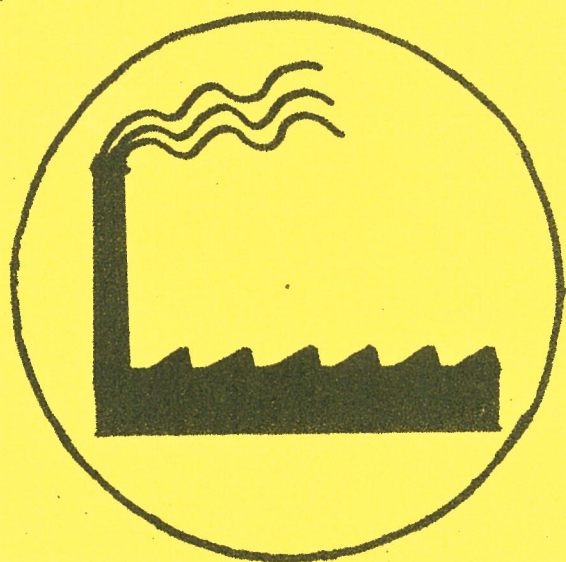


solidarity

north west



A WOMAN'S PLACE

BUILDING WORKERS
FIGHT BACK

TURNERS ASBESTOS GETS
UNION CO-OPERATION

NO SMOKING IN LANCASTER

MAIL ORDER MILLIONS

AS WE SEE IT

COMPREHENSIVES — WHAT DO WE WANT ?

volume 1. number 1

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EDITORIAL

This is the first regular issue of North West Solidarity.

You can read what we stand for in the statement below. The paper is our way of making these principles into a reality.

We want to spread news about the struggle of people - people as workers, people as tenants, people as students, all people fighting against a total system which oppresses them.

That's what we're here for -- **SOLIDARITY!**

AS WE SEE IT

1. Throughout the world, the vast majority of people have no control whatsoever over the decisions that most deeply and directly affect their lives. They sell their labour power while others who own or control the means of production, accumulate wealth, make the laws and use the whole machinery of the state to perpetuate and reinforce their **privileged** positions.
2. During the past century the living standards of working people have improved. But neither these improved living standards, nor the nationalisation of the means of production, nor the coming to power of parties claiming to represent the working class have basically altered the status of the worker as a worker. Nor have they given the bulk of mankind much freedom outside of production. East and West, capitalism remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work, and manipulated in consumption and leisure. Propaganda and policemen, prisons and schools, traditional values and traditional morality all serve to reinforce the power of the few and to convince or coerce the many into acceptance of a brutal, degrading and irrational system. The 'Communist' world is not communist and the 'Free' world is not free.
3. The Trades Unions and the traditional parties of the Left started in business to change all this. But they have come to terms with the existing pattern of exploitation. In fact they are now essential if the exploiting society is to continue working smoothly. The Unions act as middle-men in the labour market. The political parties use the struggles and aspirations of the working class for their own ends.

The degeneration of working class organisations, itself the failure of the revolutionary movement, has been a major factor in creating working class apathy, which has in turn led to the further degeneration of both parties and unions.

4. The Trades Unions and political parties cannot be reformed, 'captured' or converted into instruments of working class emancipation. We don't call however for the proclamation of new unions, which in the conditions of today would suffer a similar fate to the old ones. Nor do we call for militants to tear up their union cards. Our aims are simply that the workers themselves should decide on the objectives of their struggles should remain firmly in their own hands. The forms which this self-activity of the working class will take will vary considerably from country to country and from industry to industry. Its basic content will remain the same.
5. Socialism is not just the common ownership and control of the means of production and distribution. It means equality, real freedom, reciprocal recognition and radical transformation in all human relations. It is man's positive self-consciousness. It is man's understanding of his environment and of himself, his domination over his work and over such social institutions as he may need to create. These are not secondary aspects which will automatically follow the expropriation of the old ruling class. On the contrary, they are an essential part of the whole process of social transformation, without this no change will take place.
6. A Socialist society can therefore only be built from below. Decisions concerning production and work will be taken by workers councils composed of elected and revocable delegates. Decisions in other areas will be taken on the basis of the widest possible discussion and consultation among the people as a whole. This democratisation of society down to its very roots is what we mean by workers power.
7. Meaningful Action, for revolutionaries is what ever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the egalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. Sterile and harmful action is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others - even those allegedly acting on their behalf.

8. No ruling class in history has ever relinquished its power without a struggle and our present rulers are unlikely to be an exception. Power will only be taken from them through the conscious, autonomous action of the vast majority of the people themselves. The building of socialism will require mass understanding and mass participation. By their rigid hierarchical structure, by their ideas and their activities both social democratic and bolshevik types of organisations discourage this kind of understanding and prevent this kind of participation. The idea that socialism can somehow be achieved by an elite party (however revolutionary), acting on behalf of the working class is both absurd and reactionary.

9. We do not accept the view that by itself the working class can only achieve a trade union consciousness. On the contrary we believe that its conditions of life and its experiences in production constantly drive the working class to adopt priorities and values and to find methods of organisation which challenge the established patterns of thought. These responses are implicitly socialist. On the other hand, the working class is fragmented, dispossessed of the means of communication, and its various sections are at different levels of awareness and consciousness. The task of the revolutionary organisation is to help give proletarian consciousness an explicitly socialist content, to give practical assistance to workers in struggle and to help those in different areas to exchange experiences and link up with one another.

10. We do not see ourselves as yet another leadership but merely as an instrument of working class action. The function of Solidarity is to help all those who are in conflict with the present authoritarian social structure, both in industry and in society at large, to generalise their experience, to make a total critique of their condition and its causes, and to develop the mass revolutionary consciousness necessary if society is to be totally transformed.

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Available from North West Solidarity- "Mail Order Millions".

Our first industrial pamphlet examining the mail order firms and the people who work in them.

Available from 102 Carter St.
Manchester 13.

Price 6d.
(plus postage).

4.

(North West Solidarity has just published its first industrial pamphlet, on Mail Order Firms in the Bolton area. This is the reaction of one worker in a Mail Order Firm.)

MAIL ORDER MILLIONS

Dear Sir,

I must admire your courage on your outspoken article on 'Mail Order Millions'. I work in the agencies office of BMO and believe me sometimes its reminiscent of Victorian times. No smoking at work, a (petty officer) in charge of the 'ladies' who raps on the door if she thinks you are taking too long. Every six months we get our bonus, equal to 2 weeks pay and if we are a few minutes late we get docked 1/6th of the bonus = 1 months bonus. The management wouldn't allow us 3/4 hour for our Christmas Dinner for which we paid 2/6 and ran several raffles for extra's. This is part time workers I'm talking about. We would have to clock out a 12 o' clock instead of 1 o'clock so lose an hour. We wouldn't accept this and demanded our 2/6 back which we got 5 weeks later. To qualify for our bonus if we had half a day off we had to produce a doctors certificate. I wrote a letter to the Manchester Evening News, who printed it, about this certificate business. I went to the Medical staff at the National Health building and they said they could do nothing about it because it was an incentive bonus scheme.

You say most women work for cars and the luxuries of life, at least they are working for these and luxury surely isn't the prerogative of the rich. But believe me the majority of women have had to return to work to keep up with the cost of living. Council house tenants who paid 22/6 a week are now paying £4, with rising cost of fuel, food etc., their husbands wages are inadequate. The strain and tension of these women is to be seen to be believed. Morning workers can work to 2.45, their break is 10.15 - 10.25 am. If we work until 2 o'clock, we clock out but if we work until 2.45 the supervisor has to sign them out!

Workers get 4/- in the £1 off their orders but staff orders have to be in by 10 O'clock, 1 day a week. Supervisors get 8/- in the £1 off their purchases! If you have worked there 3 years, you get 3 extra days which have to be taken between certain dates and they have

to fit in with the other working staff. After 5 years we get an extra weeks holiday.

I've suggested a mass 'pens down' but didn't get much support. S.E.T. is another factor that keeps part time staff there, not many jobs are available at the hours that are most convenient. The bosses know this and play on it. I couldn't care less, I do what I consider a fair days work and nobody is going to bully me into panic rushing. Individually, I've not been picked on but I wouldn't have any qualms on telling officials to roll up their sleeves and get on with it themselves. The union didn't expend much effort in trying to recruit members. Meetings were messed about, nobody was notified, until the few who did join got cheeced off.

Yours,

Mrs

(Name and address supplied)

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DURING THE FRENCH revolution the real force which overthrew the old feudal aristocracy was the Parisian working class. However as the revolution progressed, the workers saw themselves being sold down the river by the arising bourgeoisie. Many songs were written at the time and later about the sellout of the revolution, this is an extract from one of them:

"We've got new Generals, our leaders are new,
They sit and they argue and all that they do,
Is sell their own colleagues, or ride upon their backs,
Or jail them or shoot them or give them all the axe.

They're screaming in language that no-one understands
About the rights that we grab with our own bleeding hands,
When we wiped out the bosses and stormed through the wall
Of the prison they told us would outlast us all. "

.....

NOW AVAILABLE- "The great Flint sit-down strike against General Motors". One shilling plus postage.

The story of one of the longest, hardest and most violent strikes in the history of the labour movement, and one in which the workers took on General Motors, the State and Federal Governments, the Police, the National Guard and the Army- and they won.

From H. Russell, 53a Westmoreland Rd. Bromley, Kent.

Union "Co-operation" at Turner & Newall

Turner and Newall are regarded as one of the 'top companies'. The Unit Trusts lavish millions of pounds of investors money on them in the sure knowledge of a high return (eleven and a half million pounds last year). Like most 'top companies', Turners survive by exploiting the rules of the capitalist game to the full.

They employ a high proportion of immigrant labour - Irish, West Indian, Polish - with each group concentrated in a different shop. There's also a fantastic turnover, so job organisation is difficult. This summer, the blokes on the 'heavy gang', (the unloader's section) - on 6/3 an hour - brought out a broadsheet which advocated joining the Union (in this case T & G). By the time three issues had come out, at approximately fortnightly intervals, the management was becoming progressively more hysterical - the lockers of the men on the heavy gang were searched, several of them were searched on their way INTO the factory. The union officials were unhappy - at the distribution of a union recruiting sheet! When the lads joined and put in a wage claim, it was rejected by the management, and a militant sacked - he got his cards through the post, as he was on the sick list at the time! Union full-timer Bro. Cox, District organiser of the T & G (and just due for promotion), called on the management without bothering at first to see the shop-steward, although after $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour he was allowed to be present.

The management produced a copy of a 'libertarian marxist' document - which must have been stolen from the militant's jacket while it was in his locker - read extracts from 'HeavyGang' No 3, the ostensible reason for the bloke's dismissal (although 'Heavy Gang' No 3 was not published until two days after the letter of dismissal was sent). Accordingly, the union official subsequently informed the shop-steward that, since the dismissal was on political grounds, no action would be taken. The shop-steward was also instructed not to see the militant again.

(Maybe they think he's a corrupting influence!)

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BUILDING — no more WORKERS self-outs!

7.

The Building Unions are engaged in negotiating a pay claim which could very well lead to the biggest sell out in the history of the trade.

The last offer from the employers, which has in fact just been turned down, was for 4½d an hour increase in November 1969, the same in November 1970 and a further 4½d in November 1971. This would bring the basic wage up to £18/2/0 with a further £2 minimum earnings payment for jobs where no bonus is paid. The pay offer as it stands is an insult, but it is bound up with enough strings to tie the lads hand and foot for ever.

Before they actually rejected the proposals the union leaders asked for time to consult their members. The A.S.W.* in fact called a series of regional conferences to allow delegates to accept or reject the proposals, but the conferences were in reality an utter sham. The proposal the delegates were allowed to vote on was to the effect that the conference supports the Executive's rejection of the employers pay offer as being inadequate. Not a word about the strings! At the conference which was recently held in Manchester the delegates overwhelmingly rejected the offer. The Executive — in their usual democratic way — refused to accept any motions from the floor, thus preventing the delegates from objecting to the strings. It seems from this that the leaders intend to leave a way open to accept an amended offer which may very well be little different to the present one, strings and all.

LOSING MEMBERS

The likelihood of a sell out is all too real. Over the years these union leaders have sold us out time and again. Only last year they won a 3d an hour rise, only to give back a penny of it when the Prices and Incomes Board said it was too much. This kind of grovelling has led to a steady decline in union membership over the past few years. As a matter of fact the Building Group is the only section of the T.U.C. which has lost members — every other section has been gaining members steadily. The only time the union leaders have ever taken a tough line has been when militants in the industry have been expelled for doing the job we elected the executives to do.

This steady fall in members must surely show even the thickest of union bureaucrats that the lads no longer have any faith in their ability to win better pay and conditions. Disillusionment with the officials is widespread and the old

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Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers

8.

cry "Vote for left-wing officials" has been exposed as futile.

Time and again "left-wingers" have been elected, but as soon as they have been asked to take any militant action, they have ducked, claiming they would lose their jobs!

If you have your tools stolen or some firm is withholding some bonus payment you have earned, then you may get some help, but don't expect a lead in any real struggle.

In fact the building unions are now so weak and ineffective that the only chance they have of making an official strike successful is by relying on the very militants they have been condemning for years.

THE LOST PENNY

When the penny was taken away, feeling was very high on the sites and any call from the "leadership" would have been supported on every site in the country, but of course the call never came. The penny went, and with it went a lot of members. The rest of the men were fragmented and dispirited. The bosses were naturally delighted. Any union which will accept a wage cut without even the pretence of a fight is no threat to anyone. The way was wide open to the employers to dictate their own terms in any future wage claim, and this is exactly what they are doing.

If we are to make any gains at all the first thing we must do is to forget about the leadership. To be at all effective, organisation must be at the job level. The only way to get action is to take it! Solidarity with our mates on the job is the only way of fighting the bosses- it is useless to rely on officials who have only been consistent in one thing- their failure to deliver the goods.

IT'S UP TO US

The feeling on many big sites gives grounds for optimism. Building workers everywhere are saying that in the event of an offer being accepted which resembles the present one, unofficial action will be the only thing left for us. The dustmen have recently made gains as a result of rank and file action. Even though they didn't get all they wanted they have gained more than we have been offered. These were workers who have no real experience of struggle, yet they put up a magnificent fight. We in the building trade with our long history of rank and file action and the experience we have gained in day to day fights at job level are far better equipped. It is up to us to mount a battle which will not only gain us an economic victory but will also give us back the dignity and self respect we lost when we let them take away the penny.

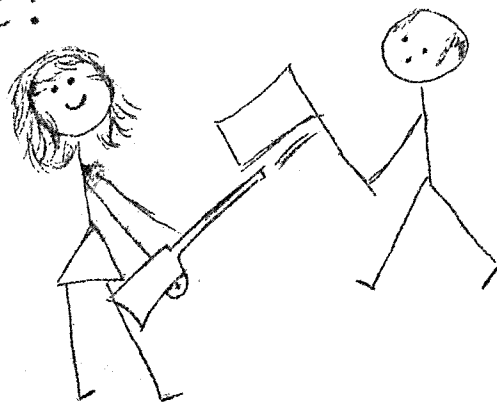
A. Naylor. (A.S.W.)

a Woman's Place?

by CHRISTINE SUMNER.

Working class revolutionaries scream for social justice and worker's power: Black militants fight to overthrow white domination: but when the 'woman question' is posed many of these 'socialists' take up a paternalistic position, and expose themselves for the reactionaries they really are.

While they are prepared to overthrow most aspects of society they almost invariably regard women as being very nice and very good in their way, but slightly inferior. Everytime a man talks in terms of 'treating HIS woman well and with respect' he is expressing the exact same outlook as that of a progressive employer talking about HIS workers, or an enlightened slave owner talking about HIS slaves.



We demand to be treated as full and equal human beings. Men have been fighting for generations for better working conditions ----- women have a different type of boss. Women militants are in many ways in the same sort of position as industrial militants find themselves when faced with a considerate and paternalistic boss. The average working class housewife relies on her husband for just about everything she has. Her standard of living is determined not only by her husband's income, but also to a large extent by his sense, or lack of responsibility. How much she spends on clothes, the type of house she lives in, the whole quality of her life; all these things are of course largely controlled by her husband's income, but within this broad framework whether or not a woman gets a fair share of this income is dependant upon the personality of her husband.

Even in homes where both husband and wife are socialists it is usually the man who goes out to meetings, the assumption presumably being that he is the more intelligent and has more to contribute. A North London Solidarity member, who shall be nameless, recently stated that women are in left wing politics for one of two reasons. They are either emotionally involved with a revolutionary, or they are looking for a husband! I am sorry, comrade, but you are not the kind of revolutionary I want beside me at the barricades. The Russian revolution was a failure in that the workers never achieved any real power: but even

a revolution in which the workers did gain real control would be abortive if women were still expected to stay home and mind the baby afterwards.

Generations of women have accepted their place in society because they were conditioned not to expect any more from life than having kids and being kept in slavery for ever. The fact that this slavery may or may not have been comfortable is completely irrelevant. It is surely quite indefensible that any human being should be subject to domination by another, particularly when this domination is based on something as arbitrary as the sex one happens to be born into. In spite of this, men are surprised that an increasing number of women are not prepared to tolerate their present role in society. They expect more, and they will fight to get it.

To talk in terms of a socialist society in which women are not totally emancipated is as nonsensical as to talk about the old Greek City States being democracies, when their whole way of life was based on a system of slave labour. In a true socialist society, all forms of superiority, whether based on class, colour or sex must be abolished.

A WOMAN'S PLACE IS WHEREVER SHE WANTS IT TO BE.

"COMRADES! Your meetings are unbearable! You are riddled with inhibitions which you have to release as aggression against comrades who say something stupid, or something you already know. These aggressions are only partially the result of insight into the stupidity of the other side. Why don't you at least admit that you are exhausted from the strain of the last year, that you don't know how to bear the stress any longer, that you consume your physical and intellectual energies without getting any pleasure from them? Why don't you discuss, before you plan your campaigns, how they can be carried out? Why don't you all buy Reich*? Why do you speak here about the class struggle and at home about the difficulties of orgasm? Is this not a subject for the S.D.S?

Helke Sanders (German Women's Liberation Movement)

* Reich - a German writer specialising in the subject of sex and dominance.

S.D.S. - German revolutionary students' organisation

NO SMOKING!

11.

In November 1968 a council estate in Lancaster called the Marsh Estate was made a 'smokeless zone'. This policy which can alleviate one of the minor problems of industrialism just proved to be an example of the way councils up and down the country fail to serve the people they are meant to represent.

The scheme involved a number of problems. One was the higher cost of smokeless fuel: whereas these houses could previously have been heated with ordinary fuel for about 24/- a week, tenants were now finding themselves spending about 35/- on smokeless fuel. In a low-income area such as Lancaster a rise of 11/- on the weekly budget is no joke.

These people were, however, the luckier ones! Many of the tenants were unable to use this fuel. For a start there simply was not enough smokeless fuel to go around. The coalmen were under strict instructions not to deliver any ordinary coal to the estate with the result that many people found themselves without fuel last winter. Last winter was fortunately extremely mild but there could be great hardship if there is a cold spell this winter for the coal merchants admit that little has been done to alleviate the shortage of suitable fuel. Of course, the Coal Board have made statements saying that there was in fact a surplus of smokeless fuel; it's no wonder the NCB is losing money when it does not seem to want to sell it.

NO HEAT AND NO MONEY

Many of the tenants who managed to get coal have run into yet another problem. Smokeless fuel just will not burn in the grates of some houses on the Marsh. These 'Yorkshire Range' grates are the old type and are found especially in the houses occupied by elderly people. The cost of replacing these is in the region of £70, a high price for anyone and especially so for retired people. It is usual when creating a smokeless zone for grants to be made available for necessary changes - 40% is paid by the government, 30% by the local authority, and 30% by the householder. The Council have failed to make provisions to get this grant although they applied for and got grants for owner-occupiers and private landlords. Though the Council have denied in the press any discrimination against council house tenants, the people of the Marsh have been unable to get any grant at all.

These problems were apparent in a very short time and by the end of November 1968 there had been a public meeting oftenants, which set up a Council House Tenants Association. The local councillors - Mr. Holgate and Mrs Sweeny - were contacted; they agreed that there was a problem but in a short time Mr. Holgate had changed sides and Mrs Sweeny appeared to forget the matter.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

In January 1969 the tenants were honoured by the invitation of the council to send a deputation to the Town Hall for a talk on the problems. The tenants were seated around a gallery some 15 yards from the councillors - one tenant commented that he felt as if he was on trial. It was certainly no atmosphere for free discussion. The council proceeded to spout the well-worn arguments of how council tenants are subsidised and any grant given to them would be yet another burden on the ratepayer. Furthermore there would be no suspension of the regulations regarding the use of coal, irrespective of smokeless fuel supplies.

Going to Lancaster's M.P., Mr. Stanley Henig, the tenants appeared to convince him of their case but months went by before anything was done. Then he introduced a private member's bill to get equal treatment for council tenants. Considering the history of most private member's bills, it is small wonder that the Marsh tenants wonder how many more winters they will have to wait.

BREAKING DOWN THE APATHY

Throughout the last year the Council has continuously tried to cheat the tenants with promises and lies. Besides their utterances on the 'fair' method of grants they have adopted, there have been promises to shelf further plans for other smokeless zones. This was a blatant lie for other zones have been created this year. As yet this Tenants Association has not had practical success but it is promising to see such an association looking into other problems in their area since North Lancashire has in the past and has at present a reputation for apathy. It has become clear to the Marsh tenants that they must unite to oppose the arbitrary methods of the Council. It must be hoped that other working - class people in the area will show similar solidarity in opposing the Council and the industrialists in Lancaster and elsewhere. Individual complaints to the council and letters to the press have for so long proved inadequate.

Isn't it strange that the smokeless zones in Lancaster have been set up in primarily residential areas. Most factories, which belch out more smoke than the houses, have not been included. Does this suggest some influence on the Council by the industrialists? No! No! That couldn't happen in a 'democratic' country.

— MINERS —

militancy returns!

BRITISH MINERS have traditionally been the most militant section of the working-class. They have also had to put up with some of the country's tamest and most respectable Communist union officials... There has not been a single official strike in the industry since nationalisation in 1947. The full-time officials of the NUM, whether communist or not, have co-operated with the National Coal Board in the most servile fashion, and have been duly rewarded with knighthoods and well-paid jobs after their retirement from union "service".

Nowhere has the stupor of the NUM officials been more obvious than in its total failure to prevent the accelerating rundown of the industry. Employment in mining and quarrying has fallen from 766,000 in June 1960 to 448,000 in June 1969(1), and shows no sign of levelling off. A couple of years ago, the Power Loading Agreement was signed. This replaced the traditional piecework system with the closely-supervised, speeded-up timework of the type under which Ford and Vauxhall workers have suffered for some years. It has been a major cause of the discontent leading up to the recent strike of surface workers.

All this was unable to destroy the miners' militancy, which was increased by the realisation that things had changed very little as a result of nationalisation. A few years ago the coal industry led the country in terms of strikes: in 1962-4, for example, coal accounted for nearly 50 % of all strikes, and for over 10 % of all working days lost(2). The Power Loading Agreement has greatly reduced these figures in recent years, so that in 1968 coal had 15 % of strikes and 4 % of working days lost(3).

These figures show that strikes in coal have tended to be short and localised. The struggle has been unofficial and fragmented. So in many respects the recent surface workers' strike marks an important development. The extent of the strike - almost nation-wide, involving at its peak at least 125,000 men - is by far the largest since nationalisation. For the first time, unofficial links have been built between districts and between different coalfields. The issues were important: the demand for a 40-hour week, inclusive of meal breaks to help share the declining amount of work; and

for a substantial pay rise for very low paid workers. (Surface workers are appallingly poorly paid: 29 % earn less than £15 per week, and 46 % less than £17 per week (4). Also, the miners are beginning to see that they are exploited and manipulated jointly by the bosses and by their union officials, however "left" - hence the demand for the resignation of the new NUM General Secretary, Lawrence Daly, blue-eyed boy of the "Morning Star".

The miners have won a partial victory. Their pay demand was granted in full almost immediately by Lord "Alfie" Robins, whose self-appointed role as 'The Miners' Friend' no longer convinces anyone. They have failed to achieve the 40-hour week inclusive of meal breaks. Certain districts, notably Lancashire, stayed at work, bludgeoned into submission by the threat of still further pit closures. Yet, for the reasons already mentioned, it is not too fanciful to see the strike as a start of a new era in the miners' struggle, as the beginning of a campaign for self-management which will develop independently of the NUM officialdom. The vision of the revolutionary miners who, half a century ago, wrote "The Miners' Next Step", may yet be achieved.

John KING

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- (1) Dept. of Employment and Productivity Gazette, September 1969.
 - (2) Ministry of Labour Gazette, April 1963, p.143; April 1964, p.143; January 1965, p.20.
 - (3) M.O.L. Gazette May 1968, p.385.
 - (4) D.E.P. Gazette May 1969, p.406.

SOLIDARITY (NORTH WEST)

Copies available from P. Cockcroft,
102 Carter St.
Manchester 13.

Bulk orders and copies of other Solidarity Group publications available on request.

COMPREHENSIVES

by Paul Harris

THIS ARTICLE is an attempt to explain the position in Bolton over the issue of Comprehensive Schools, for those who don't know. Bolton is one of the few towns in the country to refuse to go comprehensive. What this means in terms of the future of Bolton's education system, why this position arose, and what the general relevance of this issue is to the Party political scene, are points that shall be covered, but first of all, let's take a look at the causes of Bolton's present plight.

1. Selley's Report. When the Government first decided to make education comprehensive, Bolton had its Education Officer, Mr Selley, make a report on the subject. Selley's report is supposed to be impartial, but in fact he is quite prepared in it to show how the "best" kids can be creamed off in Comprehensives by juggling IQ scores - though IQ tests are rejected by progressive educationists as being biased against working-class kids. Selley's report comes out in favour of replacing the 11-plus by Primary School assessment, which can be "quantified in the same way" as the 11-plus. In other words, he wants an 11-plus but refuses to call it that! Just to show the report's impartiality, it has an Appendix by the Most Rev. G. A. Beck, Archbishop of Liverpool (obviously an expert on education!) who says that he wants to continue the old education system until comprehensives "prove" themselves.

Apart from Selley's bias, one or two things are worth nothing in his report.

- (a) Bolton is organising its secondary schools in bases, each base has all 3 schools, grammar, sec. mod., and technical. There are 3 bases now, 3 more were planned.
- (b) Bolton will have to provide schooling for 1,000 more kids by 1971, 4,000 by 1981.

2. The Education Committee Report 1965-6. Following Selley's masterpiece, the Tory Council set up a working party on education in Bolton. The Party included representatives from each school and from the main Teachers' Unions. From what the Report said eventually, I can only say that the teachers who agreed with it ought to be ashamed of themselves. The Report made the following ludicrous proposals:

- (a) The Education Authority wants 6 school bases, each reflecting a cross-section of the social structure as a whole, each base to have about 1,600 pupils.
- (b) All the kids in town of the right age would be placed in a "town order of merit" from A to E, in sections. There would be no "objective tests" - instead primary school headmasters would assess the kids. The "order of merit" would be based on "literary ability", "mathematical ability" and "certain personal qualities". An "objective (sic) test of verbal reasoning" would be given to about 2/3 of the kids, not to sort them out mind you, but merely to "equate the degree of assessment" between schools.
- (c) In one of its appendices, the report gives hints to Heads on how to assess kids. For the maths and English parts the method is the same as the 11-plus, but without the exam. But Heads have also to assess 8 "character" traits - Ambition(!), Alertness, Industry, Co-operation, Perseverance, Emotional Stability, and Retentiveness. He must further make "relevant comments" on such items as "appearance", "home environment" and "speech".
- (d) Following this assessment the kids will be sent to 2 schools in the base, called "A" and "B" in the Report. After one year together, doing the same subjects (apart from a foreign language, which is only for those "for whom this appears advantageous") the kids who make up the top 90 or so, as decided by the Heads of the schools and the assessment from before, will be whipped off to school C, where they will do a GCE course. Although parents' wishes are to be taken into account, there will need to be "strong" reasons for a kid to transfer schools after this sort-out.
- (e) The rest of the kids will do CSE courses. As a sop, there will be joint choirs, games and a "house system" in which kids from all 3 schools will be lumped together.
- (f) For the sake of "simplicity" the word "secondary" will be omitted from the names of schools! (In fact, the Tories have just come up with the brilliant device of calling Bolton Sec. Mods. "High Schools", and the Techs "Grammar Schools".

Comments on the Report

The Report was obviously a Tory swindle and was chucked out by the Government - some of the reasons are obvious: kids would be sorted out by a variety of methods on 11-plus lines at 11, and further sorted one year later. The "top" kids would go to what is obviously

a grammar school, the rest would get a usual Sec. Mod. or Tech. education. Each school has separate staff, so the "best" kids get the best staff, etc. The old system would grind on, but would begin one year later.

Some of the report makes interesting reading, for example, how the hell is a headmaster qualified to judge such things as "Emotional Stability", and what does that mean anyway? What is "Co-operation"? - does this mean being a goody-goody? Also - why do "Home Environment" and "Speech" count? These things are all included and have one and only one effect, as do all the other so-called "objective" methods - to encourage favouritism in the schools, and more important, to discriminate against the working class. The Tory fear and hatred of having their vile offspring mixing with the kids of the proles shines through this report. At every turn of a page, another way of keeping the old system going is spewed out. Even the sops of "mixed" choirs and games and Houses are a fraud. The kids know that the old system is going on under another name, teachers at the bases admit that the kids don't mix, the working class kids take hardly any interest in the public-school farce of a "House system"; and there is little or no co-ordination between the staff of the schools on matters of importance, like academic matters. bcl

So much for the report.

The Battle

As soon as the Government chucked out this Tory plan, Belton became enmeshed in a furious debate between the 2 main Parties. Let's have a look at the 2 sides in this battle.

The Tories - who have since spent all their time squealing about "Socialist Dictatorship" and "Freedom of Education". Their motives are simple, they want to preserve a system of education that recruits an academic and social elite, they know that middle-class kids have academic advantages over working-class kids (for reasons explained later); they want to keep these advantages and to keep the working-class kids in their place. The Tory snobs fear "the great unwashed"; society needs recruits for the ruling class, the Tories want their kids to be those recruits. To them "freedom" means freedom to exploit, to maintain their privileges, and to keep society divided into classes, with them on top.

The main Tory protagonists in the debate include - Alderman Ethel (windbag) Ryley; a self-appointed "expert" on education, she is a governor of almost all the "better" schools in Belton, and head of

the Education Committee; Alderman Eddie (I'm just an ordinary working man at heart) Taylor, whose trade of meat-pie maker qualifies him to speak on education; and Mr Lawrence (Smoothie) Need, Parliamentary Candidate for Bolton East. These three loons have kept up a constant barrage of speeches, letters to the paper etc, on the evils of the Government and the greater evils of "all-in" schools. It would be funny if only it wasn't tragic. Because the Government has refused to give any money for secondary school building until the Tories agree to comprehensives. Bolton now has a situation whereby the existing schools, many with rotten facilities, are becoming rapidly overcrowded. The Tories, holding out for a Tory Government, have responded by building "temporary" classrooms, with money supposed to be for primary schools, and the primary schools are bad enough as it is. So we have the kids being forced into a rotten, over-crowded education system by the Tories, to save the Tories' "principles".

What of the gallant opposition? The Labour Party.

For a start, the Labour Party and Government is only in favour of comprehensives because they will help streamline education to fit the needs of modern capitalist society. They want to substitute meritocracy for aristocracy, and they also hope to revamp their image as the "workers' Party" by putting forth comprehensives as a big boost to the working class.

 god made the bees,
 the bees make the honey,
 We do the work,
 The teacher gets the money.

Locally, Bolton Labour Party, helped by MPs Bob (I'm everybody's friend - but not the blacks') Howarth, and Gordon (Smiler) Oakes, has fought for comprehensives. But what kind? As Labour Party expert on education Harry Lucas said "It's just the system we want, we don't care how it's organised". Or, as the Bolton Labour Party agent said to the author of this article, over the 'phone, when asked what kind of comprehensives the Labour Party wanted. "well, we don't know exactly". In other words the Labour Party is just toeing the Party line and has no idea what kind of comprehensive it wants.

Let's look at the nature of comprehensive education in this country, and at the Labour Government, and see just how big a step forward comprehensives would be for Bolton.

First of all, the comprehensive systems so far in existence have "streaming", - that is, kids are

to do their job, but not enough to think for themselves. Whilst this is so, workers' kids will continue to be taught the same claptrap in the same way, taught to be obedient, taught to get the spirit of jolly sporting competition, whilst learning their place in life.

So instead of Tory aristocracy, we'll have Labour meritocracy, to the greatest benefit of the middle-class. Bolton is faced with the situation a Tory fraud which will deliberately keep down working-class kids, or a Labour sham, that will look fairer but will have the same effect.

Bolton has a group of people organised to fight for comprehensives. They say it isn't a political issue. But it is! As long as the class nature of our society remains the same the workers will get nowhere, nor will their kids. The solution in the long run is the complete abolition of the class division of society and its replacement by a socialist system of workers' control.

Until then, what can Bolton parents do?

1. Do you want your kids "streamed" so that working-class kids end up at the bottom? If not - fight for comprehensives with no streaming, equal teaching for all co-operation between kids and not competition.
2. Do you want the old system of teaching, and the old subjects to continue, to the harm of your kids? If not - organise, demand to get involved in running the school, support the kids who want more democracy and less conformity in schools, help them to be taught the truth about life, and not brainwashed.

Fight for your kids against Tory and Labour "Educationists" who both want to keep the working-class kid at the bottom of society.

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