

# national RANK AND FILE conference

## organising committee SECRETARY

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### THE CHILE CAMPAIGN

The Organising Committee has been running a campaign of adoption of Chilean trade unionists over the past six months. During this time over 70 branches, trades councils and stewards committees have committed themselves to action on behalf of prisoners in Chilean gaols. This has involved the sending of money to prisoners' families, participating in demonstrations against the Junta, and recently in delegation to the Chilean Embassy, which was reported in the national press.

In the last six weeks, the Organising Committee has secured a number of job offers for groups of Chilean trade unionists.

Of most significance have been jobs offered to Chilean miners. The South Wales Area Executive of the NUM has got this guarantee following talks with the National Coal Board. We are now following this up with the Yorkshire and Kent areas of the NUM.

Pressure from Rank and File Teachers has brought discussions between the NUT and the Department of Education about jobs for 30 Chilean teachers. The problem here is recognition of Chilean teaching qualifications - but an agreement in principle has been reached.

Jobs are also in the pipeline for three Chilean hospital workers in the London Area.

An electrician has been offered a job by Lambeth Council in south London following an approach by the local NALGO branch. (At the time of writing we are waiting for a letter confirming this).

We have received a letter from the wife of a jailed agricultural workers union leader, from the contents of the letter it is clear that we must get him out of Chile very quickly. THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE NEEDS IMMEDIATELY AN OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THIS MAN, we ask all supporters to approach their employers to secure a letter offering him any kind of job (he has worked in the past as a textile machinist and a driver).

We are in contact with the Home Office who have said that they will help us to place Chilean refugees in jobs. Soon there will be a number of Chilean workers released to come to this country. It is essential that they are welcomed immediately into the British trade union movement.

### Delegation to Chilean Embassy

A delegation from the Organising Committee and supporters went to the Chilean Embassy on 14th March. In a two and a half hour meeting with three representatives of the Junta, our delegation protested at the violation of trade union rights, demanded the release of trade union prisoners and made it clear that we are ready to campaign for all out blacking of Chilean trade in this country.

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We protested to the Embassy about the thousands of ordinary trade unionists tortured, killed, victimised and gaoled since the coup. This delegation was the largest and longest ever received by the Chileans; they were surprised by the fact that it was rank and file trade unionists making the protest and also by what we, and those who have taken up the Chile campaign, have done.

The Embassy promised that it would find out about prisoners we had named and also that it would consider an application for a Rank and File delegation to visit Chile later this year to inspect conditions of trade unionists in prison. The delegation was composed of members of the Organising Committee, shop stewards from the London docks, London airport and two London hospitals, and representatives from the CPSA, NALGO, NUJ and ASTMS. A full report on the delegation has been made to Amnesty International, the Chile Solidarity Campaign and the Chile Committee for Human Rights. A copy will be made available to any Rank and File delegating bodies, on request.

#### Liverpool Demonstration

The Organising Committee supported the Chile Solidarity March in Liverpool on March 15th in common with a large number of other trade union bodies. We issued a leaflet about the adoption campaign which met with a favourable response.

#### Blacking

The Organising Committee is in consultation with the Chile Solidarity Campaign on the ways in which a programme of blacking of Chilean trade can be stepped up in the trade union movement. Despite the commitment of large numbers of union ECs, the job remains to be done by rank and file members. We have met with dock shop stewards to consider the various possibilities. We are in possession of a very long and uncertain list of companies which may be trading with Chile which is being broken down at the moment. We will be contacting specific shop stewards committees shortly.

In conclusion we repeat our urgent need for job offers - in the form of a letter from the employer - for Chilean trade unionists. Unemployment and short-time do not of course make this any easier, but the jobs are desperately needed for trade union militants who are defenceless before the most vicious regime in the world. We now have the ability to communicate details of our Chile campaign directly to the resistance through a radio station in Algeria, 'Voice of the Resistance', which is on the air for half an hour each night. Those who are actively organising against the Junta now know that trade unionists ten thousand miles away are supporting their cause, and it will be encouraging to them to know that their brothers and sisters in gaol are receiving a real expression of solidarity from the British Trade Union Movement.

Yours fraternally

Dave Shonfield