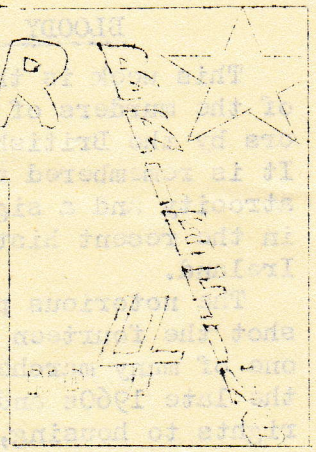
1983

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BAN PLASTIC BULLETS!



Last year's Labour Party conference voted by an overwhelming majority to ban plastic bullets. This is a big step forward. It makes Ireland once again an issue in the British Labour Movement. Outside Britain, as always, the repression being meted out in its oldest colony is more clearly seen. The European Parliament has called for an end to the use of plastic bullets (the vote was 110 to 43, with only British Tories and Northern Irish Unionists voting against). Why all the fuss?

Plastic bullets were first used in the North of Ireland in 1973, to succeed the more unreliable rubber bullets. Incidents like the blinding of ten year old Richard Moore in 1972 (when there was actually no rioting in the area) had led the security forces to introduce a weapon they could more accurately target. Target at whom?

Plastic bullets are not used as an 'anti-terrorist' weapon; real bullets are fired at those who attack the security forces, or miss checkpoints and roadblocks. Plastic bullets are used on the streets to deal with protest. In fact many of the dead and injured had not been involved in rioting but were just going about their business or looking out of their windows, or were children playing in the street or running errands. Seven of the fourteen plastic bullet deaths have been children. The very use of plastic bullets has led to rioting in protest at their use. As Bishop Daly has pointed out, "Plastic bullets are responsible for more riots than they have quelled".

Plastic bullets are not, as their name suggests, harmless. In addition to the deaths they have inflicted horrific injuries, including blinding, brain damage, and paralysis. Paul Corr, for example, was shot in 1981 by Royal Marine commandos, firing from a passing Landrover. The plastic bullet hit him on the side of his nose, tearing part of it off, and shattering his palate. Paul was 12 years old. Again there was no rioting in the area. Plastic bullets are as heavy as cricket balls, and harder. They leave the gun at 160 mph.

The resolutions passed at international level, and the hard-won Labour Party vote in October, along with the Bishop of Salisbury's call last week for a ban, are useful. But now it is the urgent task of constituency parties and trade union branches to translate the commitment into action. The Labour movement delegate conference in Manchester on 26th February is sponsored by a number of MPs and organisations. It aims to build a campaign which can ensure that the use of plastic bullets is ended.

The emergency motion from StLukes is a call for Southampton Labour Party to support this initiative.

Ian Parker

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL

organised in aid of
Anti-Apartheid
Chile Solidarity
El Salvador Solidarity
Friends of Palestine

to be held on 5 February,
at St.Matthew's Church Hall
starts 7.30 pm

Music from Chile
Palestine
El Salvador
South Africa

Food and refreshments available

We urge you to support this event.

BLOODY SUNDAY

This week is the eleventh anniversary of the murders of 14 unarmed demonstrators by the British Army in Derry in 1972. It is remembered annually as both an atrocity and a significant turning point in the recent history of the North of Ireland.

The notorious parachute regiment shot the fourteen civilians on what was one of many marches for civil rights in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Basic rights to housing, employment and voting had been denied to the catholic minority since the partition of Ireland in 1921. By 1968, when the rest of Western Europe was enjoying a comparatively high standard of living, this discrimination could no longer be tolerated. However, no significant reforms were offered by the Loyalist Stormont government of the time; instead the RUC and Loyalist groups resisted the passage of these marches to the extent that street battles ensued. After the British troops were sent in to 'keep the peace', draconian measures were introduced to prevent further protests by the catholic minority. It was against these measures - internment of hundreds without trial or charge and banning of all demonstrations - as well as for civil rights, that a demonstration was called for 30 January 1972 in Derry. It was into a crowd of demonstrators, who were fleeing from water cannon and CS gas, that the Parachute Regiment shot live rounds. As a result fourteen people died.

The resultant public uproar was quietened by a government enquiry under Lord Widgery, which itself attempted to cover up the real story. The Army claimed that they had fired at snipers in the local flats; yet not one of the dead were carrying arms, and all witnesses denied having seen or heard guns other than those of the Army. Widgery remarked: "...firing bordered on the reckless", while contradicting himself by saying: "there was no breakdown in discipline". The daily papers, selective as ever, claimed that Widgery had cleared the Army of blame, and no soldier was ever prosecuted. In fact Colonel Wilford, who had commanded the Paras on that day received an OBE for his work.

It was left to the Derry City Coroner, Mr O'Neill to state the obvious horrific fact that it was "sheer unadulterated murder".

Tom.

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING

Southampton Labour Briefing is a bulletin produced by local supporters of the weekly socialist newpaper "Socialist Challenge". For further details of our policies and local meetings phone Southampton 39851.

PAY THE WATER WORKERS!

The water workers' strike is developing into a crucial test of strength in the battle against the Tory government. To defeat the 4% pay limit imposed by Thatcher would be a massive blow to her line of 'resolute government', and a massive boost to the morale of workers everywhere. The result will be especially important in view of the impending general election, expected this year.

Despite their powerful position to disrupt both industry and domestic supplies the water workers face a number of problems. Foremost will be the huge press campaign to turn public opinion against them. Second will be the use of strike breakers, eg troops. Third will be the union leadership's emphasis on pay differentials, rather than a rise that beats inflation, which could cut off support of the low paid in other industries. Fourth is the danger of withdrawal of TUC support (as happened in the ASLEF dispute) if the dispute does not reach a rapid conclusion, given its harsh effects.

SMASH THE 4 % !

The Labour Party can support the water workers by explaining the case for the full 15% claim, and that it is Thatcher who is prolonging the dispute by refusing their reasonable and necessary claim. We need to secure support for a national campaign with the backing of the whole trade union and Labour movement, to break the 4% limit and win a proper wage for all public sector workers. As a start the PPCs should issue a statement in support and wards should organise fund-raising as was done in the health dispute.

Richard Correll