication to counter the distortions of the bourgeois press and wireless. Despite repeated exhortations to dismantle the barricades and 'guarantees' of immunity from the High Command the people of 'the Bog' remain suspicious of the authorities and confident only in their own organised strength. Even the Home Secretary, during his 'fact finding' tour, had to be handed over by the military to those responsible for 'Free Derry's' own internal self-administration.

Nor is the self-activity entirely confined to the Teagues. On the weekend of August 9-10 the Prod workers of Belfast's Shankill were building barricades of burning vehicles round their dwelling areas and throwing petrol-bombs at 'their' police. In fact it was an Orange petrol bomb which first ignited a Royal Ulster Constable! Revolutionary incendiarism played no part in this outburst, but some of the traditional loyalties are clearly beginning to fray. A fear of dispersal of the Shankill families following slum clearance in the area probably helped.

With Protestants defending their areas one weekend, and Catholics the next - against the same enemy (a reasonable division of labour) - we hope both sides will draw certain conclusions.

If the increasing practice of people seizing control of their living areas continues and if it is linked to the industrial militancy already shown by some sections of the workers, especially in largely Protestant Belfast, then real steps towards liberation will have been taken. Such a development of socialist consciousness would render the issue of whether there should be one or two bourgeois nations in Ireland ludicrous. We quite realise that this task is one of immense difficulty. But it is the only meaningful one to which revolutionaries can address themselves in Ulster.

Among the amusing by-products of recent events have been the bizarre contortions of various traditional revolutionaries. The high priests of The Militant, for instance (August 22 leaflet), call for the struggle to be led by 'a united Labour Party, formed of the Irish Labour Party, the Northern Ireland Labour Party and the Republican Labour Party, with the trade unions affiliated'. As in America, these ever-burrowing Trots are calling for the creation of a new mass bureaucratic movement in which they will then have the opportunity of practising their favourite vice: 'deep entry'.

Underlying the attitudes of most 'revolutionaries' is a touching respect for such bourgeois concepts as 'nationality' and 'national self-determination'. In their minds such national self-determination only refers, of course, to the whole of Ireland. Ulster clearly has no such rights. These socialists always lay down the pre-ordained geographical

WILDCAT AT FORD MAHWAH

This article describes a particular struggle at the MAHWAH Ford plant in New Jersey. It also analyses some of the new forces emerging onto the industrial scene in America. It should interest British car workers as there are many lessons and parallels with British experience. The article emphasises the need for closer international links at rank and file level. We suggest that Ford workers wanting more information should write to the U.B.B., 156 Valley Road, Mahwah, N.J., USA.

Supervisor at Ford's (Mahwah, New Jersey): 'Get out of here, you're fired, you black motherfucker'.

Worker: 'Don't talk to me like an animal'.

On April 24, 1969, these words led to a week-long wildcat strike by 2,000 workers at the large Ford assembly plant at Mahwah, New Jersey. Production was reduced from 800 cars a day to 270. The workers' demands were:

1. removal of the supervisor from the plant;
2. removal or transfer of all supervisors with records of discrimination and abuse;
3. reinstatement of all workers who were victimised for taking unofficial action;
4. the end of the Company system of Kangaroo Courts, in which the U.A.W. participated;
5. that the United Black Brothers (see further on) be recognized as the spokesman for black workers.

The Company agreed to all the demands except the last.

The basis for the walk-out transcended the single racist incident. It was rooted in Ford's speed-up on the production line. Workers say that the Company increases production over the limit of 56 cars an hour to 62 cars when they can get away with it. This occurs quite often, given the union's acquiescence. Those who cannot keep up with the inhuman pace are fired. Harrassment by management is continuous.

Production is the core and essence of the capitalist system, and the workers are best placed to perceive this. They are also best placed to single out and fight for its opposite - human dignity.

The new force in the wildcat was the presence of an organised group: the United Black Brothers of Mahwah Ford. The U.B.B. was formed last autumn by black workers, mostly night shift men, to fight racism and conditions on the line which were being ignored by the union.

Solidarity has always existed in the shop. It is characteristic of the workers' sense of their own power, and shows the importance of the wildcat in gaining control over working conditions. Stopping production - setting a limit on the conditions they will put up with on the job - is always hailed by workers as a collective victory over the Company. Wildcats are caused by conditions which the Company permits to develop in the factory - racism, poor safety conditions, speed-up, firings. They are almost never over wage issues. Often the incident that provokes them is only the last straw after months of accumulated grievances. Although some people regard wildcats as being provoked by management in order to expose and weed out militant workers, this is far from the truth. Companies dread wildcats because they never know where they will lead, once workers start acting on their own. Unions also fear them for the same reason. The only way management provokes wildcats is through the constant oppression of workers on the line. As one Chrysler worker put it: 'a good wildcat strike is the best weapon workers have'.

BLACK WORKERS AND THE U.A.W.

Mahwah Ford is the largest Ford assembly plant with over 4,500 workers. It produces almost 200,000 cars annually. Blacks are 15-20% of the day shift and over 40% of the night shift. The plant has a long history of labor incidents. In February 1968 a similar racial incident provoked a 4-day walk out of the night shift that was joined by the day shift. When the Company tried to hold disciplinary hearings for one of the leaders of the walk out (which was termed 'illegal' by the union) all the men in the body shop 'walked' to the hearing. As one worker said: 'We knew that if we went into our disciplinary hearings alone, management would have us where they wanted us. So, before we went back to work the first night, we agreed that if they called one of us everybody would leave the line and try to get into the hearing room'. The Company was so surprised, they sent all the workers back to work. When they asked for another hearing, the workers repeated their action. The Company again had to back down.

Racialist practices of management are nothing new in the USA, but militant organisations of black workers which can effectively

'In today's industrial society responsible trade union membership is not inconsistent with membership of a Board of Directors...'

George Cattell,
Director of Manpower and
Productivity Service,
Dept. of Employment and
Productivity.

(The Times, 3/2/69)

retaliate are a new force there. Movements like the U.B.B. at Mahwah and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers* at Detroit which organise inside the car factories have different attitudes. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers contains specifically Black Nationalist elements while the U.B.B. puts its position in this way:*

'The U.B.B. is not a racist organisation. We welcome all workers into our ranks. All the workers at the Ford Motor Co. are exploited in various degrees. Therefore all workers are welcome: Afro-Americans, Hispanic-speaking, and Whites. Of all the workers the Afro-Americans are exploited the most and therefore are in the vanguard of the movement for human rights and dignity. They have earned their place in the vanguard with the sweat and blood of their bodies. We honor them thusly U.B.B.'

(from U.B.B. Statement, June 6, 1969.)*

The role of black workers in the industry is enormous. Most of the large factories in Detroit are situated in the black ghetto. About 50% of Detroit car workers are black and at the Hamtrac Assembly (Dodge) and Eldon Avenue Gear and Axle (G.M.) plants the proportion of black workers is 70% and 80% respectively. Throughout the U.S. about 1/3 of car workers are black. In view of this the black revolt in the factories is not only associated with that in the whole society, but also has many of the characteristics of a rank and file struggle against both management and a corrupt union set up

At Mahwah, U.A.W. Local 906 has acquiesced in the Company's racism, and has failed to support almost any grievance on the line. (When the last president left office, there were 2000 unprocessed grievances in the union office) In the February 1968 walkout, the role of the union was to persuade the men to return to work while the union negotiated the issues. Instead, nothing concrete was done. The union even stood by as management attempted to discipline those who walked out. Only rank-and-file solidarity saved them. Union officials are just as anxious to can militant workers as the company. The union also failed to support another walkout last summer, this time over excessive heat in the plant.

'I never went on a strike in my life, never ordered anyone else to run a strike in my life, never had anything to do with a picket line ... In the final analysis, there is not a great difference between the things I stand for and the things that National Association of Manufacturers leaders stand for. I stand for the profit system; I believe in the profit system. I believe it's a wonderful incentive. I believe in the free enterprise system completely.'

George Meany, President
AFL-CIO, addressing the
National Association of
Manufacturers, Dec. 1956.

* Component groupings are DRUM (Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement) and ELRUM (Eldon Avenue Revolutionary Union Movement) organising 2 G.M. plants, FRUM organising Ford, CRUM organising Chrysler factories, etc.

'DIGNITY IS NOT NEGOTIABLE'

Black workers tend to get the worst jobs. This reinforces the similarity of their struggle with the revolt of assembly workers in British car factories. It is no coincidence that in British car firms it is the Foundry workers and Assembly workers (who are the most exploited and 'enjoy' the worse conditions) who lead the way.

A black worker with 12 years at Mahwah explained the concentration of blacks in the most oppressive jobs. 'If a white worker is assigned to the really backbreaking, dangerous jobs, he will refuse. He knows he can get a job about as good in another plant. For the black worker though getting into the plant was a better thing than he'd ever gotten. He knows that back on the street there's nothing again. So he takes the job and stomachs it'. Supervisors know this and assign black workers to the lowest jobs.

Racism is an essential tool used by the Company to sweat more production out of all workers. After each model change, Ford sets impossible standards for each job. Then begins a battle on the line between foremen hired to enforce those standards and workers who, through their own resistance, reduce the quotas to what they can tolerate. The foremen hold the power of 'writing up' (firing) men who don't perform, and black workers again are especially vulnerable. Foremen are under such pressure to keep production up that the institutional racism which they enforce combines with their own personal racism in the form of racial slurs and insults against blacks, Spanish-speaking, Italians and other minorities they are pushing on the line.

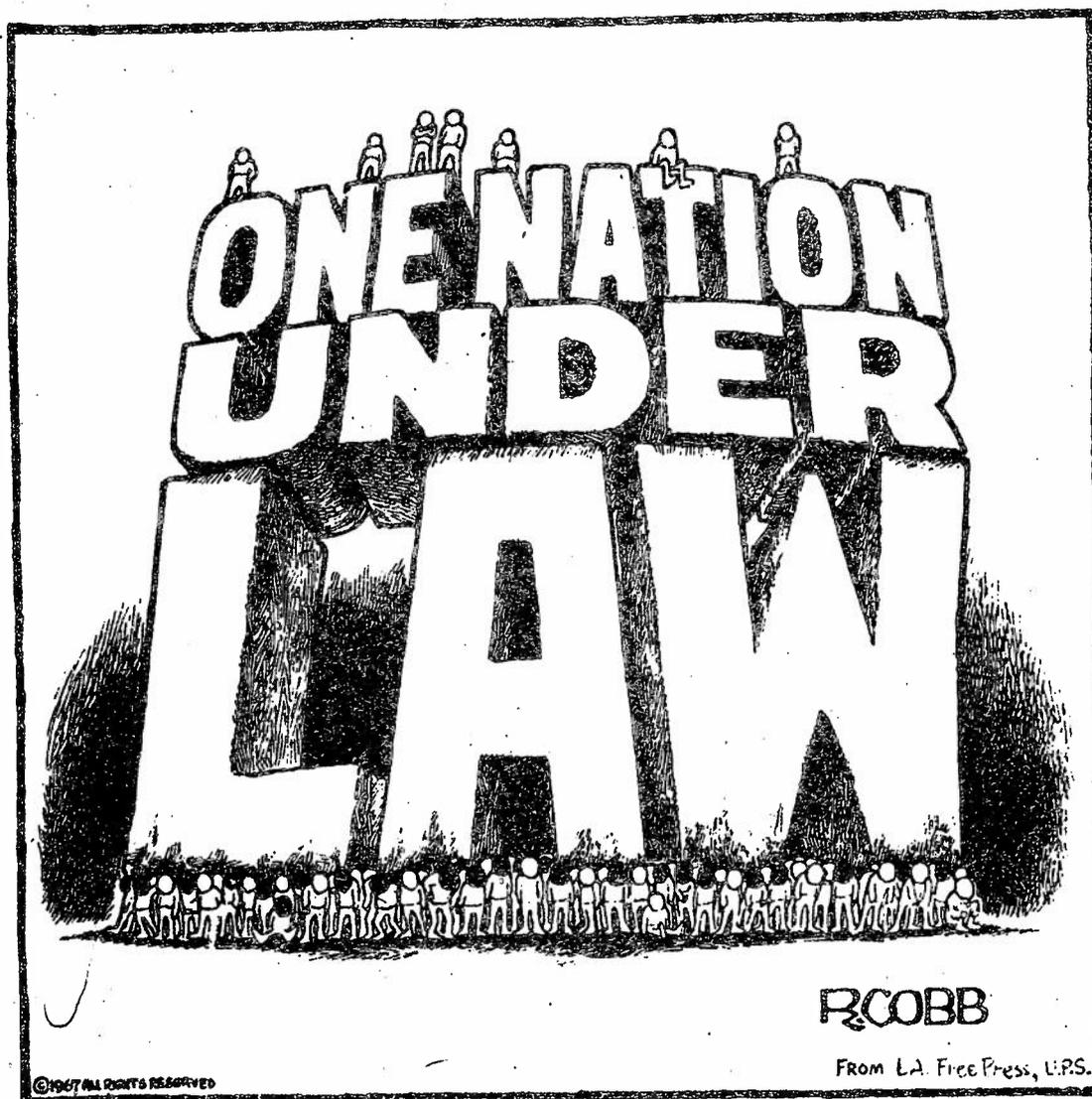
J.W.: Working conditions at the plants are deplorable. What's been happening over the last 15 or 20 years, especially in the auto industry, is the increase in productivity. A lot of people think of this as due to automation. But in most of the plants what's been happening is 'nigger-mation'. 'Nigger-mation' is simply when you hire 1 black man to do a job previously done by 2 or 3 or 4 white men. The foreman, the general foreman and the supervisor are constantly attempting to speed up the line. In their insatiable drive to make greater profits for the company, they have negated all considerations of the welfare and safety of the workers, especially the black workers. As a result, in the foundries, almost 95% of the workers have some sort of industrial illness, usually silicosis or other lung disease. In the stamping plants guys are walking around with 2 or 3 fingers missing from one of their hands because of the unsafe machinery.'

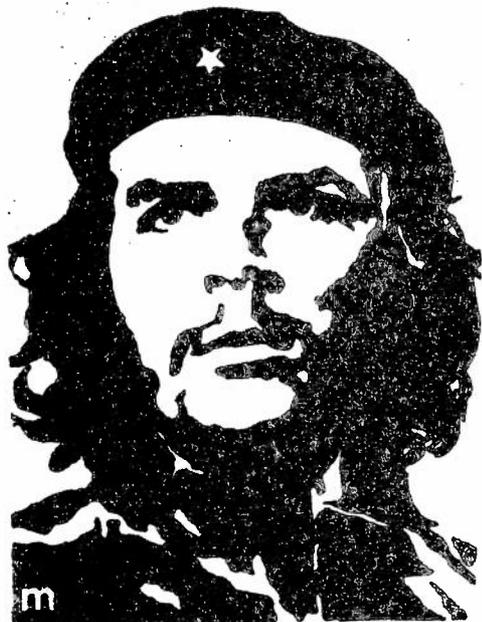
Reprinted from FIFTH ESTATE

The black workers in industry demand not only equality in pay but to be treated in dignity, as human beings, on the shop floor. They are fed up with being pushed around and they are not going to take it any longer without hitting back in an organised manner. This growing revolt in American industry is not directed against the white worker but against the racist practices and attitudes of white management and supervisors. However, the white worker too suffers abuse and indignity. He too is pushed around, not because he is white, but because he is an industrial worker in

a capitalist factory. White workers have been subjected to humiliation at work for so long that many of them almost got used to it. What the black workers are initiating in American industry today is a struggle against indignity and humiliation, and that is a much more revolutionary and socially explosive struggle than a battle over wages. 'Wages can be negotiated - dignity cannot' proclaims a leaflet issued by the United Black Brothers in Mahwah. The mere raising of that issue already undermines authority relations on the shop floor, and throughout the factory. The dignity of the worker and managerial authority are incompatible.

Compiled from: News and Letters,
U.B.B. Publications,
Speak Out, 14131 Woodward Ave., Detroit,
Wildcat, P.O. Box 9117, Chicago.





TWO,
THREE, MANY
S.D.S.s

June 1969

Upon arrival at the Chicago Coliseum, site of the Students for a Democratic Society convention, we stepped into a vast hall containing 1000 people, 500 of whom were standing up, red book in hand, chanting 'Mao, Mao, Mao Tse-tung' at the speaker who was addressing them.

After they had finished 500 others rose and began chanting 'Smash Racism'. The speaker meanwhile linked together a series of revolutionary-sounding phrases on racism which evoked more chants from different sections of the audience.

We might end our description of the SDS convention at this stage as it sums up most of the activity which occurred. Two factions, the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) and the Worker-Student Alliance (WSA, Progressive Labour-dominated) fought for control of SDS. Their weapons - Mao's Little Red Book of Quotations, Buttons with the Image of Mao on them, red armbands to signify the red guards and a Stalinist mentality.

ANOINTED BY MAO

For the better part of the first three days of the convention, all activity centred around these two factions both of whom claim to be anointed by Mao, both of whom have master plans for the overthrow of capitalism led by themselves as the vanguard Marxist-Leninist Party.

To the Worker-Student Alliance faction it was all a question of injecting class consciousness into every struggle. There was no black question in America, blacks were only super-exploited members of the working class. The same was true of the women's liberation struggle.

To the Revolutionary Youth Movement the main struggle is between U.S. imperialism and the national liberation struggles against it. In America this means the black liberation struggle. RYM hopes to develop a white revolutionary youth movement to parallel what the Black Panthers are doing.

'THE CORRECT LINE'

The debates of the first three days - on Imperialism and Racism - centred around who had 'the correct line' from Chairman Mao or Lin Piao on each of these questions. All debate was punctuated with the chanting of slogans from each side.

The only debate which would not 'fit' into the preconceived line was one on Women's liberation. Here neither side was sure of their 'line' and some independent discussion took place. This was especially true after the Black Panthers had come in to speak.

The RYM faction had invited the Black Panthers. It was hoped that this would embarrass the Progressive Labor people because Progressive Labor and the Panthers have been fighting. After attacking the policies of Progressive Labor to the accompaniment of RYM chants the Panthers then came out with some male chauvinistic statements, saying that the strategic position for women in the revolution was prone.

It was at this point that women at the convention could have become a real power. Many were unhappy with the Panther statements, but people in both WSA and RYM had not really taken the women's liberation movement seriously and therefore did not have any real answers. If women could have gotten together, a force independent of RYM and WSA might have emerged. Instead everyone made statements 'for' women's liberation and it became a political football.

One woman remarked, 'In women's liberation, we know that some of the worst male chauvinists in the movement can rap down the best line on women's liberation'.

Some tried to combat the degeneration of the convention into a shouting match between the two Maoist factions. Members of the Independent Socialist Club and Revolutionary Socialist Caucus of Chicago tried to have an independent caucus to discuss the dominance of Stalinism in SDS and figure out ways to combat it. In general these efforts were not successful.

THE SPLIT

On the third day of the convention the Panthers came back to the convention and made a more explicit attack on Progressive Labor, demanding that it be expelled from SDS. It was obvious that the RYM faction was using the Panthers to fight PL and that the Panthers were using SDS to get at one of their enemies.

At this point the convention split into two with RYM moving next door. This split now allowed more freedom of discussion within both factions and some independents who were against both factions had a chance to take the floor and speak in both rooms. The only decent discussion came at this period.

However, it was obvious that in both WSA and RYM authoritarian Maoists were still very much in the driver's seat. After 24 hours, RYM came back into the main convention room and proceeded to expel PL from SDS.

PL rejected the expulsion. On the last day of the convention two SDS organizations had elections.

BUY S.D.S. FOR BEST SUPPORT

The PL faction of SDS claims it will be non-exclusionist except for 'anti-communists', which presumably means those who don't support the thought of Chairman Mao.

The RYM was more explicit in its declaration of 'principles': exclusion of Progressive Labor, support of the struggles of the Black and Latin colonies within the U.S.; support for the National Liberation Front, and support for the governments of China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba, and wonder of wonders, Albania. All those unable to support these governments are no longer members of SDS. Long live Albania. I am sending my SDS card back to whichever faction wants it.

Reprinted from June-July issue of 'News and Letters' (415 Brainard St., Detroit, Mich. 48201)

ABOUT OUR OTHER SELVES

SOLIDARITY (Clydeside) have produced their second pamphlet, 'REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION'. This is a reprint of three articles appearing in 'Agitator' (Solidarity's predecessor) nos. 4 and 5 and in the first issue of Solidarity proper (vol.I, No.6).

Aberdeen's largest Ultra-left group, 'Solidarity' (Aberdeen) produced the first issue of their magazine in late July. As well as an introduction to the group and a comment on the May events in France, the magazine contains articles on the paper industry, the highly successful struggle of a Tenants' Committee and the current situation in the fishing industry. The trawlermen - normally non-militant and apathetic - have recently been on strike for nearly 3 months, in a remarkable demonstration of how fed-up they are with their low pay, dangerous and uncomfortable conditions and their useless union officials.

We look forward to further issues of this magazine.

THE NEW PROLETARIAT

'The class divisions in modern society are more and more divisions between order-givers and order-takers. The immense majority of individuals, whatever their qualifications or pay, are transformed into wage-earning 'executants', performing a broken-up labour, experiencing both alienation at work and the absurdity of society, and tending to revolt against them. In this respect office workers and those in similar occupations are less and less distinguished from manual workers; they begin to criticize and struggle against the system along the same lines. The crisis of culture and the decomposition of the values of capitalist society drive increasing numbers of intellectuals and students towards a radical criticism of the system as a whole.'

Modern Capitalism and Revolution, p.94.

'A great big barn of a place, full of noise and smoke and people. Inside were Irish labourers who'd put ink on their hands so that they could tell the girls they were clerks.'

Only When I Larf - Len Deighton

In the late 1950s, the heyday of Social Democracy, its ideologists argued the irrelevance of revolutionary (or indeed any) socialism on the grounds of the disappearance of the traditional, militant, class-conscious manual working class. It was proclaimed that the manual working class was approaching the 'middle class' in its standard of living, in its attitudes and in its politics. It was also held that its numerical dominance in modern capitalism was diminishing.

The 'embourgeoisement' thesis has been dealt with elsewhere (1) and will not here be submitted to further criticism. The second strand of the argument, however, is both valid and relevant to socialist theory and practice. I hope to show on the one hand that the traditional proletariat is slowly being transformed into a largely non-manual, white collar class and secondly that the conclusions to be drawn from this development are radically different from those suggested by bourgeois or social democratic theoreticians.

(1) See Modern Capitalism and Revolution by P. Cardan (pp.12-13). The thesis lingers on however. For a characteristically naive and crude version of it see J.K.Galbraith 'The New Industrial State' (Hamilton, 1967).

THE 'DISAPPEARANCE' OF THE WORKING CLASS

One of the distinctive features of modern capitalism is its ability - indeed its need - to transform itself at an unprecedented rate. Capitalist development in the last few decades has affected the structure of the working population in two ways:

1. There has been a decline of the old staple industries - coal, cotton, shipbuilding, railways and the like. Employment in these manufacturing and ancillary sectors has been partly replaced by the rapid expansion of, for example, engineering and electronics. Far more important, however, has been the growth of employment in the non-manufacturing, service sector. Here non-manual workers are necessarily employed in far greater proportions than in manufacturing industry.

2. There have been changes in the occupational structure of the labour force within manufacturing itself. The proportion of the labour force classified as 'administrative, technical and clerical' has risen from 16% in 1948 to 25.8% in 1967; (2) moreover, it is highest in progressive, expanding industries like chemicals and branches of engineering and lowest in the declining staples like textiles and clothing.

The net effect of these changes (an inevitable consequence of economic growth, technical progress, and the increased concentration of production in key manufacturing sectors into larger units) has been vastly to increase the importance of white-collar employment at the expense of manual occupations. (Incidentally, it has also been to reduce the importance of self-employment.) Nor is all this a new development as will be seen from the following figures: (3)

OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE BRITISH LABOUR FORCE

	<u>1911</u> %	<u>1951</u> %	<u>1961</u> %
1. Employers and Proprietors	6.7	5.0	4.7
2. All white-collar workers	18.7	30.9	35.9
a) managers and administrators	3.4	5.5	5.4
b) higher professionals	1.0	1.9	3.0
c) lower professionals and technicians	3.1	4.7	6.0
d) foremen and inspectors	1.3	2.6	2.9
e) clerks	4.5	10.4	12.7
f) salesmen and shop assistants	5.4	5.7	5.9
3. All manual workers	74.6	64.2	59.3

(2) D.E.P. Gazette, July 1968, p.557

(3) Adapted from G.S.Bain 'T.U. Growth and Recognition', Donovan Commission Research Paper No.6, p.5

The change is mirrored in the proportion of National Income paid out as salaries rather than as wages - though the distinction is not particularly clearcut. (4)

DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL INCOME

	<u>Wages and Forces</u> <u>pay</u> %	<u>Salaries</u> %	<u>Profits, Rents, etc.</u> %
1860 - 9	38.7	6.5	55.8
1910 - 4	40.5	16.2	43.2
1935 - 8	38.5	17.9	43.6
1960 - 3	39.4	23.1	37.5

Bain (5) estimates that white-collar workers will outnumber the manual working class sometime in the 1980's. (This has already happened in the U.S.) This will pose serious problems for those revolutionaries who still look on the working class as consisting solely of horny-handed sons of toil. (6) 'Workers' in the restricted, traditional, sense will no longer be a majority of the population, so that a proletarian revolution conceived in these terms can no longer be the act of the 'overwhelming majority of the people'. The class position of the white-collar workers thus arises as an issue of great importance.

THE 'NON-STRIKING CLASS'. (7)

Non-manual workers have traditionally seen themselves (and been seen by others) as fundamentally separate from the manual proletariat. Socialists of all types have concurred: white-collar workers are 'unproductive labour', 'intermediate strata', 'petit-bourgeois', or part of 'the aristocracy of labour'.(8) Their 'objective class position' is, at best, ambiguous; subjectively, a great gulf has divided them from manual workers.

(4) C. Feinstein in J. Marchal and B. Ducros, 'The Distribution of National Income' (Macmillan, 1968), p.119.

(5) loc. cit.

(6) An example of this type of traditional thinking (the identification of white-collar workers with the petty-bourgeoisie) can be found in International Socialism No.35 (Editorial 2, 'Politics and the Freeze', p.3) : 'The chief threat facing the revolutionary movement now comes from its own social composition - the threat of a petty-bourgeois (white-collar and student) revolutionary movement, cut off from the industrial base'. (my emphasis)

(7) See J. Bonham, 'The Middle-Class Voter' (Faber, 1954) for an entertaining account of the politics of white-collar workers.

(8) See E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Labouring Men' (Weidenfeld, 1964), chapter 15.

Several factors (listed below) supported such a view of their role.(9) But there are now other factors, dealt with further on, which lead to different conclusions.

1. Pay. White-collar workers have historically been in a privileged position as regards both the level and, more important, the security of their earnings. They have earned more than the great mass of manual workers (10) and have thus been able to enjoy a style of life more comfortable and less insecure than that of the man with the blue collar.

2. Promotion prospects. The possibilities of individual advancement have been greater for clerks, technicians and supervisors than for the majority of manual workers. The incentive for collective group action, let alone class action, has been correspondingly less. (11) So has the possibility of identification with those who don't have the prospect of 'moving up'.

3. Status: working conditions and job control. By and large, white-collar workers arrive at work later, work fewer hours, dress differently at work, and eat in separate (if not better!) canteens. Far more crucial, they have on the whole retained as individuals a greater degree of control over their jobs, and have been less subject to mechanisation, subdivision of work, speed-up, intensive supervision and ruthless discipline at work. The pressures for rationalisation and bureaucratisation of non-manual work have been fewer, weaker and slower to act. The size of the workplace is almost inevitably smaller, and the personal contact between worker and boss often far closer. There is the appearance, if nothing more, of being treated as a human being while at work.

Given this background, white-collar workers have understandably failed to identify themselves with the manual proletariat: the development of even the most rudimentary group consciousness has been inhibited by the circumstances in which they live and work. (Life for the non-manual worker was never a bed of roses, as any good Victorian novel will reveal - the point however is that in such conditions individual, private action is the most rational response to one's problems. Thus most white-collar workers have traditionally been apolitical and/or reactionary.) How, it might well be asked, can such a stratum - one hesitates to say class - have any revolutionary potential? (12)

(9) A very perceptive account is to be found in D.Lockwood 'The Black-coated Worker' (Allen, 1958).

(10) See G. Routh 'Occupation and Pay in Great Britain 1906-60' (Cambridge University Press, 1965).

(11) Just how important the prospect of promotion is for non-manual workers is shown by A.J.M. Sykes 'Some Differences in the Attitudes of Clerical and of Manual Workers', Sociological Review, November 1965.

(12) 'White Collar' by C. Wright Mills brilliantly reflects this conventional mixture of pity, condescension and despair. (O.U.P., 1951)

THE TRANSFORMATION OF WHITE COLLAR LABOUR

At the turn of the century such an analysis would have been largely justified. Since then, however, things have changed.

1. The pay differential already referred to has narrowed drastically. In many cases it has in fact been reversed. (13) The massive expansion of education in the 20th century has ensured that the supply of non-manual labour has risen even faster than the demand. Even the security of white-collar employment, once perhaps its most attractive feature, is less obvious with the advent of general full employment and of specifically white-collar redundancies.

2. Although concrete evidence is lacking, it seems a priori probable that the prospects of individual advancement for white collar workers are shrinking. The sharp decline in the proportion of self-employed to the total occupied population is cutting off one outlet. Bureaucratic selection procedures in giant corporations, often depending more on the possession of educational qualifications than on a record of loyal, undistinguished service, are damming up another. In the era of the expert and the graduate, the self-made man will surely find his rise from the ranks more difficult. (14)

3. Above all, non-manual work is becoming subject to the same 'rationalisation' and bureaucratisation that hit the shop floor (in the form of 'Scientific Management') half a century ago. (15) This can be partly attributed to the sheer expansion in the number of white collar workers, and to their increasing concentration at the workplace.

Assessment and remuneration, formerly based on personal knowledge of individuals, is giving way to impersonal procedures (salary scales, job evaluation). The number of rungs in the ladder of authority is increasing. White-collar pay forms a vastly greater proportion of total costs, so that greater emphasis must be placed on the 'efficient utilisation' of this type of labour. As a result work study invades the office. The mechanisation and subdivision of routine clerical tasks, for example, is progressing rapidly. The medium term effects of computers on office work may be enormous. Even that most personal - even genteel - of occupations, that of the shop assistant, has been revolutionised in the last 50 years. The development of multiple retail chains, and the overriding domination of national advertising of branded goods, makes the supermarket increasingly resemble a factory.

(13) See G. Routh, op. cit., p.104. It is only fair to point out that there is some evidence that this process has reached its limit.

(14) cf. the recent, well-publicised emphasis on 'professionalism' in the Civil Service.

(15) The transformation from crude sweating to a more subtle form of exploitation is well described in E.J.Hobsbawm 'Custom, Wages and Workload in 19th century Industry', chapter 17 of 'Labouring Men'.

Thus white collar wage-earners are coming to 'enjoy' the same type of working conditions, to suffer the same indignities, and to be subject to the same attacks as the manual proletariat. There is less and less justification for treating them as an 'intermediate stratum' in any sense of the word. As members of an oppressed and exploited class they are objectively at least in an increasingly similar position to that of the manual workers.

An important question remains however. Is there any evidence that non-manual workers are beginning to recognise their new class position, or are they still permeated by 'false consciousness' of their role in modern capitalism?

WHITE COLLAR MILITANCY

It is clearly no accident that the history of white collar unionism parallels that of the increasingly bureaucratic domination of their working lives. In the Civil Service, for example, unions first emerged in the last quarter of the 19th century, the period in which nepotism and corruption disappeared and were replaced by a rigidly bureaucratic (in the strict sociological sense of the term) and vastly expanded Service. (16)

Bank clerks showed their first signs of militancy in the period immediately following the great wave of bank amalgamations in the 1900's when the 'Big Five' grew out of the old, family-controlled country banks. (17) Railway clerks were among the first non-manual workers to unionise at the end of the last century: their employers were large, relatively efficient by 19th century standards, and extremely cost-conscious. (18)

The current wave of white collar militancy has affected draughtsmen, bank clerks, insurance workers, airline pilots, teachers, technicians and many more. It comes in a period in which the occupational and industrial structure of the labour force has been changing more rapidly than ever before, in which the concentration of the production and distribution of many goods and services has intensified, in which bureaucratic rationalisation is being applied to white collar work for the first time on a mass scale, in which the costs of the reorganisation of the British capitalist economy have been imposed on manual and non-manual workers alike, and in which 'restraint' has been applied to office salaries as well as to industrial wages.

(16) B.V. Humphries, 'Clerical Unions in the Civil Service' (Blackwell, 1958).

(17) R. Blackburn, 'Unionisation and Social Class' (Batsford, 1967).

(18) D. Lockwood, op. cit.

These tendencies are unlikely to be halted and the radicalisation of white collar workers is likely to progress even further. All this would seem to bear out my basic argument: that vast layers of non-manual workers are being assimilated, objectively and subjectively, into the ranks of the working class. The employers are in no doubt as to the threat that this implies. (19) While some are thinking in terms of repression, others are already thinking in terms of 'integrationist' concessions to the newly emerging forces (see for instance the document 'In Place of Strife'). One of the by-products of all this is an out-pouring of academic studies on white collar unions!

The bureaucracies of the manual workers' unions also see the threat quite clearly. This was shown most obviously in the full-page advertisement placed in the national papers in January 1969 - at the height of the ASTMS and CAWU 'recognition' strikes - by the officials of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation. In these adverts, the officials boasted that there had been 'no official strike in the steel industry for 43 years', that 'the few unofficial stoppages had been very firmly handled', and that recognition of white collar unions in the steel industry would be 'a body blow aimed at responsible trade union leadership'. But as usual most 'revolutionaries' seem less aware of the implications of a changing social reality than those (employers and union bureaucrats) they are struggling against!

CONCLUSIONS

The dissolution of the former peasant and independent-producer classes led to the emergence of the traditional manual proletariat. Its development was slow and uneven, its political consciousness volatile, its industrial militancy sporadic and fragmented. The development of the white-collar proletariat is unlikely to differ greatly in these basic features.

(19) A confidential document was issued some time ago to member organisations by the British Employers Confederation. The document warned of the danger of the growth of trade unions among white collar workers. The Guild of Insurance Officials got hold of the document and made it public in the editorial of its paper 'Cover Note' (December 17, 1964). After deploring the growing tendency for staff workers to join trade unions the employers' document goes on:

'It is recognised that staff unions, because of the type of workers they represent, are generally more articulate, more militant, and more effective than manual workers' unions and that any development of staff unionism on a major scale will present serious problems for employers' ... 'Even if recognition were granted to a staff union, this need not include the negotiation of wages and conditions of employment, but might be limited to informal discussions or to the laying down of procedure for dealing with requests and complaints' ... 'There is a danger however that once a staff association has been recognised for any purpose at all as representing the interests of staff workers, it will be encouraged to press for the full rights of negotiation'.

Vast numbers of white collar workers (as indeed of manual workers) remain indifferent to what is happening to them, backward, isolated, easy to manipulate and hence - at least at a superficial level - often downright reactionary. This is not a cheering prospect for revolutionaries but it would be pointless to deny it. There are moreover factors clearly operating in an opposite direction.

The immediate task must be to break down the artificial barriers imposed by the ruling class for its own protection. This means more than attempting to unite white collar militants by showing them the common interests in their own struggles. It involves nothing less than the destruction of the ideological premisses - in peoples' minds - separating mental and manual labour. It involves an onslaught against one of the most deeply rooted bourgeois mystifications. In concrete terms, and to start with, it involves the eradication of scabbing by white collar workers in manual workers' strikes, and solidarity by the former when the latter are in struggle. It involves stressing, in theory and practice, the fight for job control irrespective of the colour of a man's collar.

Perhaps the most urgent problem is that of changing the attitudes of many socialists, who seem to suffer a mental block when confronted with the proposition that non-manual workers are proletarians in their own right. On a tactical level a substantial amount of fresh thinking is involved. Forms of struggle suited to car workers or dockers will not be universally applicable to laboratory technicians or draughtsmen. Lines of managerial attack or resistance will undoubtedly differ. The official hierarchy of many white collar unions has a veneer of militancy rather thicker than that of some manual workers' unions, but this is unlikely to survive their 'recognition' and subsequent absorption into capitalism's industrial police force: the NUT provides an excellent example of this. The need for independent rank and file organisation and initiative is as great here as anywhere else. The task is enormous. But for all the problems involved, the prospect of the new proletarians is one which can give our rulers no joy, and revolutionaries new opportunities.

John King.

'Dr. Anatol Rapoport of the University of Michigan said there was not necessarily any profound psychological difference between the corporation executive and the racketeer. "The only difference between a racket and a legitimate business is that the latter operates within the letter of existing statutory law" he added. "It is only a legislative accident that the tobacco and liquor industries are 'businesses' while narcotics are dispensed by 'crime syndicates'. The goals are both the same - to expand the market, to design operations for maximum efficiency, to maintain autonomy".'

'The Guardian' (17/8/68), reporting an American Congress on Mental Health.

REVIEWS



ULTRA-LEFTISM IN BRITAIN by Betty Reid. Published by the Communist Party, 16 King Street, WC2.

In 1934 the C.P.G.B. (in the guise of one R.F. Andrews) published a pamphlet called 'The Truth about Trotsky'. In 1943 King Street (in the guise of one John Mahon) published 'Hitlers' Agents Exposed'. Today the chickens have come home to roost. Or rather they have gone forth and multiplied. 'Hitlers' agents' today outnumber Stalin's, and the C.P. has to publish a new pamphlet on an old theme: 'Ultra-leftism in Britain'.

This pamphlet, signed by professional hack Betty Reid, takes to task 'that large number of young people influenced by one or other of these ('ultra-left') theories - but who are genuinely seeking a way to end capitalism'. She is dimly aware that the Party is in a state of advanced organisational and ideological putrefaction and that the odours emanating from it are actually deterring people from joining it. In an exquisitely worded phrase she points out: 'the aftermath of the revelations of the 20th Congress ... have naturally had their effect in diminishing the enormous attraction and mobilising power which would otherwise have come ... from the staggering achievements of 50 years of socialism'. What she really means is that if Russia is the wave of the future, lots of us are looking for dry land!

The pamphlet differs from most other exercises in Stalinist apologetics in that the author has done a fair amount of home work. Gone are the days when abuse and expulsion were substitutes for argument.

Although Miss Reid does her best, it is unfortunately not quite good enough. True she is aware of sundry fascinating esoterica (Pabloism sine Pablo (p.30) - Trotskyist maciism as proclaimed by the Revolutionary Workers Party (p.31) - strange encounters with supporters of I.S. disguised 'as members of local Labour Parties' (p.33). But on other matters she is distinctly weak. Max Shachtman (persistently spelt Schactman) did not characterise the Soviet Union as 'state capitalist' (p.32) but as a 'bureaucratic collectivist' society. The Socialist Party of Great Britain is not, and never has been, a Trotskyist organisation (p.32). It is an organisation which, like the Communist Party, believes in the parliamentary road to Socialism. Solidarity did not have 'essentially anarcho-syndicalist roots' (p.32). Whatever its present inclinations, its roots were clearly in the marxist movement. Etc., etc.

Miss Reid's little pamphlet will fail in its whitewashing task. Of Solidarity she says: 'the total effect of (their) theories (the hostility to all other organisations of the left, especially the Communist Party, the deep hostility to the Socialist countries) is to divide and disarm the

working class movement'. We would claim the very opposite. For revolutionaries 'deep hostility' to the Communist Party and the 'socialist' countries is a hallmark of a libertarian vision of socialism, a proof of demystification, and a guarantee that we will not exchange one tyranny for another. On this basis, the widest unity should be possible.

M. B.

DEMOCRACY IN THE MOTOR INDUSTRY. Published by Institute of Workers' Control, 91, Goldsmith Street, Nottingham. (5/-)

This booklet consists of contributions to the 7th Conference on Workers' Control held on 29/30 March 1969, at Sheffield. The authors are T. Tuckfield, a Divisional Organiser of DATA; Ernest Mandel, an economist and editor of the Belgian trotskyist weekly 'La Gauche'; Tony Topham, a lecturer in Industrial Relations; Stan Newens, a Labour M.P.; Ken Coates; and Sid Harroway, Convenor at Ford's, Dagenham.

Only 2½ pages of the 58-page pamphlet are actually by a car worker. (Everyone would like to see more academics contributing towards working class struggle, but this is ridiculous!) As Ken Coates says in his introduction about someone else: 'stewards are almost certainly not prone to take their cues from academics, however disgracefully subversive they might be'.

The pamphlet provides some interesting statistics, but its contents betray its origins. It consistently identifies the interests of car workers with those of the union hierarchies which claim to represent them. To mention one example: the solution to the international consolidation of motor manufacture is seen as the strengthening of the international committees set up by the I.C.F.T.U. and the drawing into them of the unions of the communist-led W.F.T.U. How unions which fail to represent workers on a national level will, by some miraculous dialectical leap, work wonders on a world scale is not explained. I prefer to agree with Peter Nicholas, convenor of Rover's, who in his verbal contribution to the Conference stressed the need for an international car workers' conference, with the emphasis on shop floor contact, not official links at a bureaucratic level.

K. W.

SHOWS PROMISE...

A general knowledge test given to a 16-year-old Birmingham applicant for a factory job included 'Complete the saying - more haste, less -----'. After some thought he wrote: 'Overtime'.

SOLIDARITY (SOUTH LONDON)

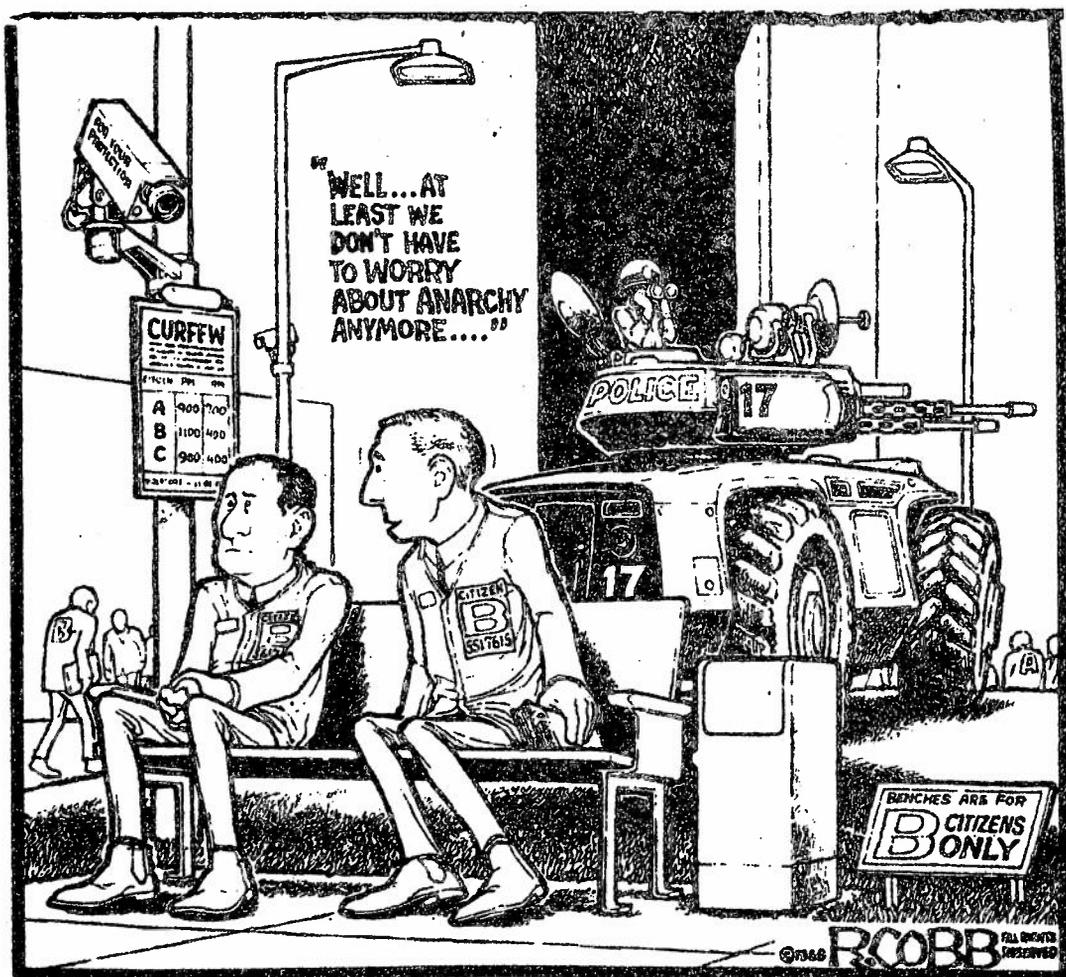
Issue No.5 contains articles on DRAX, Dungeness and Fawley Power Stations, the TUC versus the workers, Fiat (Italy), etc. Copies from A. Mann, 79 Balfour Street, London SE17.

ULSTER (continued from p. 2)

boundaries within which self-determination is to take place. There are no historical reasons why the claims of 'Ireland' should be supported, while those of Ulster, Scotland, or Sark are denied. The gerrymander by which the Ulster Unionists get 1/3 of the vote and 2/3 of the seats on the Londonderry Council pales into insignificance compared to the International Marxist Bolshimander. But the 'revolutionaries' have already decided that Irish Nationalism is a progressive force. (Anyone who has been progressively beaten up by the Gardai will confirm.)

The tragedy is that with all this opportunistic nonsense the Trad Revs. only succeed in reinforcing the idea implanted in the thinking of many Protestant workers by the Orange bourgeoisie that socialists work hand-in-glove with the Papacy. It may seem a ludicrous belief to many, but the behaviour of Irish socialists and their British co-thinkers in the past has made this a tenable proposition. Many Protestant workers have a healthy aversion to the theocracy in the south. All this is the more tragic because many of them are not bosses' men: the Harland and Wc f men are as militant as most other British shipbuilders.

Implicit in the attitudes of these 'revolutionaries' is the notion that the traditional loyalties (Protestant=Unionist, Catholic=Nationalist) will be maintained. If this is the case, is there any point in self-determination? Such self-determination would have nothing to do with socialism and the battle for anything worthwhile would already be lost.



APPEAL

Volume 6 begins with this, our fifty-ninth, issue. It has taken us over 8 years to get this far. Our magazine is now one of three co-equal papers produced by autonomous Solidarity groups. This is a sign of our gradual emergence as a national movement, rather than a small group based on London.

One of the main tasks of what is now the North London group has been the production of a steady stream of theoretical and agitational pamphlets. As the response to our ideas develops, this job has expanded. We are now in the throes of realising our biggest project ever: a 70,000-word paperback; 'The Bolsheviki and Workers Control, 1917-1921'. The book deals with this whole area in depth, bringing to light many long-forgotten texts and resurrecting several controversies of great relevance to the world of today.

Producing this book (type-setting, paper, printing and binding) will set us back nearly £500. Although we have been able to raise part of this sum both internally and with the help of some good friends, we badly need more money. The book will cost 5/- and we hope gradually to recover production costs, once sales get going. In the meantime we appeal to all our readers to send us as much as they can afford, either as loans or as gifts, so that publication will not be delayed. (All loans or gifts will be acknowledged.)

AUTONOMOUS 'SOLIDARITY' GROUPS

ABERDEEN : c/o P. Roy, 138 Walker Road, Aberdeen.

CLYDESIDE : c/o D. Kane, 43 Valeview Terrace, Dumbarton

LONDON (North) : c/o H. Russell, 53A Westmoreland Rd., Bromley, Kent.

LONDON (South) : c/o A. Mann, 79 Balfour Street, London SE17.