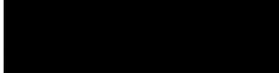




Special Branch
Annual Report
1972.



SPECIAL BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT

1972

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

PART ONE

- (I) INTRODUCTION
- (II) THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT IN IRELAND
- (III) THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN
- (IV) THE CIVIL RIGHTS/ANTI-INTERMENT MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN
- (V) PROTESTANT EXTREMISM

PART TWO

EXTREME POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN LONDON

PART THREE

SPECIAL BRANCH PORTS

PART FOUR

ADMINISTRATION AND STATISTICS

SUBJECT INDEX

NOMINAL INDEX

Special Branch
New Scotland Yard
SW1H 0BG

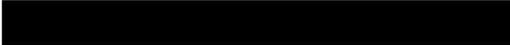
Commissioner

I have the honour to submit this report on the work of your Special Branch during 1972.

Your national responsibility for counteracting Irish Republican activity in Great Britain remained, as it has been since 1969, the major area of operational concern.

Whilst events and activities in the Republic and Northern Ireland inevitably produce reaction over here, I am sure that the overall successful outcome of Branch activity can be measured from the fact that, apart from two notable exceptions, such reaction was muted and of little public significance. The exceptions arose from the highly emotive "Bloody Sunday" incidents in Londonderry on 30 January, when 13 civilian deaths were attributed to the security forces following a Civil Rights demonstration, and which can be seen to be directly responsible, firstly for the outrageous attack on the Parachute Brigade Headquarters at Aldershot on 22 February when seven people were killed, and, less seriously, for a particularly violent demonstration in London on 5 February which resulted in 127 arrests.

1

 Our monitoring of Irish Republican extremist groups have shown a distinct bias in favour of relatively innocuous political and fund-raising roles rather than a move towards violence.

None of the issues which has motivated extremist militancy in the recent past - such as the Vietnam war, Anti-Apartheid and Rhodesia - created any serious problems. Minority foreign groupings and potentially explosive factions such as Black Power were relatively quiet, apart from a virulent anti-police propaganda campaign by the latter and the arrest of one of their leaders for publishing incitements to murder.

There was a fortunate fall-off in the numbers of large-scale demonstrations leading to disorder. During the first two months five such events each attracted over 5,000 supporters; 127 were arrested at an Anti-Internment League march, and 43 at an Anti-Apartheid protest on the Rhodesian issue; during the remainder of the year only one further demonstration attracted such support. Smaller demonstrations on trade union or industrial issues were potentially difficult and, outside London, violence and the advent of the "flying picket" created new problems. Extremists have for some time been seeking an emotive issue upon which they might crusade on the lines of the former anti-nuclear and Vietnam war campaigns, and many are seeking to follow the lead of the Communist Party and the trotskyists in developing militant support on industrial issues. Much SB attention was directed towards this problem which, together with student protest, has a real potential for public disorder in the year ahead.



As in 1971, a large part of the Sinn Fein effort during the year was devoted to fund raising, chiefly by collections in Irish-frequented public houses but also by holding socials and raffles. Some success was achieved in this field; in October, for instance, some £800 was collected, of which half was given to Northern Aid (the euphemistic title of the fund

- 29 -

set up by Sean STEPHENSON to help finance the "Provisional" IRA), and the rest divided between An Cumann Cabhrach and Sinn Fein itself. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that Republicans in Britain were instructed to keep out of trouble and keep the money flowing. The public-house collections led to occasional disputes with the "Officials", represented by Clann na h'Eireann, over territorial rights (and sometimes to similar disputes between different branches of Sinn Fein), but generally the superior muscle-power of the "Provisionals" ensured their dominance in this field.

Sinn Fein had several demonstrations during the year on topical issues, usually in the form of a march in West London, but in general they were poorly supported and led to no breaches of public order. Only when "Provisional" Republicans participated in joint public activities with such bodies as the Anti-Internment League, and were thus reinforced by the usual left-wing assortment of demonstrators, were they moved to display any real militancy.

(IV) THE CIVIL RIGHTS/ANTI-INTERMENT MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN

As in the latter part of 1971, the civil rights scene in Britain during 1972 was largely dominated by the Anti-Internment League, though principally because of its nature as an umbrella organisation embodying a multiplicity of groups rather than by virtue of any particular effectiveness on the part of those running it. From its foundation in August 1971, its high-water mark was reached in the aftermath of the "Bloody Sunday" shootings in Londonderry. On 5 February 1972, almost a week after the shootings, it sponsored a demonstration in London which in numbers of participants and militancy came near to rivalling the massive Vietnam demonstrations of past years, but thereafter, and particularly following the introduction of direct rule in Northern Ireland, it entered a period of decline from which it had not recovered by the end of the year.

The days between "Bloody Sunday" (30 January) and the 5 February demonstration saw several preliminary events, the most notable of which was a march on 2 February through the West End with symbolic coffins in which some 1,400 persons took part. These included a rather higher proportion of genuine Irish than is usual on such occasions, the organisers having made considerable efforts to get the mass of uncommitted London Irish on to the streets; there was only comparatively minor disorder, largely caused when the marchers halted in Piccadilly during the evening rush-hour to hold thirteen minutes silence in memory of those killed. The organisers appealed to those present to "save themselves for Saturday", and serious trouble was avoided.

The main event on Saturday, 5 February, attracted some 6,000 persons for a march from Cricklewood to Whitehall, and again there was a reasonably high proportion of Irish, though

- 42 -

they were still outnumbered by the usual collection of left-wing habitual demonstrators. Feelings had been running high almost from the start, and they boiled over when police refused to allow 13 mock coffins to be deposited in Downing Street. The crowd tried to storm Downing Street but were forced back and driven up Whitehall towards Trafalgar Square, where further disorder ensued. By the time order had been restored, 127 persons had been arrested, the majority of them non-Irish, and the subsequent proceedings lasted well into the summer.

The most important of those proceedings are still not over, however. Soon after the event, three of the march organisers - [Privacy] ([Privacy] A-IL), [Privacy] and [Privacy] (both then Sinn Fein representatives on the A-IL committee) - were arrested on warrants alleging conspiracy to contravene Section 5 of the Public Order Act, 1936; shortly afterwards, [Privacy] then chairman of the A-IL, and [Privacy] another committee member, were charged with the same offence. The committal proceedings at Wells Street Magistrates' Court lasted well into the Autumn, at the end of which all the accused, except [Privacy] were committed for trial. That trial has yet to take place.

These prosecutions inevitably had a depressant effect on the subsequent activities of the League, and attempts to reproduce the fervour of 5 February proved somewhat futile. A contributory factor was the revulsion engendered by the Aldershot bombing, which acted as a counterweight to the emotions aroused by "Bloody Sunday". Considerable effort was put into preparations for a "national demonstration" on 12 November, and an initial turn-out of about 1,400 persons was achieved. The great majority, however, were from non-Irish extremist groups, and their numbers dwindled very rapidly in the face of inclement weather conditions, despite

- 43 -

the presence of Bernadette DEVLIN, MP. There was a noticeable lack of militancy about the demonstration, and there was no disorder; it was the last major event of 1972, but the not unreasonable turnout persuaded the A-IL leadership that the organisation ought to remain in being.

That leadership was, however, rather different from the one in power at the beginning of the year. Then the chairman was Bowes EGAN, the national organiser was John GRAY, and there was a committee of 12 representing some of the constituent bodies (five Sinn Fein, two Clann na h'Eireann, three International Socialists, and one each from the Communist Party of Britain - Marxist-Leninist and the International Marxist Group/Spartacus League).

In June 1972, however, the Irish Solidarity Campaign (synonymous in effect with the International Marxist Group) moved to take over the Anti-Internment League and by astute political manoeuvring IMG members contrived to get themselves or their nominees elected to branch committees. By the end of the year the process of take-over, though not complete, was so far advanced as to be well-nigh incapable of reversal. The attainment of leading positions by IMG members was greatly facilitated by decisions to resign on the part of EGAN and John GRAY. EGAN was not replaced as permanent chairman, and at the national conference of the League in London on 7-8 October, Robert McGovern (Bob) PURDIE, a leading IMG member and secretary of Central London A-IL, was without difficulty elected to the powerful post of national organiser. His only opposing nominee was Mike HILL, a relatively obscure International Socialist.

Other appointments made at the October conference were as follows:-

National Treasurer:

Fiannoulla FLOOD

Central Committee:

Liam O'CONNELL (Slough A-IL)

- 44 -

Kevin O'DOHERTY (IS, W London AIL)
Paddy PRENDIVILLE (IS, W London AIL)
Michael O'KANE (Sinn Fein)
Maureen McGUIRE (Haringey A-IL)
Martin CAMPBELL (Clann na h'Eireann)
John GRAY (IS)
Gery LAWLESS (IMG)
Eddie MURPHY (Sinn Fein)
Paddy LYNCH (Peoples' Democracy)
Sean MATGAMNA (Workers' Fight)
Mike HILL (IS)

The IS representation was reduced in December, when John GRAY and Mike HILL resigned from the committee; they were replaced by [Privacy] (Sinn Fein) and [Privacy] (Clann na h'Eireann), as part of a deliberate policy to induce the Republican movement to play a greater part in the A-IL. If Brendan MAGILL had his way, however, Sinn Fein would sever all connection with the League.

While a claim was advanced late in 1972 that over 30 branches of the League existed throughout the country, supported by 30 affiliated organisations, it was admitted that some of those branches and organisations existed on paper only, and that the whole movement had suffered considerable erosion since the introduction of direct rule in Northern Ireland. Its future is seen as depending very much on the progress of the struggle in Northern Ireland, but barring another emotion-stirring event like "Bloody Sunday", the prognostications are hardly favourable.

With the virtual appropriation of the Irish Solidarity Campaign by the A-IL, only the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association still remained in being as a semi-viable and independent organisation. As the year progressed, however, NICRA (London) became of less and less account in the civil rights scene (being in no way comparable to the parent organisation in Northern Ireland, which itself suffered a

decline in 1972). The London support group mounted no independent activities during the year, barring the odd social, and several of its more active members abandoned the organisation and joined more militant bodies such as Sinn Fein; the former Walthamstow branch of NICRA in fact became the nucleus of East London Sinn Fein. The principal office-holders of NICRA (London) in 1972 were:-

Chairman:

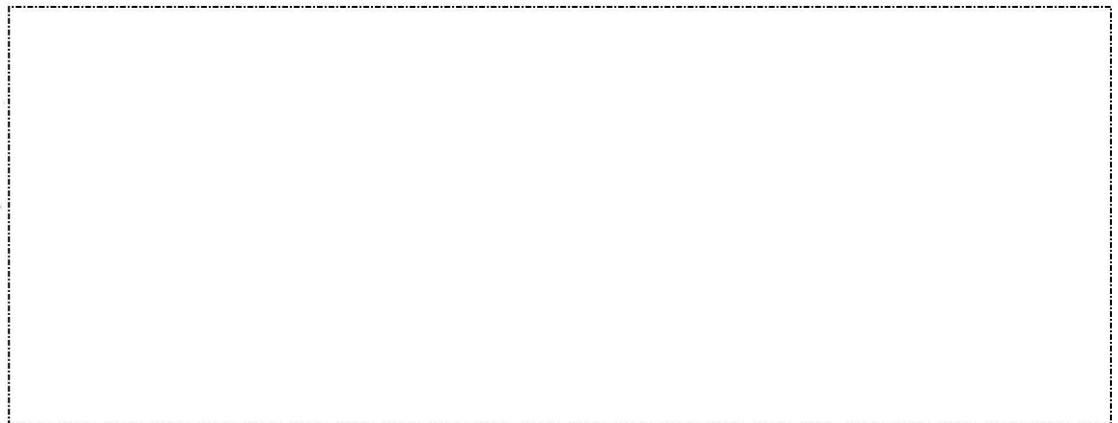
Privacy

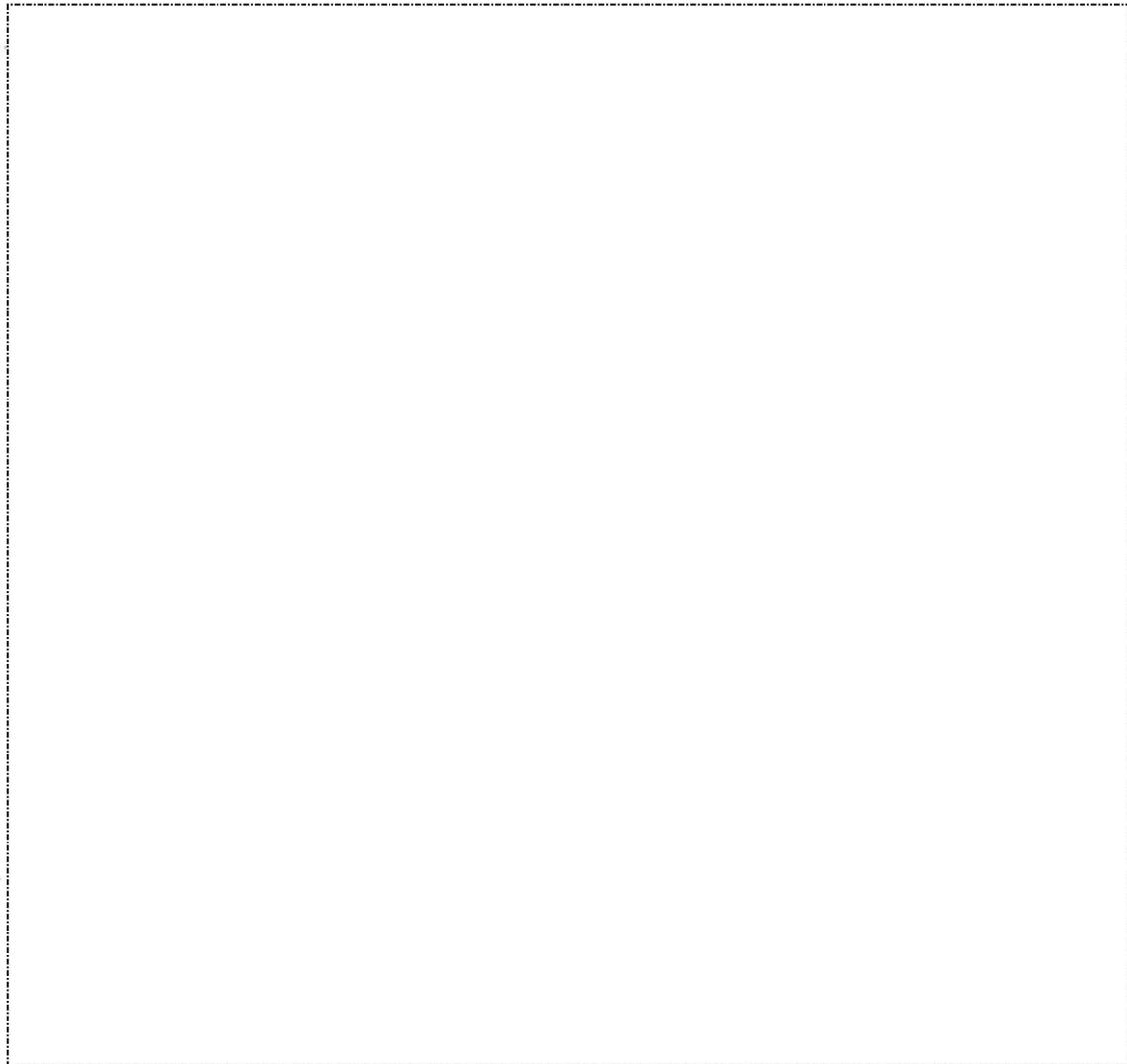
Secretary:

Sister Sarah CLARKE

Treasurer:

Privacy





On 11 February three leading members of the London Alliance in Defence of Workers Rights were sentenced at Middlesex Guildhall Crown Court for their part in a disturbance at a public meeting in Hornsey in July 1971. [Privacy] received three months imprisonment for assault on police; his wife, [Privacy] was fined £100 for a similar offence; and [Privacy] was sentenced to three months imprisonment for assault. As a result the Alliance undertook little public activity in its own name during the year but its members directed their energies towards the Schools Action Union. The latter was formed in January 1969 and, following successive communist, trotskyist and anarchist control, was dominated during 1972 by the Alliance, although it is doubtful if many of the children who demonstrated under its banner were aware of that fact.

- 74 -

The Union, which was in direct competition with the communist influenced National Union of School Students in attempting to recruit school-children, was at its most active in May when a spate of public protests were held by pupils to publicise their aims of greater participation in running schools and the abolition of regulations affecting discipline and school uniforms. The largest demonstration took place on 17 May when nearly 4,000 school-children massed in the centre of London. Minor disorder occurred outside County Hall, SE1, where a number of youths tried to force their way into the building, and resulted in 24 persons being arrested including an anarchist and two prominent members of the Young Communist League. The Union's journal, "Vanguard", was published approximately once a term from the organisation's offices at 75 Acre Lane, SW2.

Dissent continued to surround the megalomaniacal Abhimanyu MANCHANDA and his several organisations, which included the Friends of China and the Mao Tse-Tung Thought Institute. Although he has only a small personal following, MANCHANDA usually manages to muster about 100 supporters on demonstrations and, surprisingly, he has some standing in international pro-Chinese communist circles.

The Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding claims a nationwide membership of some 1,200 but its activities have been confined to the holding of orderly meetings in support of China.

- 77 -

Trotskyists in Britain believe that the continuance of capitalism will eventually produce a situation in which the working class will overthrow the system. In the meantime they are preparing for the revolution by building militant groups and generally extending their influence. While trotskyist groups were responsible for comparatively little public disorder during 1972, there was a marked increase of interest shown in industrial matters and the principal groups produced an enormous volume of literature. Nevertheless, the total number of dedicated trotskyists is relatively small and, while their potential for mischief-making is substantial, they have no capacity to sustain any campaign of real significance.

The International Socialism Group, with an intellectual appeal, is the largest of the trotskyist organisations with a membership in April of 2,351 divided among 113 branches spread throughout the country. The expulsion of the Trotskyist Tendency in December last year resulted in the loss of about 50 members. The Group continued to operate from premises at 6 Cottons Gardens, E2, and the executive, as the inner body of the 41-strong national committee, changed little during the year. It comprised:

Tony CLIFF
Jim HIGGINS
(national secretary)
Jim NICHOL
(national treasurer)
Privacy
(industrial organiser)
Roger PROTZ
(editor - "Socialist
Worker")

Roger ROSEWALL
Duncan HALLAS
Mike CAFFOOR
Ian BIRCHALL
Chris HARMAN
Frank CAMPBELL
Chris DAVISON

The Group has for several years attempted to recruit on an industrial front in accordance with its theory of replacing the capitalist system by full workers' control,

- 78 -

and during 1972 it was successful in establishing a strong industrial base. Influential "fractions", the equivalent of CPGB "cells", existed in at least 14 major industries and a conference on industrial matters sponsored in Manchester on 30 January was attended by some 700 delegates. The Group was active with propaganda in the disputes involving the miners and the dockers and, as a long term venture, an International Socialists Information Service was set up in October to collect background information on individuals and organisations to assist in the course of industrial disputes.

Although the vast majority of the Group's resources were directed towards the encouragement of strikers, sit-ins and industrial agitation, it campaigned on a large number of issues, including rents, racialism and Ireland, and was active in the media, especially the press, through its influence on the nebulous Free Communications Group.

Sales of the "Socialist Worker", a well-produced 16-page weekly paper, rose considerably during the year with an average circulation of over 24,000 copies. With the return of journalist Paul FOOT to the editorial board in October, the Group anticipates a further dramatic increase in 1973. Several thousand copies of rank and file papers specifically for teachers, local government officers, and workers in the power and motor industries as well as numerous pamphlets, were also printed. Additionally, the Group's theoretical review, "IS Journal", started to appear every month, instead of quarterly, in the autumn. All this placed a too heavy burden on the presses of the Group's printing company, SW (Litho) Printers Limited, who had at the same time to undertake sufficient commercial work to offset expenses. This, coupled with the absence of a reliable system for collecting subscriptions resulted in August in debts amounting to £115,000. These were to some extent

relieved by an anonymous donation of £50,000, and new, larger presses have been ordered for delivery early in 1973.

The Socialist Labour League remained under the control of its autocratic general-secretary, Gerry HEALY, and continued to operate from offices at 186A Clapham High Street, SW4. The principal concern of the League during 1972 was with its own development as a broad-based political party. In that respect it apparently absorbed its youth movement, the Young Socialists, and its industrial wing, the All Trades Union Alliance, although both continued to hold their own meetings. A notable change of policy was also seen in the summer when the rigidly held isolationist attitude was dropped and the formation of Councils of Action advocated. Support for such councils was envisaged from trade unionists and tenants to form "the fighting base of the working class in preparing and maintaining the General Strike". Following the holding of a number of well attended meetings initially, little has since been heard of the Councils and the League appears to have reversed its decision to allow discourse with other groups.

The League confined its activities during the year mainly to industrial circles, being particularly strong in the Midland's motor industry, and with a growing influence in the world of entertainment. Public meetings, although few in number, were well attended and orderly, with a May-Day peak rally of 1,600 persons in London on 7 May. Membership stands at about 2,300 of which the majority is attributable to the Young Socialists because only about a third are dedicated enough to meet the extreme demands in terms of time and money required for full membership. Financial resources are considerable, and in March a bookshop was purchased at 28 Charlotte Street, W1. The League's newspaper,

"Workers Press" edited by Mike BANDA, contained good industrial coverage and had a daily circulation in excess of 20,000. On 1 February its price was increased from 3p to 4p, but at the same time it was enlarged from 4 to 12 pages.

As usual, there was a rapid turnover of members in the Young Socialists and towards the end of the year even some of the leaders appeared to be disillusioned. The majority of members, who are in their late teens, are attracted by well organised social activities, and are used to distribute propaganda and collect funds for the League. Early in the year a national campaign against unemployment, entitled the Right to Work Campaign, was mounted. To publicise this groups of young persons set off from Glasgow, Liverpool, Swansea, Southampton and Deal to march to London, where they met at a rally at the Empire Pool, Wembley, on 12 March. Numbers taking part in the marches were generally small but nearly 4,000 were present at Wembley, the majority being attracted by a "pop" concert which followed an harangue by HEALY. The movement's publication, "Keep Left", which has a content designed to appeal to a young readership, has appeared at weekly intervals since May.

At the end of 1971 the leadership of the International Marxist Group was criticised by the IVth International, of which the Group remains the British Section, for its handling of internal disputes, notably with a faction named The Tendency. A re-appraisal of policy followed at the annual conference in May, and some of the leaders, including Pat JORDAN - one of the founders, resigned their offices, but since they remained on the national committee the resignations appeared to have little effect. Other stalwarts on the 20 strong committee included Tariq ALI, Peter GOWAN, John WEAL, Bob PURDIE, Robin BLACKBURN and Gery LAWLESS. Further preoccupation

with internal matters was seen in the fusion of the Group with the Spartacus League, which was originally intended to be the youth wing but was found to be recruiting from the same sources as the parent body, to the detriment of the latter. The unification was completed in the summer to give the Group a total membership of over 400.

The Group has relied heavily in the past on public demonstrations mounted through a number of front organisations, including the Vietnam Solidarity Committee, Red Circles, Socialist Women, the Black Defence Committee and the Committee to Defend Czech Socialists; in December it was also prominent in the formation of the Indochina Solidarity Conference, an umbrella organisation opposed to the continuing war in Indochina. While this trend appears likely to continue there were indications of a distinct future bias for work in the student, industrial and Irish fields, evidence of which was seen from increasing emphasis in the fortnightly "Red Mole" and the bi-monthly "International", both published from the Group's offices at 182 Pentonville Road, N1.

The Group gave unqualified support to both arms of the Irish Republican Army and played a prominent part during the year in the activities of the Anti-Internment League (See Part I). It is worthy of note that its members were well to the fore in the militant demonstration held under the auspices of the League on 5 February when attempts to breach uniformed police cordons across Downing Street resulted in 127 arrests. In student affairs the Group was active through the medium of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Student Unions, which it dominates. The Committee was responsible for the breakaway from a demonstration organised by the National Union of Students on 23 January of about 1,000 students, who later picketed the offices of the National Coal Board to express their solidarity with the miners then on strike, as well as for the disruptive activities which

occurred during the year at the North London Polytechnic. The only other large demonstration mounted by the Group was a counter-protest, in conjunction with International Socialists, to a rally by the Monday Club on 16 September against the influx of Ugandan Asians. The opposing factions were kept apart by uniformed police and the potentially explosive situation passed off without incident.

The Revolutionary Workers Party, the Revolutionary Socialist League, Workers' Fight and Big Flame were among other trotskyist groupings that existed in London during 1972 but undertook little activity of note.

Support for the Angry Brigade, never very strong in the orthodox anarchist or marxist fields, centred around the Stoke Newington Eight Defence Group, an organisation set up last year by friends of the accused to promote their interests by means of propaganda. Apart from a small demonstration in conjunction with the Anti-Internment League outside the Central Criminal Court on the opening day of the trial and ineffective picketing at the same place during the closing week with the Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners, the Group endeavoured to justify the acts of the Brigade and alleged that the prosecution was an "Establishment Plot".

2



a march from St Paul's Cathedral to Holloway Prison on 7 December and another from Shepherd's Bush to Wormwood Scrubs Prison on 16 December. Both were attended by about 300 supporters of whom a third were International Marxists. This well illustrated the dual standard of the latter and similar bodies, which will support "political" prisoners but not necessarily the activities leading to their imprisonment, and of the "New Left" itself, which is not above accepting support from the "Old Left", which it despises, in order to bolster a demonstration.



- 87 -

Mention must also be made of the Claimants Unions, of which there are over 100 independent branches throughout the country. About 40 of those are loosely affiliated to the National Federation of Claimants Unions, a rather insubstantial body based in Birmingham. On 8-9 April, however, the Federation held its quarterly conference in London and at its conclusion about 120 participants marched to New Scotland Yard to present a petition to the Commissioner complaining against alleged police harassment of claimants. The marchers then made their way to Victoria, where they dispersed without disorder. Branches of the Unions were occasionally utilised by the International Marxist Group and the International Socialists for recruiting purposes during strikes, but they now appear to have abandoned any real hope of a take-over. Most Unions are less concerned with the real needs of claimants than with exploiting the alleged inadequacies of the Welfare State and provoking confrontations, preferably violent, with authority. There were sporadic incidents at local Department of Health and Social Security offices but police action was usually confined to ejecting the disruptive elements. In London links were noticeable with individuals who belonged to the Alternative Society. An example of this was seen on 17 February when Privacy a supporter of the Stoke Newington Eight and active member of several left-wing extremist groups, was one of three members of a Claimants Union who were arrested after causing damage to a DHSS office in Hackney. Although no connection was traced, it was significant that an unsuccessful attempt was made to set fire to another DHSS office nearby the following night.

Finally, notice must be taken of Women's Liberation activities in which anarchists, although by no means predominant, played an active part. A spring conference on the subject was held in Manchester on 25-26 March and attended by 500 women, many patently emotionally unstable and quite paranoically

opposed to men. The proceedings were chaotic and, despite the presence of maoist and trotskyist groups, the proceedings were dominated by anarchists, a large proportion of whom were from the Gay Liberation Front. The section from the Grosvenor Avenue commune in North London was distinctly larger than on previous occasions and was, together with other representatives of the Alternative Society, opposed to organisation in any form. By contrast, an autumn conference on 3-5 November at Acton Town Hall was orderly and no attempts were made by extremists to manipulate the proceedings. As with the composition of the Women's Liberation movement generally, the majority of the 2,000 women attending, although inclined to the political left, were not politically motivated. In the London area the maoist Revolutionary Women's Union - formerly Women's Liberation Front - and the Socialist Women, controlled by the International Marxist Group, were among the most active groups during the year but neither held any significant demonstrations, confining their activities in the main to private discussion meetings.

The Black Unity and Freedom Party, of Privacy SE15, continued to be one of the more active of the black extremist organisations in London and held a number of minor demonstrations on various issues. The largest was on 13 August when 235 persons attended a meeting at Camden Town Hall, NW1, to commemorate two deceased members of the "Soledad Brothers". Several of the speakers, including a representative of the Stoke Newington Eight, took the opportunity to air their grievances concerning the oppression of the coloured community in general and alleged brutality in Brixton by police in particular, against whom militant action was urged. The Party is the most politically inspired of the coloured groups and has links with the maoist London Alliance in Defence of Workers Rights, whose white supporters were prominent at several of the demonstrations. The quality of "Black Voice", the Party's quarterly, improved greatly during the year.