

# DEFEND THE LEFT PRESS IN BRITAIN

March 28, 1977

From: Philip Agee Stanley Aronowitz  
Noam Chomsky William Kunstler  
James Weinstein Stan Weir

Dear Friend,

We are writing to draw your attention to a new wave of attacks on civil liberties now taking place in Britain. Among the victims is a signatory to this letter, Philip Agee. Another is *Socialist Worker*, Britain's largest circulation weekly socialist newspaper (30,000 per week).

In the first of four libel actions being taken against it by leading trade union officials, on February 28th, 1977, *Socialist Worker* was fined \$17,000--the equivalent of a year's wages for the entire *Socialist Worker* staff. The offending article was a satirical attack on a union for encouraging its members to take cheap vacations in General Franco's Spain. The London *Times* newspaper reprinted part of this article and was also approached by the union's lawyers. Its refusal to settle, however, was not taken any further. Instead the attack was mounted exclusively on *Socialist Worker*.

Other libel actions coming up deal with articles on the firing of a woman who had just had an abortion, on discrimination against hiring black workers, and with an advertisement for an allegedly libellous rank and file pamphlet not even printed by *Socialist Worker* that attacked the undemocratic character of another big union.

Hal Draper writes:

"The utilization of libel actions, brought on specious grounds with the aim of breaking a socialist group financially, is a vicious threat to civil liberties anywhere, whether in Britain or in the United States. At this time the victim is the British *Socialist Worker*. But Americans too should raise their voices in protest and do what they can to aid the defense of that paper against this sort of attack, regardless of political differences."

We would like to urge you to act to defend the left press in Britain. The total damages against *Socialist Worker* are expected to be \$40,000-\$50,000, easily enough to close it down. Help prevent this happening.

Send checks to the North American SW Defense Appeal  
635 Sixth Avenue, 2nd Floor  
New York, N.Y. 10011

Donations will be acknowledged.