

Special Report

SPECIAL BRANCH

December

7th

13th day of

19

SUBJECT

International  
Socialists

Reference to Papers  
400/74/198

1. The following information has been received from a reliable source-

2. On Sunday 8 December 1971 at Camden Town Hall, Kings Cross, the International Socialists held an evening of socialist entertainment to celebrate the success of the 1961 Fighting Fund. It commenced at 7.30 pm and concluded at 10.15 pm. Approximately four hundred persons attended.

3. Bob LIGHT opened the proceedings and commenced by introducing a film produced by the revolutionary-left in Chile at the time of the overthrow of the Allende regime. It set out to depict the atrocities perpetrated by the fascist Junta's soldiers and the resulting heroic and indomitable spirit displayed by the Chilean left in its effort to defend Allende's communist-socialist state. The film's post-script hoped that left groups in all the European countries - especially France, could learn from the mistakes made by the Chilean left.

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4. After this Adrian MITCHELL read Revolutionary poems. The first was a comic study of the song British Day of Life. The second was an immortalisation of the Chilean Revolutionary folk hero and singer, Victor JARA, who had had his hands cut off by the Junta's soldiers before they had killed him. The line which kept re-occurring through this poem was the had strong hands, he had strong wrists'.

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5. Bobby CAMPBELL, gave a well-received folk singing set, accompanied by Gordon McCULLOUGH on the fiddle and mandolin. After this Chris SHARPE appeared with large bass-drum and his ensemble - 'two fingers'. Mel MORRISON, played the trombone and the two of them, kept the audience amused with revolutionary adaptations of 'Catch a falling star' and 'John Browns Body'.

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6. Three members of the 'Dobins' then performed a satirisation of the British 'free-press' during the last three centuries. Following this an ex-boxer, believed to be hobbled onto the stage resplendent in tattered 'dodgy' suit and sporting a jeweller's glass. He read poems on how MOSLEY and his veracious followers had been driven from the streets of the immigrant-packed East End during the thirties. After his diastimative form had been assisted from the stage by Bob LIGHT, a folk-group comprising three persons, two of whom were believed to be Irish reels and sea-shanty tunes. The high spot of the evening, however, was reserved for the ever-popular and much travelled IS combine who gave a slightly altered version

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of the Shrewsbury (Flying-picket) phenomenon of 1973 and the reaction of the ruling classes. (See attached leaflet 'Free Shrewsbury Two - defend the right to picket').

7. Before drawing the passport to a close Ross PRITCHARD and Bob LIGHT called for a collection which realized £116.50. They also urged support for a picket on Friday 13 December 1974 outside the Railway public house, Grove Road, Hill End, S3, where the landlord was alleged to have been exercising a 'pernicious form of the colour bar' (previously reported).

8. PRITCHARD thanked all present for having attended and for supporting, along with thousands of others, the SW in its attack on the establishment. In his opinion the 'SW' had been an overwhelming success and this boded well for the future.

9. The following persons were amongst those present:-

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- Adrian MITCHELL
- Bob LIGHT
- Ross PRITCHARD
- Bobby CAMPBELL
- Gordon McCULLOUGH
- Chris STABLE
- Mal JOHNSON

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10. Special branch references are given in the attached Appendix.

Chris Light

R. White  
DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX

Appendix to Special Branch report of 10.12.1974 concerning an IS  
socialist evening held on 8 December 1974.

[REDACTED]

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Bob LIGHT	RF.h05	Privacy
Adrian MITCHELL	RF.h05	
Neil MORRISON	Mentions re IS	

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Gordon McCULLOUGH	No trace
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Ross PRITCHARD	RF.h02	Privacy
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[REDACTED]

# FREE THE SHREWSBURY TWO



*Building workers lobbying UCATT Executive for action to free the Two*

**Defend the right to picket**

In seeking support for the jailed Shrewsbury building workers and calling for their release, you can be sure that someone will start asking questions about the case. The chances are that they will be tough questions.

Some will say that the men were convicted of acts of violence and intimidation, so no trade unionist should support them. Others will say that no matter how much string-pulling the Tory government engaged in behind the scenes, the outcome of the trial was finally decided by a jury. And what could be fairer than that?

The best way to get at the truth about Shrewsbury is to ask a few serious questions.

Why was Shrewsbury picketed?

By 6 September 1972, the first of two days picketing in and around Shrewsbury, the building workers' official strike was two months old.

Although North Wales was one of the most backward areas for trade union organisation in the industry, the strike had become effective there. Flying pickets had been used to shut down lump sites after lump sites and win the men to the union.

But the employers had prepared their own plans to undermine the success of the strike.

They banded together a hard core of strikebreakers, set them to work in Shrewsbury and schemed to keep the town free of the 'menace' of trade unionism.

They organised anti-picket squads which would 'fight the pickets, if necessary' (Shropshire Star, 23 August 1972).

The official joint union North Wales strike action committee met to consider the situation in Shrewsbury. They could not ignore it if the strike was to be kept solid and the lump defeated. They resolved to send in a mass picket.

What happened on 6 September?

In the early hours of the morning six coach-loads of pickets set out for Shrewsbury. They arrived just after the lumpers had started work.

The first site they picketed was Kingwood. On this site a serious incident took place. It enraged the union men and confirmed to them that they were up against employers who would stop at nothing to beat the strike.

As the pickets moved on to the site, Terence Parry, son of one of the lump contractors on the job, took a 12-bore single-barrelled shotgun out of his car boot, pointed it at the leading pickets and threatened to shoot.

The picket went for him, disarmed him and smashed his gun. One was later charged with damage to property. Parry became a prominent witness in the pickets' trial.

Were there any arrests on that day?

The pickets moved on to other sites. In the main they conducted orderly meetings and attempted to get the lumpers out of strike.

In some places some pickets did smash the odd window or piece of piping in the heat of the moment. Unset brickwork was pushed over. This is hardly surprising as the men were angry and frustrated at building workers earning £1.00 a week for strike-breaking while they struggled without strike pay for a £35 a week basic.

This is probably the single most interesting question anyone can ask about the picketing at Shrewsbury. The answer is that there were no arrests at all on 6 or 7 September. Nor was even one of the pickets taken down to the station for questioning.

This is particularly interesting because all the time the pickets were visiting sites in Shrewsbury, they were being accompanied by 80 police under the command of senior officers.

At the trials police officers stated that pickets were 'rampaging like an Apache horde', frightening and terrifying dozens of workers, and committing other dreadful crimes. But none of the policemen could offer a satisfactory explanation as to why there were no arrests. The most they came up with was the notion that they were too 'terrified'.

The only answer for the police's inactivity is that they arrived at the fairly realistic conclusion that while there may have been some damage to property, the pickets had been provoked and there were no grounds for prosecuting any one party to the incidents.

So who did decide to prosecute and why?

The National Federation of Building Trades employers was campaigning through its MPs' lobby for tough action against pickets under the criminal law.

What clinched the matter was the Tory government's need to prosecute without using the Industrial Relations Act. This was in a rather tattered state thanks to the massive movement to free the five jailed dockers. The conspiracy laws were a useful alternative and Shrewsbury an obvious area for their application because the trade union movement was so weak.

Only after the go-ahead to launch an investigation was given by Robert Carr, Tory Home Secretary, did the West Mercia police force move on the track of the Shrewsbury pickets.

How did they get their evidence?

The main body of men interviewed were lump workers on the picketed sites. From these men the police got considerable co-operation. This is not surprising. Lump workers live in fear of the law.

# Shrewsbury Fact Sheet

The police also got a good deal of co-operation from the lump employers. These gentlemen of course had the greatest possible interest in contributing to a successful prosecution—the survival of the lump and assurance of their future profits.

But for a convincing case the police had to get some evidence from among the pickets. They did this in a familiar way. They blackmailed people. John Llywarch, who ended up as one of the six men to face conspiracy charges, was intended to be a prosecution witness. Because he would not sign a doctored statement, he was charged.

Were the defendants prosecuted for acts of violence?

This question is the key to the whole Shrewsbury affair. Not one of the Shrewsbury 24 stood trial at Shrewsbury Crown Court on a specific charge of violence, damage to property or intimidation.

At first, the men were charged on all sorts of specific counts. But the prosecution at the trials chose to whittle the charges down to three—conspiracy to intimidate, unlawful assembly and affray.

The advantage of the conspiracy to intimidate charge was two-fold. First, if the men had been prosecuted on a straight charge of intimidation, the maximum sentence would have been six months. Conspiracy to intimidate carried no maximum sentence at all.

In addition, conspiracy to intimidate does not require the prosecution to prove that the defendants were individually involved in specific acts of intimidation.

For conspiracy allows a mass of otherwise inadmissible material to be brought as evidence against a defendant. Hearsay, gossip, totally unrelated facts, in short anything and everything, can be introduced.

So what did the prosecution set out to prove against the men now in jail?

First of all they set out to suggest that, though the defendants were not necessarily personally involved in acts of violence and intimidation, there was a pre-planned decision that pickets would use violence. This was, they suggested, taken by the leaders of the pickets.

By inference, since the men on trial were among the leaders of the pickets, the accused were guilty.

This line of argument was shot down by the defence who pointed out that two of the six men on conspiracy charges hadn't even been at the meeting where the conspiracy supposedly took place.

So the prosecution switched tack. They said that because the accused were among the strike leaders and there were repeated incidents during the picketing, the defendants were prepared to tolerate violence. They were guilty for this reason, or, alternatively, because they did nothing to stop others using violence.

Conspiracy is the most savage weapon the law possesses. It is a catch-all designed to secure convictions which could not otherwise be obtained.

Yes. But what about the jury?

Members of a jury are not free agents. They are directed by the judge and the judge directs them according to the letter of the law, or his version of it.

After the sentences in the first Shrewsbury trial were announced, two of the jurors walked out in protest against them. The two then spoke to the defendants who had not been imprisoned and to some journalists from the socialist press.

They both insisted that the jury had been led to believe that guilty verdicts would lead only to fines or at the most to suspended sentences. On this basis, and on the basis of a desire to get a marathon trial concluded without hours and hours of fierce debate, the majority on the jury caved in.

What about the courts of appeal?

Judges are one of the most reactionary and tightly organised groups in society. When a Labour government replaces a Tory one, they don't change. They go right on fighting their personal war against those who threaten the privilege and wealth of the establishment.

The Shrewsbury appeals have been handled by a Lord Chief Justice Widgery. He was appointed by a Tory government. He is a Tory and was even asked to stand as a prospective Tory MP.

Widgery is a highly political man who has been involved in almost every case of any importance since 1972. He conducted the whitewashing inquiry into the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry. He suppressed the Sunday Times article attacking Distillers for its marketing of Thalidomide. And he ruled that Stockport magistrates must convict a union official for stopping a lorry and talking to the driver.

What have the men's unions officially done?

While the Shrewsbury pickets were on bail pending appeal the TUC, TGWU and UCATT all passed pious resolutions. Now that the two have been sent back to prison we do not see the executives living up to these resolutions. The union officials fear that the Shrewsbury issue will embarrass the Labour government and so they are soft-peddalling. It's up to the rank and file in the unions to force the issue. The officials hope that Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson will be paroled, which would let them off the hook, and ensure that the underlying issues can safely be forgotten.

The right to picket is fundamental to trade unionism. The fight to repeal the Conspiracy Act and secure Des and Ricky's release is the defence of that right. It's up to us to force our union officials to do their job.

## Organise to free the two Defend the right to picket

## Who knows about Shrewsbury?

Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson, two Shrewsbury building worker pickets, have been sent back to jail to complete their two and three year prison sentences. After having been allowed out on bail their appeal has been turned down.

They were convicted under the 1875 conspiracy act for effective picketing in the 1972 Building Workers strike. It represents a very serious threat to elementary trade union rights, yet it is a case that too few know about.

The Shrewsbury jailings were secured following charges 4½ months after the 1972 official Building Workers strike.

Recent weeks have seen Lorry Drivers, Teachers, Bakers, Busmen and ICI-Intex workers use flying pickets. Will individuals from these strikes face similar charges in four months time?

Enclosed is a question and answer fact sheet. Read it, but more importantly, sell it to your work mates. Get bulk orders for your stewards' committee, union branch or Trades Council.

The press and TV have maintained a conspiracy of silence over this important case. Whole sections of the labour movement have thus been kept in ignorance of the facts. We hope this pamphlet will help overcome this problem.

## What is to be done

The five dockers imprisoned under the Industrial Relations Act were released because of the mass strike by rank and file trade unionists. The Industrial Relations Act was finally forced off the statute book by maintaining this militant opposition. Similar action is necessary to force the repeal of the 1875 Conspiracy Act and the release of Des and Ricky.

The Labour government must therefore be subjected to mass pressure from the trade union movement.

1. Fight within all unions for commitment by union executives to official strike action, particularly UCATT and the TGWU.

2. Pressurise the TUC itself to instigate

strike action.

3. Raise money for the imprisoned men's families.

4. Publicise the Shrewsbury case by meetings, film shows, distribution of relevant literature etc.

5. Establish local Shrewsbury Defence Committees of bona fide trade union representatives to further the campaign in the localities.

Further information, speakers and films on the Shrewsbury campaign are available from: Rank and File Organising Committee  
214 Roundwood Road  
London NW10

Price 1p (75 copies for 50p)

## Produced by Rank and File Organising Committee

The Rank and File Organising Committee consists of elected representatives from rank and file papers and shop stewards' committees. It exists to encourage the building of a Rank and File Movement committed to the defence of trade union rights, the fight against wage restraint and unemployment, and for democracy in the unions. Such a movement is not separate from the official unions, it is a network of trade union bodies fighting for such policies *within* the unions.

For further information, and details of other activities contact:  
The Secretary, Rank and File Organising Committee,  
214 Roundwood Road,  
London NW10

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