

WHAT TRADE UNIONISTS CAN DO ABOUT CHILE

You may feel that there is nothing you can do to help our brother trade unionists in Chile. If so, you would be mistaken. A lot can be done by your union organisation if you decide to help. The Organising Committee of the National Rank and File Conference urges you to take up one or more of the following proposals:

ADOPTING PRISONERS

The Organising Committee has accurate lists of trade unionists imprisoned by the military junta. If your organisation agrees to adopt one of these prisoners you should undertake the following steps:

- a) Write to the Chilean Embassy, Devonshire St, London W1, saying you understand there are jailed trade unionists in Chile, protesting at this, and requesting some information on the whereabouts of your prisoner and conditions for him.
- b) Write to the Rt Hon James Callaghan, Foreign Secretary, House of Commons, along the same line and asking him to take up your case with the Chilean embassy.
- c) Encourage other TU bodies in your locality to adopt prisoners. We will provide relevant lists of prisoners.
- d) Write to Amnesty International (South American Section), 53, Theobalds Rd, London WC1X 8SP, telling them who you have adopted and asking for any further information they have.
- e) Inform us - the Organising Committee - of your actions. This will enable us to ensure that adoptions do not overlap, and to liaise with refugee organisations. We will be organising delegations to protest to the Chilean Embassy - tell us if you wish to send a delegate.

GET A WORK PERMIT

There is only one way we can get trade unionists out of gaol and away from the torturers: getting them employment in this country. This just exchanges exile for prison life, but Chilean workers are understandably keen to be released, even if it does mean exile. In several cases the authorities are already prepared to release prisoners to exile. This means that we can secure their release by getting work permits. To do this you have first to 'persuade' your employer to offer a job. Then you must get an OWL form from your Employment Exchange. The employer should fill this in and return it. It takes about two weeks for a permit to be sent to your employer. The trade union must ensure at this point that a photocopy of the permit is obtained. One copy should be sent to the Organising Committee so that we can inform Amnesty International. The actual procedure of getting the worker out of Chile will then take place - the real test of this will only come when we have the first permit.

SUPPORT FOR CHILEAN FAMILIES

Inflation is running at about 450% a year in Chile. Average wages are not even enough to buy food for the average family. Money is therefore important. We cannot ensure that money goes to an individual family, but the Church Committees there will give the money either to named prisoners or to those even more desperately in need. We will pass money on to the Church organisations. Cheques/POs should be made out to the National Rank and File Organising Committee/Chile Account. The money is forwarded through Amnesty International.

BLACKING CHILEAN TRADE

Many union executives are committed to this, but it has been left up to the rank and file. Obviously this is the best way of frightening the Chilean military. We will pass on names of firms trading with Chile, and those taking blacking action if you need them.

I hope your organisation will consider these proposals urgently and do everything to ensure they are taken up.

Yours fraternally,
Roger Cox
(Secretary)