

# Workers' ACTION

12 pages  
15p

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## Tories budget for the rich

THE FIRST Tory Budget, announced on June 12th, was a good Budget for the rich.

ICI boss Maurice Hodgson's 'take-home' pay will go up from £400 to £800 a week. He will receive about £9,500 in back tax on October 5th. Ford boss Terence Beckett will gain £300 a week, British Leyland boss Michael Edwardes £200.

The same goes for every exploiter and profiteer whose accountant is slow enough for them to pay the tax they should at present.

For judges, top civil servants, and armed forces chiefs, an extra £100 or so a week top up a 25% rise they got only a couple of weeks ago.

Controls over investment and purchase of property abroad have also been lifted. And while all other state spending is cut, the armed forces will get £100 million more.

For working people, it was different.

The increase in Value Added Tax to 15% is reckoned to raise prices by about 3½% overall. True, food and some other goods are exempt from VAT. But that price rise by itself will nearly wipe out the income tax cuts — worth a grand total of £1.08 a week for a married couple with two children on £60 a week — and the recent rise in child benefits, too.

And there's worse. Increased interest rates and increased fuel taxes will mean a further general rise in prices.

The sick, the unemployed and the needy all come off worse. Prescription charges go up from 20p to 45p. Local authorities have £300 million hacked off current

spending and £440 million off capital spending. Also, cash limits will not be raised to cover inflation.

That will mean jobs cut and all sorts of services cut. Education and housing will suffer particularly.

Trade union leader attacked the Budget. David Basnett of the GMWU said: "The trade union movement has a duty to act.

"It will respond politically with a united campaign in defence of public services and it will respond industrially to defend members' living standards and jobs".

But the only plan for action that has yet come from TUC General Secretary Len Murray is a 'demand' (?) for new talks at Downing St with Mrs Thatcher.

★ The first step in the response must be a drive for pay rises at least sufficient to offset the price rises. And we must demand automatic cost of living increases to protect pay against future price rises.

★ The Tories' cuts will decimate jobs. We need a fight for a shorter working week: cut hours, under workers' control, with no loss of pay. 35 hour week now!

★ Against the public service cuts, demand: millions for schools and hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Fight for the nationalisation without compensation of the banks and financial institutions, and the lifting of the interest burden on public services.

★ In each area, trade unions, Labour Parties and tenants' organisations must unite against the cuts — and demand that Labour councils stand firm against the government. No rent and rate rises!

## Tribute to a fighter



THOUSANDS of black people, anti-racists and socialists paid tribute to Blair Peach on Wednesday June 12th.

At Southall, the night before, 8,000 filed past the open coffin at the Dominion Cinema. Then bearded, turbaned community elders, with fists clenched, sent the coffin on its way.

At Brick Lane, on its way east, the cortege was met by representatives of the Bengali community. 'He fought with us. We will never forget him'.

From the school where he taught, in Bow, 5000 people marched silently the three miles

to the cemetery, taking over the narrow streets of Newham. They carried red carnations and wore badges proclaiming, 'Southall is innocent. Drop the charges'.

As the march went, people coming out of work joined in.

Teachers from all over London had come, and in huge numbers from East London, many in anger at the dry-boned, mealy-mouthed bureaucratic attempts to stifle the demonstration. The National Union of Teachers Executive refused to send its national banner for fear of being associated with the Anti Nazi League, and was threatening action against

teachers' union branches that sent money to the memorial fund. In Newham, the education authority tried to restrict the attendance of teachers to 32, in case the funeral became a 'political event'.



Of course it was a political event! Instead of the mumbo-jumbo of priests or vicars, the Internationale rang out over the cemetery. Instead of officials and clerics on the procession, there were community groups, trades councils, and trade unions, with banners from the National Union of Railwaymen, the National Union of Public Employees, and others. Speeches emphasised that Blair Peach was a fighter.

"He was a different kind of teacher", an ex-pupil, Ernest Carr, told the crowd. "I am of mixed race, and it was for me and others of my colour that Blair Peach went to Southall. He was a man of high ideals, but ideals are no good if they are not put into practice. He always practised what he preached. His killing should be regarded in the same light as the killing of Steve Biko".

And since Blair Peach was a fighter, the best way to commemorate him now is to continue the battle for the ideals for which he died in Southall on April 23rd: by fighting to wipe out fascism and to get Blair Peach's murderers, the police Special Patrol Group, disbanded.

### FUND DRIVE

Received since last WA:  
Basingstoke ..... £20  
Birmingham ..... £55  
Cardiff ..... £11  
Leicester ..... £100  
Machen (Gwent) ..... £5  
Manchester ..... £16.10  
North London ..... £28.70  
Northampton ..... £5  
This week's total ... £240.80

Total to date ..... £376.80  
Target ..... £500  
to help finance the expansion of *Workers' Action* to 12 pages.  
We still need ..... £123.20  
Send contributions to: Fund, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

### INSIDE

MAGAZINE SECTION: How the Industrial Relations Act was defeated; and Rosa Luxemburg on the mass strike

..... p.8-11



## Southall Action Committee plans a public inquiry

THE ASIAN community in Southall have demonstrated how much faith they have in the police investigations into the death of Blair Peach. Despite police claims to the contrary, there was a virtual boycott of the police caravan in Southall.

McNee again gave the lie to his claims that the response was good when he suggested that those who didn't want to be seen in Southall speaking to the police should go to Scotland Yard to give their statements.

The Southall Action Committee was set up after April 23rd to organise the defence of the 350 arrested and fundraising. It is also campaign-

ing to mobilise the black community and the labour movement against police, seeing the Southall events not as an isolated incident but as one stemming from the role of the police in a racist state.

As part of its campaign, the Committee has asked the National Council for Civil Liberties to initiate an independent public enquiry.

Finding the individual SPG member who killed Blair Peach is only part of the story. The driver of an SPG van on April 23rd has been suspended, apparently for refusing to cooperate with the CID detectives who are

investigating the death of Blair Peach. Scotland Yard said it was for 'disciplinary reasons'.

The driver was detained for 4 days after a home-made cosh was found in a locker at an SPG depot. Last week an independent pathologist said that Peach had been killed with "a lead-weighted rubber cosh or hose-pipe filled with lead shot, or some like weapon", and not the standard issue police truncheon.

But are such coshes common in the SPG? Why are they allowed? The SPG breeds brutality. Who is responsible? These are the questions that need to be asked.

That is why the demand for an official public inquiry is still important — as well as the demand for the dissolution of the SPG.

The procedure for the NCCL inquiry has not been finalised yet, but it will take the form of a panel consisting of 'notables' which will sit five or six times and hear evidence. This could take up to six months, after which a report will be issued.

Neither this inquiry (nor an official public inquiry) can solve anything in themselves. They can only provide back-up for the campaign launched by the Southall Action Committee, and efforts everywhere to

win the labour movement to support the self-defence of the black communities.

Morale in Southall is high — despite continuing police harassment and passport checks, and threats of deportation against many of the 350 arrested who do not have British passports. The Action Committee estimates that over £100,000 will be needed for the defence. £10,000 has already come in from the Indian Workers' Association, from temples, and from collections in local factories, but more is needed. Send c/o IWA, 16-18 Featherstone Rd, Southall, or SYM Fund, 12 Featherstone Rd, Southall.

JO THWAITES



## The 'barrios' explode in Nicaragua's civil war



Sandinista guerrillas (above, and top left): fighting to oust Somoza... and then what?

NICARAGUA'S Interior Minister is reported to have fled the country. A general strike has shut down the capital, Managua, since 4th June. The leftist Sandinista guerrillas have engaged army units in full-scale battles, and they have temporarily held some of the country's largest towns.

The only thing preventing the collapse of the Somoza family's 45-year dictatorship is now the elite army unit, the National Guard. It is a unit that has been under the personal control of the Somoza family since Anastasio Somoza senior was installed in power by the USA in 1933.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) began its 'final offensive' against the regime of Anastasio Somoza Junior at the end of May. This took up the threads from the action last August, when a spectacular kidnapping of two ministers and 46 MPs from the Chamber of Deputies by the FSLN led to revolts in a number of towns.

By June 6th the FSLN controlled most of the country's second city, Leon, and the city of Masaya, only 20 miles from the capital. Local army units were not capable



Nicaragua's air force is pounding the working class areas of the capital with bombs. But dictator Somoza cannot last long.

of resisting while the National Guard was embroiled in battles with FSLN forces in other areas of the country.

By June 8th the National Guard had emerged victorious against two separate

insurrections in the north and south of the country, through superior firepower and control of the air. They turned their attention to the cities.

Masaya was attacked by air force bombardments on June 9th, and was taken by the National Guard the next day as poorly armed FSLN supporters and fleeing civilians were strafed from the air.

But the regime has not secured itself. As National Guard units marched out of Managua on the 9th for Masaya, the capital's slum areas, the 'barrios', exploded. They were sealed off with barricades, and food and medical supplies were gathered together to keep up the armed resistance in the capital.

The few remaining National Guard units in the city made only token efforts to attack the barrios, waiting until units returned from Masaya. On Monday 11th Somoza ordered his air force to bomb the city into submission.

The weakness of the Nicaraguan regime and its reliance on only one body of loyal troops is a result of the personal domination of the Somoza family. They have tried to squeeze out other bosses and built a state racked by corruption and opposed by almost every section of the population.

In moves towards a general strike last September the main bosses' organisations, the Chamber of Commerce and the Nicaraguan Development Institute, actually supported the strike. The bosses have been forced to go along with radical action in the hope of reasserting their own control when Somoza's inevitable fall takes place.

The US government has withdrawn its aid to Somoza's regime, and other Central American dictatorships are unwilling to intervene on his side. For the USA, the best outcome would be the 'government of national salvation' called for by the bosses' organisations and the opposition Conservative

Party, protecting business interests generally and encountering less explosive opposition.

While the Sandinista guerrillas have shown themselves able to launch spectacular military actions and briefly win control of the cities, their militarist strategy tends to mean the advances are easily overturned again once the National Guard marches in.

The logic of a situation where a general strike is coupled with workers seizing

their own areas of the cities, to control everything from defence to food distribution, goes far beyond just ensuring 'rights'. It opens the way for the workers to rule, eliminating capitalist exploitation and landlordism and threatening the hold of US imperialism and the shaky military dictatorships it supports in other Central American countries. But for that outcome a different political leadership will be needed.

NIK BARSTOW

## Socialist Organiser

Socialist Organiser groups are being set up in every area where the paper has active supporters. For more information, or for details of your local Socialist Organiser group, send this form to Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16. For a copy of the June Socialist Organiser, send 22p in stamps.

NAME.....  
ADDRESS.....

## Making Ireland an issue in the USA

Pressure is mounting on politicians in the United States to get off their backsides and do something about the continuing British military occupation of northern Ireland.

The public statements of people like Representative Mario Biaggi, chairman of the Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs, has sparked an enthusiastic response in many sections of the US public... and howls of rage from British politicians.

Much of the campaign has recently been centred around the proposed sale of \$28 million-worth of arms to Britain by the USA. Lester Wolff made the following statement in the US House of Representatives on April 9th:

...if we are ever to put any teeth into the human rights legislation then I think it is about time that we started to concern ourselves with some of these areas which Congress now has the opportunity of responding to, and that is the limitation on the sale of any type of military equipment to any country and (we should) also consider the authority which the Committee on For-

eign Affairs and the Congress have in restricting those particular sales.

'On that point I should just like to inform the House that it will be my responsibility, as well as that of a number of other members to call some questions into account in the whole area of denial of human rights in Northern Ireland and to bring this question up... when the sale will be required to be consummated.'

Governor Carey of New York

has denounced the British presence in northern Ireland as '...an affront to the entire world community' and suggested economic sanctions if the British government did not respond to the criticisms of continuing denial of human rights. Dr. Kevin Cahill, a major advisor to President Carter and joint author with Carey of a report condemning the British government in northern Ireland, stated that 'somehow the two parties in

England decided that this [i.e. Northern Ireland] is not going to be a political issue. That's like saying in 1962 that civil rights was not to be discussed publicly.'

While British politicians can agree unanimously to let Ireland rot, the same is not possible in the USA with its large and vigorous Irish-American community. Thus US politicians who are far from radical can make statements which would seem revolutionary in

Britain.

But the statements cannot be taken at face value. Men like Carey and Tip O'Neill [Speaker of the House of Representatives] have close links with Dublin premier Jack Lynch. Just as Lynch occasionally denounces Britain, the better to undercut Republican and socialist radicalism in the South, so Carey and O'Neill couple their human rights appeals with active opposition to Irish Republican support groups in the USA.

Biaggi even proposed an independent Northern Ireland state. Both for this plan, and for Lynch's vague plans for a bourgeois united Ireland, prospects of American investment in Ireland are central.

Like Lynch, the Irish-American politicians have no notion of getting involved in any serious struggle against imperialism. As the Irish Republican Information Service points out, 'a trade boycott [of Britain on the Irish issue] of some description is possible, but it will come from sympathetic trade unionists, not the United States Congress.'

JOHN CUNNINGHAM

## Locked up on Army open day

FOUR supporters of the United Troops Out Movement were picked up by police and held for over two hours after an anti-recruitment picket at an Army 'Open Day' at Glencorse Barracks, near Edinburgh, last Saturday, 9th.

The four were picked up as they were driving from a car park some distance from the display. The police called for reinforcements' and

escorted the car and its occupants to a mobile unit. They were questioned for two hours about their political affiliations, what they thought about Ireland, and whether they were members of the IRA! The car was searched and several leaflets were removed.

There were no charges. In fact the 251 UOM supporters on the picket had been careful to get assurances

from the police on duty that no obstruction was being caused and no laws were being broken.

2,000 leaflets were given out, and Edinburgh UOM is continuing its activity. On 26th June, at 7.30pm, Edinburgh Trades Council, it is organising a public meeting with a report-back from delegates from Newcastle Trades Council who recently visited Northern Ireland.

1: THORPE CASE

# So murder is natural, being gay is a defect?

IF IN any circumstances homosexuality can lead to the 'inevitable destruction of a man' — as Mr Peter Taylor QC, summing up the Thorpe prosecution, claimed — this can only mean that such a man is living in an intolerant, bigoted and blinkered society.

Homosexuality in itself never destroyed anyone. Through all the ages and in every society, millions of

men and women have been 'glad to be gay'. They are not odd, not bent, not queer; they simply don't adhere to the 'state religion' of exclusive heterosexuality.

But back in the courtroom, it is not society's intolerance [which, supposedly, drives an aspiring politician to think of murder rather than be an open homosexual] that is on

trial. Nor is Jeremy Thorpe's defect his ambition or his callousness or his ruthlessness or his cowardice.

According to the learned QC, we had witnessed 'the slow but inevitable destruction of a man by the stamp of one defect — his homosexual tendencies'.

This statement, quoted in every newspaper and

all the broadcasting media, is as outrageous and insulting a court pronouncement as Judge McKinnon's greeting to John Kingsley ['one down, one million to go'] Read — 'I wish you well'.

Mr Taylor, no doubt to show what a cultivated gentleman he is, had begun by saying that Jeremy Thorpe's downfall was a tragedy 'of truly Greek or

Shakespearean proportions'. Shakespeare had a lot to say about murderous ambition, and the Greeks were quite sure that no amount of wriggling or cover-ups could get you out of the path of fate. But one thing is for sure: neither Shakespeare nor the ancient Greeks — of all people — had the least idea of condemning homosexuality as a 'defect'...

2: PETROL CRISIS

# Oil moguls pocket the profits and blame the Arabs

THE headlines bristle with news of oil price rises, and newspapers tell stories of shoot-outs between motorists at the petrol pumps. Meanwhile the Arab sheikh replaces the American tycoon as the racist media's popular symbol of unbridled wealth and power.

The scene is set for a new anti-semitism: the scapegoating of the 'Arab' countries for the problems of the industrialised capitalist world. Colonialist racism is turned on its head, with the imperialists making out that they are being oppressed by the third world oil exporters. Greed and corruption cease to be the hallmarks of imperialist plunder and are seen as 'typical of the Arabs'.

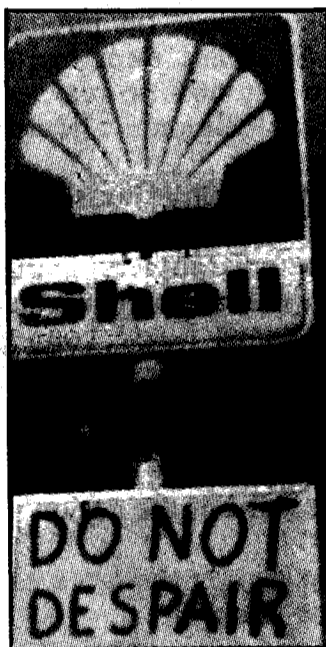
The fact is that the history of the oil industry is a history of imperialist bullying and super-profiteering by means of price fixing, of brutality, greed and corruption by capitalist companies and states.

Nurtured first in the US in the nineteenth century, the quest for more and cheaper oil took the oil companies to every corner of the globe. The Far East, Mexico and Venezuela were the earliest victims of the oil companies' insatiable profit-hunger.

The author of a standard work on the history of the oil industry wrote of Mexico's fate: 'The (Mexican) 1938 nationalisation came after twenty years' shameless exploitation of the country's natural resources for the good of foreign capitalists whose scorn for the government and the people were scarcely veiled, who deliberately refused to submit to the Mexican authorities, the laws it embodied and its efforts to tax the companies, who continuously intervened in domestic politics, who never ceased to corrupt civil servants in the States or in the Federation, who subsidised armed uprisings and maintained armies of white guards in the oil regions'.

Mexico's fate was typical, including for the Middle East. Indeed, the very boundaries between some Arab states were only imposed by the imperialists in order to protect this or that pipeline or retain this or that oilfield.

Until 1950 the history of the oil industry was marked by the absolute domina-



demanding a share in the profits and control of the oil industry.

Yet as late as 1970 the Majors still controlled about 80% of world crude oil exports and 90% of Middle East production. OPEC demands (often supported secretly by the US in order to gain an edge over their oil-importing competitors like Japan and West Germany) were presented in the western press as the attempt by greedy 'haves' to have more at the expense of the ordinary consumer in the west. The consumer was told to blame 'the Arabs' and forget the Rockefellers.

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It would be difficult to imagine a more lying representation of reality. The oil exporting countries are all

ring. The point was in general to secure an artificially high price by outlawing competition and in particular to guarantee the profits of the most costly American fields. The practice, therefore, was to fix the price of Middle East oil arriving in Europe at the price that the equivalent oil coming from the US would need to find to make a good profit for the relatively inefficient American oil fields.

In addition to price-fixing, the taxes levied by the importing country help push the prices even higher. A French economist gives the following breakdown for the price of 'average' crude in France in 1974 (all cost calculation include the addition of profit at the average rate): 0.6% production costs, 3.8% transport costs, 3% refining costs, 4.3% marketing costs, 32.1% tax to the

diplomatic resources used to bolster the dominance of the oil companies.

OPEC is nothing more than a cartel of the underdeveloped exporting nations to limit the plunder by the cartel of the developed importing countries and their companies. It exists to create a united front to fight for a bigger cut of the profits and control of the oil industry. OPEC's attempt to restrict the flow of oil has three related purposes: to keep the price up, to keep the cartel intact, and to prevent a too rapid exhaustion of oil and natural gas.

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A secret US State Department document recently leaked offered a possible extreme solution to OPEC's power: invade the Middle East. The British ruling class impotently advocates cuts in US transport consumption. Some, together with some US economists like Milton Friedman, advocate letting the price rip in America and breaking up the cartel. *Tribune*, the paper that prides itself on keeping the red flag flying, calls for rationing in Britain... 'socialist' rationing, of course, while the *Morning Star* calls for the nationalisation of British oil resources in the North Sea.

As for Labour's Energy Secretary of yesterday and would-be socialist hero of today, Anthony Wedgwood Benn, he has not said a word yet.

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*Workers' Action* advocates the nationalisation without compensation of all oil resources in Britain and their 'downstream' operations: marketing, refining, transportation, etc. Britain should give up all foreign installations and put their respective 'downstream' operations in the hands of the producer countries of the third world.

In the meantime, cut oil to the military, not to the public. Oil workers should organise a committee of enquiry into the companies and publish their findings to expose the real profiteers. The TUC should put its weight behind such an enquiry.



Saudi Arabia's OPEC negotiators: seeking a share of the profits

tion of seven major companies, which succeeded in imposing their will on the producing and consuming countries. The next twenty

years, however, saw the impact on this situation of anti-colonialist ideology and struggles. By 1969, Iran, Venezuela, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Iraq and Libya had each in turn established national oil companies. In 1960 OPEC was set up to try to limit the power of the oil companies. Increasingly, the producer nations

underdeveloped, have all been plundered by imperialism, and all need vast funds if they are to develop industrially and socially. The fabulous wealth of a few emirs does not change the fact that the mass of the population of the oil exporting states is wracked with poverty.

Lies about who is whose victim go together with concealment of the truth about the structure of oil prices. Since the late '20s prices have been fixed by a cartel — a price- and output-fixing

producing country, 38.4% tax to France and 17.7% superprofit.

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This means that the oil companies are fabulously wealthy richer than many third world nations put together. And these profits are secured at public expense — not only because the public pays an inflated price, but because the public pays for the military, financial and

IN BRIEF

SIR Kenneth Keith, chairman of Rolls Royce Ltd and also of the merchant bank Hill Samuel, is fed up with the National Enterprise Board interfering in the company's affairs.

Rolls Royce got £265 million from the NEB last year. Sir Kenneth does not object to that. But he says the NEB does not hand the money over slickly enough. It delays too long and asks too many questions!

Keith admitted that the NEB had never tried to change Rolls Royce policies. But — so he said, in effect — what he wanted from the state, the owners of Rolls Royce, was a good messenger service to hand over the cash, and not anybody asking questions.

Coming at the same time as the Tory plans to sell the most profitable parts of the NEB back to private industry, Sir Kenneth's outburst throws a spotlight on the reality of capitalist state ownership. Far from being an attempt to introduce socialist planning into capitalist industry, state holdings are there to prop up the existing system, are run by champions of that system, and are likely to go back to private ownership as soon as they make a consistent profit.

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*IN A series of articles, the magazine The Leveller is reprinting the minutes of a pact between the BBC and the police which gives the police an increased say in television coverage of the force.*

*Programme plans will have to be submitted to them, and they will be able to hold up anything they object to unless the director-general gives his go-ahead.*

*According to the Guardian, 'The agreement covers only areas which the police consider delicate, such as national security, privacy and matters which are 'sub judice'. It does not extend to news items or to current affairs features on police work'.*

*Nice to know... if it's true. But the same paper points out that the Metropolitan Police started to get heavy with the BBC after their screening of a three-part drama series, 'Law and Order'. The Met didn't like the picture of corruption it painted.*

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**THE GUARDIAN 1:** The *Guardian* was the only big national daily paper to report the case of the Virk brothers (see page 5). It is less racist than the other papers, to be sure. But even this liberal daily managed to headline its report: 'Gaul terms cut for Aslans who attacked whites'.

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**THE GUARDIAN 2:** After the police riot in Southall, James Callaghan claimed that the trouble was all the work of outside agitators. [The NF and the SPG apparently had every right to rampage through Southall, but anti-racists from outside the area had no right to join the protest]. It was soon revealed that almost all of those arrested lived in or near Southall and most of them were Asians.

*Despite this the Guardian — whether out of sloppiness or malice — refers to the anti-NF activities on April 23rd as 'Socialist Workers Party protests'.*



# Why the Garners strike lost

BY LAWRENCE WELCH

THE GARNERS Steak Houses strike ended in defeat on June 11th, after 17 months of hard struggle for union recognition. It ended ultimately as a result of the betrayal of the strike by the TGWU officials; the strikers were determined to fight on but felt unable to do so in the face of TGWU obstruction. A conference was called by the strike committee on 9th June to learn the lessons of the dispute, and was attended by about 120 people. On the platform with the committee were Mrs. Jayaben Desai [Grunwick strike leader], Phil Gilliat from Sandersons, and representatives from the strikes at the Economist Bookshop and Grosvenor Hotel.

## Vicious

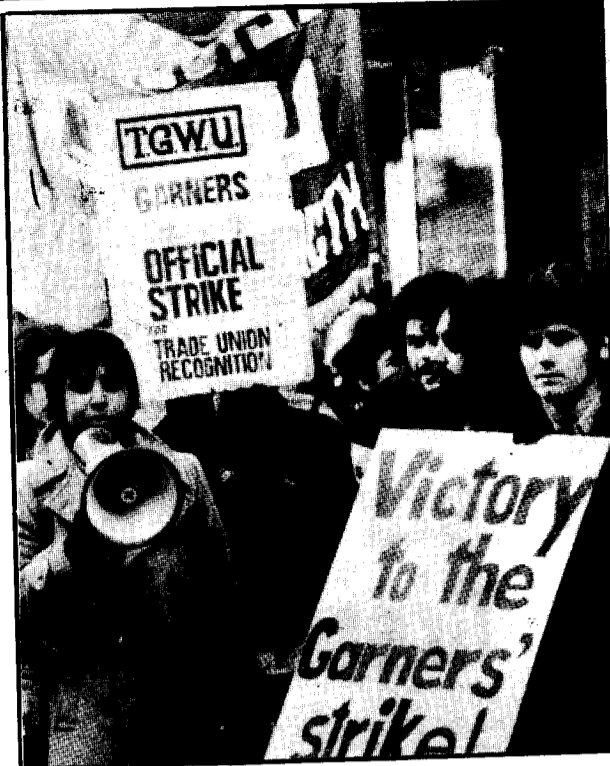
The strike committee presented to the conference a 6-page report on the development of the strike, with particular detail of the days of action and the two previous conferences, and of the role of the union bureaucracy. They concluded with four general points under 'What we have learned from the dispute'. The first states: 'The catering industry is full of immigrant and migrant workers who are ready to join the unions. They work in terrible conditions under the vicious system of temporary work permits for 4 years. The trade union movement as a whole must recog-

nise that it has an enormous responsibility in this industry in which there is only 2% unionisation'. The second point condemns the role of the press, other than the socialist papers, and the third argues that 'no striker, no matter how just the cause, can place any reliance on the impartiality of the class courts and legal system'.

## Defeat

Point 4 reads: 'We remain, despite our defeat, trade unionists. We have not lost confidence in the rank and file of the movement. We believe that when a serious lead was given the response was there and that the basis for winning existed throughout. But this lead never came from the most vital source — the leadership of the TGWU and Region One. We believe that our dispute will not be entirely in vain if workers who take up the fight for union rights are prepared for the role of this leadership, and do not have to learn the hard way.'

A 5-point declaration by the strike committee was proposed and carried unanimously, to be circulated throughout the trade union movement and endorsed as resolutions. The declaration notes that 'none of the demands of the Strike Committee for adequate finance, large-scale effective picketing, and full secondary



blacking, were met by the responsible officials in TGWU Region One'. It draws attention to the particular difficulties of organisation in the catering industry, and demands the removal of the Regional Organiser, Regional Secretary and other 'officials responsible' in addition to the presence of the strike committee at any en-

quiry. It further pledges 'to fight forthwith for the election and full accountability of all labour movement officials in the future'. The last point calls for an automatic procedure in recognition disputes, comprising four demands which the strike committee had made on the union throughout the strike:

- the appointment of at least one full-time union worker with the dispute as his/her sole responsibility, under the control of the Strike Committee;
- effective picketing, including mass pickets when necessary;
- effective blacking, including full secondary blacking;
- special strike pay — 235 per week [comparable to Grunwick] given that the union has experienced many such marathon disputes. [The strike pay at Garners was £8 a week.]

## Focused

Contributions from the floor were dominated by the Workers' Socialist League, who had given the strikers considerable support. They focused their attacks on the union officials and their pretension of being left wing: both of those whose removal is demanded by the strike committee are closely connected with the Communist Party.

The only dissident voice was that of an AUEW official who attempted to excuse the T&G officials on the grounds that they had not understood the dispute, and had had insufficient time [17 months...] to do so.

Mrs. Jayaben Desai made the point that unions are learning various techniques of sabotage: for instance, whereas the strike committee at Grunwicks had financial in-

dependence, money intended for the Garners committee was, and still is, held by the TGWU.

## Factor

Two distinctive features of the organisation of the dispute were the independence of the strike committee from union machinery, forced on them by the inaction of union officials over the first six weeks and a crucial factor in enabling the strike to continue for so long; and the formation of a support group to help with picketing, money-raising, etc., and preventing isolation of the strike. The conference provided a valuable opportunity to examine the experience of the strike and to pass on its lessons through concrete proposals, particularly directed at those involved in recognition disputes.

## Blacked

The strikers are now blacked from jobs in catering and faced further hardship. Donations are gratefully received by the strike committee.

Copies of the Report and Declaration are also available from the strike committee at Room 84, 12-13 Henrietta Street, London WC2



Garners strikers lobby T&GWU officials

## POST OFFICE: NOW TO BUILD A RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

TOM JACKSON was censured by UPW delegates at the union's annual conference at the end of May. But they didn't take the members' anger over the Executive's handling of this year's pay claim to its logical conclusion by passing the more serious vote of no confidence.

Conference censured the whole of the Executive Council for 'bringing the UPW into disrepute during the 1979 negotiations on pay, which culminated in the recommendation for acceptance in the national ballot'. Supporters of the no confidence amendment spoke of the unbelievable bitterness in the branches, and the fact that the General Secretary was completely out of touch with the membership.

Replying, Tom Jackson had the nerve to say he 'resented the suggestion' that he had at any time supported the 5% pay curbs of the government — when everyone knows he was the most staunch supporter of wage controls under the Labour Government.

Jackson still persists in claiming that the offer the Executive Council accepted in March was 'the best settlement' they could get — a lousy 8% with strings attached to consolidation of the '76 and '77 pay settlements. It doesn't seem to occur to Jackson that consolidation is only giving postal workers what is ours by right: in an industry where exceptionally long hours of overtime are the norm — sometimes 30 or even 40 hours a week — the Post Office has robbed workers of millions of pounds by paying overtime rates on 1974 rates of pay.

What goes by almost unquestioned is the fact that the 1975, '76 and '77 rises are being served up to postal workers twice — the first time round as supplements, the second time round as consolidation. Although this year's original pay offer (rejected by 6-1 against) was only 8%, it was presented by the EC as 12% because it included part-consolidation. And workers were being asked to pay for this crumb through increased efficiency!

Jackson tried to argue at Conference that the efficiency agreements were only for show — he asked delegates to believe that although the union would have agreed to the introduction of part time workers, 'any branch which, under the terms of the agreement did not want part timers would have the backing of Union HQ'. Members were being asked to believe that HQ would fight against something which was already union policy, when they have clearly shown their inability to fight for anything.

Or almost anything — the exception came when Jackson had to put up a fight for his job as General Secretary. He managed to hang on despite the disgusting sell-out now bulldozed through — six months after the annual pay increase date of January 1st.

Another very important amendment reflecting the dissatisfaction with the EC was the one calling for officers elected after 1981 to stand for re-election every five years — an attempt to make the decision-makers accountable to those they make the decisions for.

As Ernie Dudley, the mover, explained, 'When you elect a general officer to HQ you are not electing him to a rest home but to one of the most responsible jobs in the UPW'. The amendment was unfortunately lost, but only by the narrow margin of 10,587 votes to 8,124.

Jackson patted himself on the back at Conference for achieving a settlement which workers will actually get in their pockets six months' late. He tried to argue that it was not possible to see a trend, or a going rate, until almost the end of February'. And now he is pushing for the pay date to be moved from January 1st to July 1st — in order 'to see exactly what happens to other groups on a strictly comparable basis'. Post Office workers must protest against this attitude of letting other workers do their fighting for them.

The deal finally accepted is 8%, 8% on allowances, and a reduction in incremental scales together with consolidation of the previous supplement of 7% as from June 1st 1979. There will be ongoing discussions on consolidation of the '76 and '77 pay awards and on a payment for moving the annual pay date.

Pay is only one of the issues which urgently call for the building of a national rank and file movement in the UPW. A militant rank and file is needed to put up alternatives to Jackson and his crowd on the fight for jobs, the fight for a democratic union, the fight for a shorter working week and the fight to stop the hiving off of sections of the Post Office to private industry.

MARIAN MOUND

## NUT left moves towards unity

RANK & FILE TEACHER held its annual conference last weekend (9th-10th) during a period of industrial action over the salary claim, and three days before the funeral of Blair Peach, who was a leading member of R&F Teacher before his death at the hands of the SPG in Southall.

The conference confirmed the healthy growth of the organisation during the past year — a doubling of its membership and increased sales of its paper were reflected in the numbers and morale at conference. Numerous new groups have been founded outside London, while traditional strongholds that have survived years of downturn are recruiting again. Most important, many teachers' associations with little previous R&F presence have bombarded the NUT Executive with resolutions on the pay issue, calling for the stepping up of industrial action along the lines argued by R&F and other militants.

Internal democracy has been improved. There have been national delegate meetings during the year as an advisory body for the elected Executive, which refreshingly does not have a London-based majority.

A motion was passed unopposed endorsing cooperation on specific issues — such as joint election slates, conference resolutions and the organisation of educational conferences — with the Socialist Teachers' Alliance. The motion stopped short of recognis-

ing that the common ground between the organisations is sufficient to make a fusion both possible and desirable; and it blurred over the fact that the STA was set up in the first place because of the lack of democracy in R&F, rather than because of political disagreements. Nevertheless, it lays the basis for future joint activity against the union bureaucracy.

The conference also discussed how to relate to militants in the other major teachers' union, the NAS/UWT. Although on paper the NUT has far more progressive policies on educational issues and on social questions such as racism and women's rights, the key task is to involve NAS/UWT members in joint action at school level against the bureaucratic leaderships of both unions. R&F will fight to recruit NAS/UWT activists to the NUT on the basis of fighting the union leadership.

Motions drawn up for next year's NUT annual conference include a salaries motion which calls for flat-rate increases and opposition to comparability, arbitration, and possible incomes policies. The motion on racism demands an end to immigration controls, affiliation to the Anti-Nazi League, and the scrapping of the police Special Patrol Group.

The motion on sex discrimination will raise for the first time in the union demands relating to discrimination against gay teachers, as well as de-

mands for women's rights — abortion, maternity leave, security of tenure, and nursery facilities. A motion on union democracy will call for restoration of the right of local associations to sanction industrial action, and the annual election of all union officials.

Other motions call for opposition to corporal punishment, for pupils' rights, and for a fight against the attacks on education.

There was a debate on falling rolls, which began to clarify some of the key tasks facing teachers. However, there wasn't enough time to hammer out a coherent strategy, and surprisingly the conference rejected the demand of 'no school closures'. The argument was that it was tactically better to insist on job maintenance, smaller classes, better conditions of work, and the value of small schools, while not ruling out the possibility of some schools with poor buildings and facilities closing.

Overall, R&F Teacher has responded well to the upturn in teachers' militancy and is making an increasing impact on the union leadership on a whole range of issues. As long as its leadership continues to avoid past mistakes in stifling internal democracy and in sectarian mistrust of other teacher militants, then the prospect of a strong opposition in the NUT is now better than for a long time.

CHEUNG SIU MING



# The wall crumbles but the struggle lives on

**DURING THE** early hours of 8th June, a massive act of vandalism was perpetrated on behalf of Capital. Morgan Crucible Company, a multinational which intends to develop the Battersea riverside site on which it stands for offices and luxury flats, almost completely demolished the 256 foot mural covering its wall.

The mural was the work of Brian Barnes, a local artist, painted over two years with the help of friends and residents, and only given its final lacquering six months ago.

The idea of a mural arose from discussion in the Battersea Redevelopment Action Group (BRAG), which was fighting for two derelict sites at Battersea Bridge to be used for public recreation and council housing, both urgently

needed by Battersea residents.

The second public inquiry into use of the sites reported in February 1978, giving Morgan as developers the permission they required, and granting residents nothing. The wall of Morgan's factory was exposed after the demolition of a Halfway House, and was separated from the road by a stretch of grass. Local residents set up a 'Wandsworth Mural Workshop', and obtained permission from Morgan to paint the wall.

Not only did it add welcome life to the otherwise bleak site, but it served very well to publicise the issue and to gain support for BRAG's demand that the sites should be for public use.

The mural depicted a huge broom sweeping the

dirty and smelly factories of the Battersea riverside, the projected tower blocks and office buildings, along with the planners and speculators, into a holocaust, leaving the area for parks, playgrounds, and residents' use.

Although those who worked on the wall always knew that it was unpopular with Morgan and might eventually be demolished, they hoped at least to save it for the site. It came to symbolise a better Battersea, and pressure was building up around the issue of the wall itself in addition to the question of the use of the two sites.

Morgan are not intending to develop immediately, it appears, as the market for the expensive building they plan is poor at present, and there are disagreements over the shar-

ing of profits with the builders, Wates. Demolition of the whole factory will take a year; so far, only the wall has been destroyed, without warning. The one factor clearly absent from Morgan's calculations is residents' need, for housing and for open space.

Since the demolition, Brian Barnes has painted, among the remaining flames, Morgan's chairman burning to death, along with the chief architect and Lord Harlech from the board of directors. Lord Harlech holds a paintbrush made by Rowney, a subsidiary of Morgan and manufacturer of paints and artists' materials. Apart from providing a useful creative outlet for his anger, Mr Barnes commented that these figures 'improve it artistically'.

The morning the demoli-

tion was discovered, Brian Barnes made a public protest, supported by several hundred people dismayed by the spiteful and unnecessary destruction of a much-loved local asset. The police piled in. Early in the demonstration, the Special Patrol Group arrived, armed and with riot shields, and kept the demonstrators from joining Mr Barnes on the remains of the wall. The crowds did not disperse until late evening, and many continued their protest outside the police station where Mr Barnes and others arrested were taken.

Brian Barnes is facing charges of threatening behaviour and obstruction. Six others were also charged. Their cases have been deferred to October.

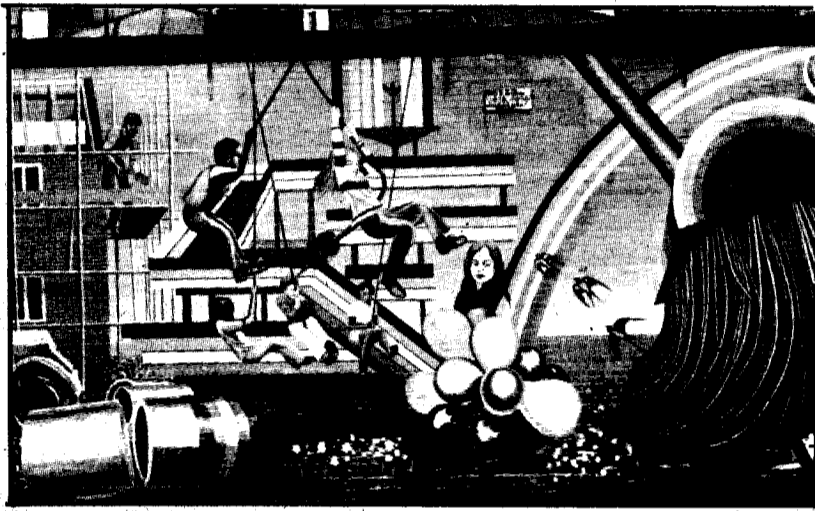
Mr Barnes is, with the help of a firm of solicitors

specialising in art matters, investigating the possibility of legal redress for the demolition of his work, and of future safeguarding of wall paintings. He would also like to see artists boycott Rowney materials.

The fight over the use of the sites continues, and BRAG hopes that sufficient pressure will be put on Morgan for them to sell the land to Lambeth council, which is interested in part of the site for council housing. They are seeking support through union channels to prevent further demolition, and plan to picket any firm which takes it on.

There is a public meeting at 8pm on Friday 15th June at Latchmere Baths, Latchmere Rd, Battersea, fund, c/o David Imberg, 1 Stormont Rd, SW11.

MANDY WILLIAMS



## SENTENCES REDUCED ON VIRK BROTHERS

**THE VIRK** brothers defence campaign scored a limited success on Friday June 8th when, after a picket outside the Royal Courts of Justice, an appeal judge reduced the brothers' sentences from seven, three and two years to 3 years, 18 months, and one year.

But police tried to get their own back by harassing the picket and making two arrests.

The Virks were mending their car outside their home in East London when they were abused and provoked by white racist thugs. They defended themselves and a fight started. The Virks called the police... only to be arrested themselves and later given heavy sentences.

The picket on June 8th, about 200 strong, was mainly composed of Sikhs, with a few supporters from the white left. At first the police agreed to a picket of 50,

saying that the remaining 150 would be allowed to march through the City and past the courts. At the last minute the police suddenly decided the march would not be allowed to march past the courts.

When the Sikhs tried to push forward, two were arrested. The demonstration staged a sit-down, but was forced to move off.

The police then said the picket could only be ten people, not 50.

At the same time, 20 supporters of Housing Action and the London Squatters' Union were also picketing the courts, over the eviction of 50 squatters from the Ferry Lane Estate in North London. The houses, owned by the GLC, were squatted by Housing Action as a protest at the GLC's plan to sell them off. Local tenants and trade unionists supported this protest.

Just as the Virk Brothers demonstration was stopped, the police moved in to break up the squatters' picket and arrested seven.

The next day, when the seven appeared at Bow St Magistrates' Court, 30 supporters picketed that court. The police stepped in again, arresting seven more people, and re-arresting one of the first seven.

In both cases, those arrested were subjected to sexist and offensive abuse, along with remarks like 'Blair Peach? We get a body bonus, one down, a few thousand to go', 'We haven't brought our coshes today', 'So what's wrong with being in the National Front?'

All these arrests are an attack on the fundamental right to picket.

For more information on the squatters' arrests, phone 607 2789 x 5027 or 701 5691.

PAUL BARKER

## Battered by husbands, attacked by the council

**BATTERED** women and their kids and Birmingham Womens Aid have occupied a large house in Edgbaston in their fight for a refuge for battered women.

There is one simple reason why women endure split lips and bruised bodies — they have nowhere to go. Their plight is even worse when there are children involved, as there usually are.

Birmingham City Council, who own the house, have responded to the women's bold action by serving a possession order and getting the Electricity Board to dig up the road to cut off the electricity supply.

By the time you read this the women and kids will probably be without gas and water too — and the bailiffs may have been round to evict them.

The women are fighting all the way. They have the support of local NUPE and NALGO branches and the Trades Council, and over 100 people turned up to their support meeting on Sunday 10th June.

### Refuge

At that meeting further offers of support came from shop stewards at Longbridge and Rover Solihull, and from Labour Party members.

The women are picketing the council housing committee meeting on Thursday 14th. The council's complete inhumanity towards the women was shown when they told the husband of one woman — battered by him for 16 years — where she was living.

Cities such as London and Manchester have had refuges for several years now. Birmingham lags pathetically behind with no refuge at all. The women also want to draw attention to the plight of the homeless in the city, and to protest at the plan to turn the house into a private hospital in an area where there is no

lack of private hospitals!

The house is in good condition but has been standing empty for two years. The council's neglect of their property has suddenly turned into great concern.

The reactionary local evening paper and the TV refused to publicise the women's daily press releases until the bailiffs come to throw them out

— and then publicity will be too late. The more support the women have, the better their chances of resisting eviction and winning a refuge from the council.

MARIAN MOUND

★ Donations and messages of support to: Women's Aid, 26 Priory Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham 15 (021 449 5913).

## Lindo freed

**GEORGE Lindo** has been cleared after serving a year in jail. Lindo, a Bradford textile worker, was framed up for robbery by a detective who claimed that Lindo had confessed to raiding a betting shop.

He was sentenced to two years although he was not identified by the shop assistants and had a cast-iron alibi sworn to by workmates and family.

When police enquiries into an unconnected case revealed that the detective who framed up George Lindo was a liar, they did not bother to contact Lindo's solicitors or the court. The detective has since left the force.



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ON THURSDAY May 24th, the 720 workers at the Triumph Meriden motorcycle co-operative were faced with an unpleasant choice: whether to accept 150 'voluntary' redundancies or to go for a 3-day week for at least the next 18 months.

The co-op's managing director Geoffrey Robinson (Labour MP for Coventry NW and a former Jaguar boss) insisted that the redundancy plan was the co-op's only hope for survival. Union officials like Bill Lapworth of the TGWU (who had played a leading role in setting up the co-op in the first place) opposed the redundancies and pressed for the 3-day week.

At a mass meeting earlier in the week (from which Robinson had been excluded at the wish of the workers) the redundancy plan had been rejected. But Robinson demanded another meeting and threatened to resign if the redundancies were not agreed to. The unions bitterly accused Robinson of blackmail, but in the end he had his way. The redundancies were accepted.

by  
JIM DENHAM

Robinson joyfully proclaimed that the decision proved 'the first allegiance of members of a co-operative is to the co-operative and not to the trades union'.

But Meriden is far from being out of the wood. Last year they had losses of £700,000 and the best the co-op can hope for even after the redundancies this year is to break even — and that can only be done if the government waives £1 million in interest repayments. There is a stockpile of over 200,000 unsold bikes, and demand from the crucial American market is in sharp decline due to the rise in the value of sterling and the outdated design of the 750cc Bonneville. So far this year, 500 unsold bikes have had to be shipped back from the USA.

Even if, against the odds, Meriden does manage to stay in business, the heady, idealist spirit of 1973-4 has gone for ever. There is a clearly defined 'professional' management, and even the worker-directors are now regarded as bosses by the other workers. Meriden

# Meriden: Island of workers' control sinks into sea of capitalism

workers are acutely aware of how low their wages are (and how hard their work is) compared with the local car factories.

The roots of the present crisis at Meriden go back to the very foundation of the co-op — and beyond that, to the nigh-on criminal greed and incompetence of the old BSA company. While Lord and Lady Docker were swanning around the night-spots of Europe in their gold-plated Daimler, BSA was dying from lack of investment.

In early 1973 the Tory government handed £4.8 million to Manganese Bronze to take on BSA and the other near-defunct British motorcycle company, Norton-Villiers-Triumph. Manganese kept hold of the profitable parts, and set up a

separate concern — NVT — for the more risky motorbike side. Manganese boss Dennis Poore became chairman of both companies.

Before long, Poore decided that motorbike production had to be rationalised. The original plan was to close Meriden and Wolverhampton NVT, and transfer all production to the old BSA plant at Small Heath, Birmingham.

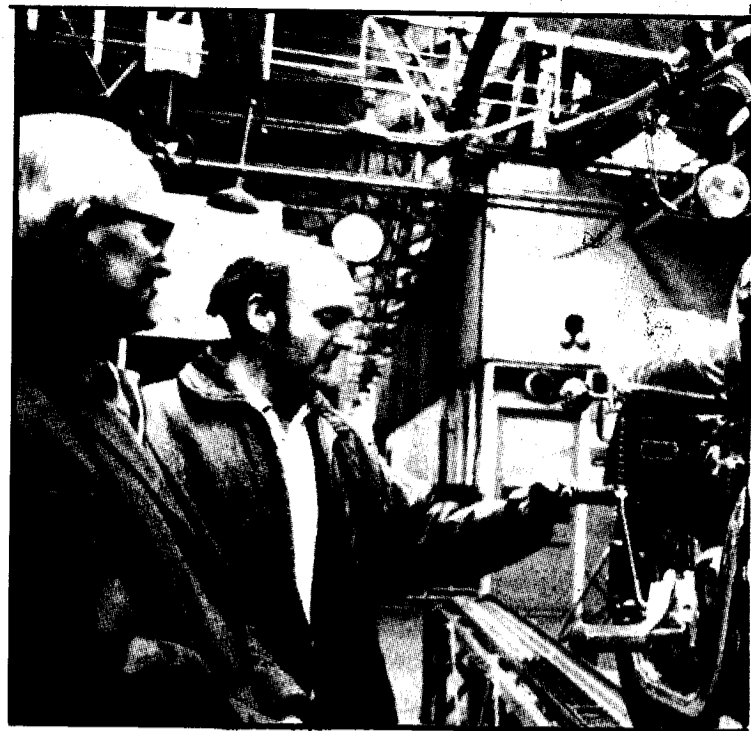
The (then) 1750-strong Meriden workforce were ready to fight. A mass meeting on 2nd October 1973 voted to 'work-in', stop all movement of finished bikes out of the factory, and to call for the blacking of all NVT products at the docks. But the militancy of the workers was not matched by any great determination or clear direction from their

union leadership.

The idea of nationalising Meriden, Small Heath and the Wolverhampton plant was half-heartedly mooted, but then negotiations between T&G official Bill Lapworth, Nuneaton MP Leslie Huckfield, and Christopher Chataway of the Department of Trade and Industry were already working round to the idea of a 'workers' co-operative'.



A mass meeting on 5th October enthusiastically endorsed the idea. Poore was almost as keen himself — sniffing a convenient way of ending the redundancy dispute and getting rid of the NVT albatross from round his neck in one operation.



Bill Lapworth explained how the union officials envisaged the deal: 'If Mr. Poore is going to sell the Meriden factory we are in the market as buyers... The fact that we are prepared to establish a workers' co-operative as a viable proposition shows that the workers are prepared to back their judgment that Meriden can be kept going on a profitable basis... We realise we have to achieve credibility with the banks and other interested parties, but we are confident this can be done. Certainly we are not anticipating any difficulty in attracting competent management.'

Despite the initial enthusiasm of all concerned, the negotiations between the unions, Poore and the Government on purchasing the factory and the practicalities of actually establishing a co-op dragged on for another nine months. By now, the Labour Government was in office and Wedgwood Benn was at the Dept. of Industry. Also, the workforce had declined from 1750 to 1250...

When the Government announced the final terms for the deal on 20th July 1974, the earlier euphoria among the workforce began to give way to a bitter realisation of just what they had let themselves in for.

The Government would provide a £4.2 million loan at

'concessionary' interest plus a grant of £750,000 (compared with the £4.8 million, interest free, handed to Poore the year before); and even that was hedged about with strict conditions for Benn:

*'The Government will have first charge on the assets of the co-operative and my prior consent will be required for substantial acquisitions and disposals; for making wage, salary or other payments in excess of £50 per week to any employee, director or official of the co-operative; for the declaration or payment of any dividends on the co-operative shares; and for the taking up or making of loans. I will also have the right to appoint a director to the advisory board of the co-operative.'*

But the worst aspects of the deal were the manning levels and productivity requirements upon which it was based: a workforce of around 800, producing 500 finished machines per week, compared with the 600 to 800 bikes per week produced by the 'old' 1750-strong workforce.

About all Meriden had going for it was the determination and idealism of the small hard-core that had hung on into July 1974, and a contract from NVT management to buy finished bikes for the American market.

Meanwhile, St Wolverhampton to go to the fight of all the under workers have stood a success at that When the t



1974: pickets at Meriden factory gates

## EEC ELECTIONS EEC ELECTIONS EEC ELECTIONS



French 'Communist' Party poster: 'I love my country... I'm joining the CP'. Another poster said 'No to a German Europe'. And the French CP also calls for a total halt to all immigration, and the building-up of France's nuclear weaponry.

## FRANCE: 600,000 VOTES FOR A WORKERS' EUROPE

TWO French Trotskyist organisations, Lutte Ouvrière and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (French section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International) presented a common list of candidates for the European elections under the slogan 'For the Socialist United States of Europe'.

This list was the only one that stood for a clear internationalist position in the elections in France. It won over 600,000 votes, more than 3% of the total, which was about the same proportion as the far-left vote in the general election last year. It would have been enough to obtain at least two members of the European Parliament, had it not been for an undemocratic law passed by the large parties in Parliament which meant that only parties getting more than 5% of the vote would win any seats.

As a result of the joint work of the two organisations, Arlette Laguiller (a leading member of LO) called at the LO festival on the weekend of 2nd-3rd June for LO and the LCR to fuse to create a 'democratic revolutionary party', including all those who 'have the same programme, the pro-

gramme of Trotskyism, the Transitional Programme'. However, it was clear, even in the course of the joint election campaign, that wide divergences between LO and the LCR remain which cannot just be resolved by appealing to the Transitional Programme.

Most importantly for the campaign, LO and the LCR have different positions on the attitude revolutionaries should take to the EEC. The LCR, like the IMG in Britain, argues that the EEC strengthens the bourgeoisie economically and politically and should therefore be opposed. In the USFI's manifesto for Europe they put forward the demand: 'total support for the campaign of Spanish, Greek and Portuguese revolutionaries against the integration of their countries into the community of capital'.

Despite their use of the word 'revolutionary', this in fact lines them up in France and the other countries which are already in the EEC alongside those like the French CP who argue against the extension of the EEC from a reactionary, nationalist viewpoint.

This is not just a minor part of the USFI's platform.

In *Intercontinental Press* of 21st May, Anna Libera writes: 'We think that in those countries revolutionaries must clearly say 'no' to entry into the Common Market, which represents above all a reinforcement of the capitalists in those countries to exploit the workers. There can be no ambiguity on this question. A clear position of rejecting membership is the only position that makes it possible to wage a really internationalist campaign...'

Lutte Ouvrière has a fundamentally different (and in our opinion correct) position on the EEC, arguing that the working class has no interest in taking sides for or against, and that an anti-EEC position inexorably leads to concessions to nationalism. In their weekly paper *Lutte Ouvrière*, no.570, one of their comrades writes:

'... Whether the comrades of the LCR realise it or not, being against the EEC means adding grist to the mill of the nationalists and sections of the labour bureaucracy... we are neither for nor against the Common Market, as we think that there is no point in the workers taking a position on the agreements or commercial

contracts the capitalists make among themselves'.

On the same basis, LO rejects any opposition to Greece, Spain and Portugal entering the EEC.

It might therefore appear puzzling that the two organisations were able to agree on a common platform for the European elections, and all the more so when one considers that in the general election last year LO and the LCR had different candidates because they could not agree on the attitude to take towards the Union of the Left. In reality the problem was resolved quite easily.

When LO approached the LCR about a joint campaign, the LCR — having just suffered the collapse of their effort to run a daily paper — were not in a financial or organisational position to undertake a campaign of their own. LO offered to take on the greater part of the expense of the campaign. At the same time, they insisted on certain political conditions. The first was that the propaganda of the campaign was truly internationalist; the second, that at least in France, the campaign should denounce those who were opposed to the entry of

Greece, Spain into the EEC; a slogan that the LCR defend the slogan Party-So government in the campaign.

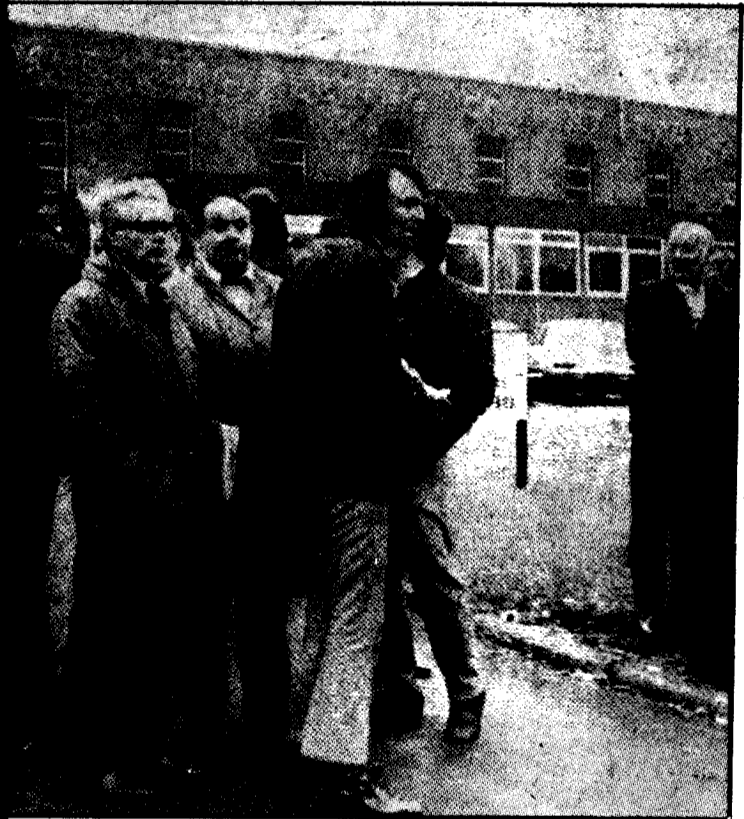
The LCR accords terms and have kept to them. The irony of arguing against a condition and that hardly needs mention. It was only of the LCR agreed up its own position was able to take truly internationalist campaign which did to anti-EEC pickets Tariq Ali's in W

The USFI must deal out of hand national allows avoid the mistakes of nationally-based organisations by making to centralise the struggle. With some of the ex-France might militants to question their sector could only be being unprincipled BRUC





Heath and were left things began to look very grim for Meriden. The co-op although nationalisation factories hoped to make up for that loss by winning back the big police fleet orders from BMW, but without success. In January 1977 a request to the Government for more



## EEC ELECTIONS

GERMANY'S Social Democrats and Christian Democrats both stand to make 20M deutschmarks (£5M) profit out of the EEC elections. Both received 3DM50 (nearly £1) from the state towards 'expenses' for every vote they got — regardless of what they actually spent! This was probably the main source of interest in the election for the German parties. Throughout Europe the enthusiasm for the election both from the parties and from the voters was less than in their national elections. There was a low 60% turnout in Germany, only 42% in Holland, and a 33% turnout in Britain was the lowest of the lot. The cause was simple. All the major bourgeois parties, Christian Democrat, Conservative and Gaullist, have said that the EEC parliament is powerless and

ment to finance the purchase of American marketing rights from NVT.

All the while, Meriden was increasingly being forced into accepting conventional capitalist management methods. In August 1977 a 'professional' managing director, ex-BSA manager John Nelson, was brought in for a salary of £10,000 a year — while average wages at Meriden then were £59 a week.

The wonder is that the co-op has lasted as long as it has done — even though that survival has meant junking virtually all the ideals of the original venture.

The sad fact is that the Meriden workers lumbered themselves with the responsibility of running a commercial enterprise without having the financial power, the economies of scale or the marketing resources of the big capitalists. And for the workforce, the very conception of the 'co-operative' stripped them of much of the protection that an independent shop-floor organisation gives to workers.

The basic idea behind workers' co-ops is far from new, but for a while Meriden (along with Kirkby and the Scottish Daily News) seemed to some on the left to point the way to a real alternative to 'state capitalist' nationalisations of the NCB/Rail/Leyland type.

The 150 redundancies (accepted, incidentally, on the same day that Keith Joseph effectively drove the last nail into the coffin of the Kirkby co-op) has brought that particular dream to an indisputable end.

But it would be a pity if socialists drew the conclusion that any sort of workers' control is mere idealism, or something to be put off to the distant future. Just as the experience in Leyland and elsewhere proves that nationalisation in itself has no socialist content, so the Meriden experience shows the futility of trying to build a fortress of stable workers' control within capitalism.

But the two elements — nationalisation and workers' control — can be fused into a whole that does point the way towards socialism.

cash was turned down, and lay-offs began.

A temporary reprieve turned up in the form of a £1 million order (plus technical aid) from GEC, and an eventual further loan of £500,000 from the Govern-

they will keep it that way. The main workers' parties in the EEC went even further in their defence of 'the national interest' and their national parliaments. The French Communist Party had posters saying 'I love my country, I'm joining the CP'. In Britain the Labour Party, in a campaign dominated by the ideas of the 'left wing' National Executive Committee, presented a more muted chauvinism than the 'Get Britain Out' appeal in the 1975 referendum. But the gist was still that the Common Market is a bad thing because it's foreign, and Labour will fight for the national interest better than the Euro-minded Tories. Labour Weekly devoted its main article on the EEC before the election to an expose of how 'Britain's industrial trade in the Common Market

# WHY LABOUR WAS TROUNCED

has been a disaster', and 'this pattern of trade increases our budget contributions and reduces the benefits we get from trade in Europe'. Given that Labour Weekly isn't talking about the 200 fags or bottle of whisky you bring back from holiday, either 'we' are supposed to be big businessmen, or 'we' have more in common with 'our' bosses than anyone else.

That campaign brought no response. Many Labour Parties took the logical conclusion of the anti-EEC arguments, and made it a point of pride that they did

no work for the election, giving the Tories a sweeping majority. The Labour share of the vote fell from 37% in the general election to only 33%, while the Tory share climbed from 44% to over 50%.

The result was that Labour got only 16 MPs while the Tories got 60. The defeat was made worse by another aspect of 'British democracy' that the Labour Party has been so keen to defend — the 'first past the post' system, rather than proportional representation. The idea that Euro-MPs

personally represent the half million electors in the areas they cover is even more ludicrous than Westminster MPs personally looking after the interests of 50,000 people, but the pay-off for Labour's defence of this idea was to get one-fifth of the British seats for one-third of the votes. The Liberals got 13% of the votes and no seats at all.

Though all the other countries in the EEC used some form of proportional representation, the 'first international election' didn't live up to its name. It

Europe, seeking to ally the working class with some of the most rabidly nationalist and reactionary bourgeois forces in attacking the EEC.

A struggle based on international links between shop stewards' organisations in each multi-national firm is needed if workers employed by the same firm in different countries are not to be set against each other. When

workers in one country are on strike, their fellow workers in other countries must organise solidarity.

That, said Ali, is the only internationalist way of fighting the EEC. But he did not explain how that fight for solidarity is a fight specifically against the EEC, rather than against capitalism, EEC or non-EEC.

Unfortunately a billed

Walter Mondale, Vice-President of the USA. Mondale is reported as '... commending the labor movement for its commitment to free trade unionism...' (whatever that means).

Replying, Sol Chaikin, guest of honour and president of the Ladies (sic) Garment Workers' Union, makes a few passing references to inflation and unemployment before sounding off about the threat to freedom from 'totalitarian communism'.

It is doubtful if any of the 1000 guests at this disgusting spectacle even know what Eugene V. Debs stood for — or if they do, they are doing their utmost to make sure that the workers of America never find out.

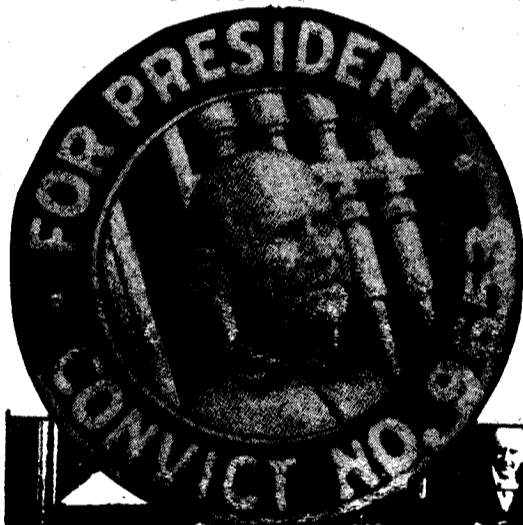
Debs represented all that was fine in the early American socialist movement. Organising the rail workers into the American Railwaymen's Union, he led the famous Pullman strike or 'Debs rebellion' of 1894. After being jailed for his part in that strike he became a socialist, and until his death in 1926 was the most popular agitator the American working class ever had. In 1920 he got over a million votes as an openly revolutionary socialist candidate for US president.

Jailed for his anti-war stance and relentlessly persecuted by state and employers, Debs would have nothing but the utmost contempt for the collection of wretches who gather annually and supposedly commemorate him, yet only defile and besmirch the memory of America's best loved revolutionary.

One day the memory of Debs will be celebrated in the only way it should be, by the workers themselves on the streets. Then maybe the ghost of Eugene Victor Debs will be allowed to rest in peace.

JOHN P. CUNNINGHAM

Debs' campaign for president (below), and the Socialist Party's 1920 campaign button. Debs got over one million votes while in jail for making an anti-war speech



## PE

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## EEC ELECTIONS EEC ELECTIONS EEC ELECTIONS

# Britain: Was 'Out of the EEC' a socialist slogan?

IN Britain there was only one would-be revolutionary candidate: Tariq Ali of the International Marxist Group, who stood in London West. He got 1,600 votes, or about 0.9% of the total in that constituency.

But the main slogan on his election posters was, 'Out of the Bosses' Market!' At his major campaign rally, attended by over 150 people on June 1st, Ali tried

to explain how this slogan could be reconciled with internationalist principles. He attacked the EEC as an attempt by the bosses to organise internationally to increase exploitation and to attack living standards and democratic rights, as well as to form an economically integrated bloc. For those reasons, he said, we must be against the EEC — ignoring the fact that ruling class att-

acks will occur inside or outside the EEC, that they most come from the national states, and that economic integration is not a conspiracy by Brussels bureaucrats but mirrors the expansion and development of the forces of production under modern capitalism.

Ali went on to attack the chauvinist arguments of Social Democratic and Communist Parties throughout

speaker from the French revolutionary organisation Luttre Ouvrière failed to appear. No explanation was given by the rally's organisers. Perhaps LO objected to the confused anti-EEC line of the IMG, in contrast to the internationalist position put forward in a joint revolutionary slate by LO and the IMG's French sister organisation, the LCR.

NEIL COBBETT



# From Kautsky to Eurocommunism:

## INTRODUCTION

The working class often struggles spontaneously against the misery of exploitation and the political system which maintains it. How does a socialist party relate to this spontaneous revolt? What part does working class self-activity play in achieving the overall aim of socialism? How do Marxists deal with a struggle which is often fragmented and relate day-to-day tactics to a strategy to overthrow capitalism?

Reformists and revolutionaries have, since the inception of the Marxist movement, given different answers to these questions. For example, Bernstein, who proposed substituting a policy of social reform for that of revolution, summed up his views in the maxim "The movement is everything; the final goal nothing". The Economist trend transferred his views to Russia and argued that socialists should immerse themselves in the spontaneous economic struggles of the working class. Lenin, on the other hand, saw the need for an organised vanguard if that spontaneous struggle was to develop its full potential to give it a conscious direction.

Rosa Luxemburg had addressed herself to these questions long before her debate with Kautsky on the mass strike in 1910. In 1899 she replied to Bernstein by pointing out that trade unionism, cooperatives and social reforms could not destroy capitalism and that a revolutionary struggle was necessary. In 1904 she sharply disputed Lenin's conception of the type of revolutionary party needed. In 1906 she drew on the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1905 to show how the spontaneous self-activity of the working class was the raw material of revolution which could not simply be conjured out of thin air by organised trade unions and political parties.

## by Bruce Robinson

The section of "Attrition or Struggle" which we print here takes up these questions, particularly the position that that Social Democratic Party should take in relation to the mass action which was expressed in the support for the demand of the mass strike.

She begins by continuing her polemic against Kautsky's conception of the mass strike as something that could be switched on or off at will by the SPD and the trade unions. For Luxemburg, a mass strike comes about as a result of a conjuncture of a political situation and a mood among the masses. She quotes from one of her own articles:

"The mass strike is merely the external form of action whose inner development, whose logic, whose growth and whose consequences stand in the closest connection with the political situation and its further development.....the decisions for an immediate action of the masses can only proceed from the masses themselves".

The party or trade unions cannot impose themselves on the masses in order either to prevent or to order a mass strike. To try either would lead to the masses repudiating their 'leadership'. Thus Luxemburg argues that if the trade union leaders were to oppose a mass strike which was supported by the masses, they would merely lose all influence amongst them.

It is clear that Luxemburg here underestimates the extent to which reformist leaders could head off and strangle the spontaneous action of the working class. Of course, in 1910 there had been no great historical event which would have enabled her to test this in practice. The test was only to come with the outbreak of war in 1914. Furthermore, large sections of the working class were still unorganised or only just coming into trade unions. Luxemburg, basing herself on the Russian experience, thought that these workers would play a leading role in a mass strike and would offset the conservatism of the established working class leaders. She opposed the contemptuous attitude the union and party leaders (including Kautsky) held towards the unorganised workers.

Though Luxemburg denies the ability of the unions and SPD to hold back the class struggle, she is well aware of the need for clear leadership from a conscious political party if the spontaneous struggle of the working class is to be successful. She reproaches Kautsky precisely because his aloof attitude makes it possible for the spontaneous struggle to peter out without clear aim or direction. She writes:

"...if there is even one chance that the mass strike will be used in the near future in Germany, then it is our duty as a matter of course to bring this possibility to the masses' attention and to arouse sympathy for this action in the broadest possible circles of the proletariat so that the workers are not taken unawares and so that they do not enter into it as a blind reaction, but with full consciousness, with confident awareness of their own strength and in the largest numbers possible."

Luxemburg also attacked Kautsky's attempt to compartmentalise the class struggle by listing all the different types of strike (economic strike, protest strike, strike of compulsion), and also by separating the econ-

# Schemas against the struggle

omic and political struggles and arguing that it would be harmful for them to be confused. Luxemburg did not rest content with pointing out that in real life all these careful classifications broke down and that this was precisely a strength of, for example, the Belgian suffrage movement. She also shows that this division both contradicts the basic purpose of socialist tactics and actively holds the movement back. She writes:

"If...we want to conduct the suffrage struggle in the spirit of purely proletarian tactics... and make its foundation the proletariat's own power and class action alone, then it is clear that a 'sharp separation' from the economic interests and struggles of the proletariat is counter-productive and even impossible. It would then mean artificially paralysing the strength and impetus of the suffrage movement and making it poorer in content if we did not let it be borne along by everything which affects the vital interests of the proletariat".

Since Luxemburg wrote this, the separation of economic and political struggles has become fixed as one of the solid bases of the hold of the reformist social democratic and Stalinist parties over the working class. In Britain particularly there is a developed division between the Labour Party (representing politics) and the trade unions (left to take care of the bread and butter issues). As events since 1974 have shown, this division can paralyse the spontaneous direct action of the working class. Luxemburg's attack on this division is therefore as timely as it was in 1910 and it shows how and why revolutionaries must break this division down.

## Rosa Luxemburg: ATTRITION OR STRUGGLE?

But Comrade Kautsky refers to still other harmful effects of a public debate. "I would very much regret it", he writes, "if Comrade Luxemburg's article has the effect of opening a discussion in the party press in which one side was to put forward reasons as to why a mass strike would be hopeless at present. They may be correct or incorrect; such a discussion can under no circumstances be a stimulus to action."

Now this view is completely incomprehensible to me. It has never been held by Social Democracy before. We have never attempted to find a "stimulus to action" through illusions and hiding the true state of affairs from the masses. If the opponents of the mass strike are correct in their reasons for the hopelessness of such an action, then it is thoroughly useful and necessary for us to hear their arguments and to follow them. If they are incorrect, then it is just as useful and necessary for their arguments to be publicly acknowledged to be invalid. The most thorough discussion can only be of use and contribute to the self-clarification of the party, direct our attention to the weaknesses of our movement and press us to undertake the most urgent practical tasks of agitation and organisation.

If Comrade Kautsky had in mind here the danger that the trade union leaders would become involved as a result of my written and oral agitation and would bring their big guns to bear against the idea of the mass strike, then in my opinion this fear was based on an overestimation of the power of leaders, which again can only be explained by the



Social Democratic suffrage demonstration, 1910

rather mechanistic conception of the mass strike as a surprise plan hatched out and conducted by the "general staff". In reality the trade union leaders are not even in a position to prevent a mass strike movement if this arises out of the situation, out of a sharpening of the struggle and out of the mood of the proletarian masses. If in such situations the trade union leaders emerge in opposition to the efforts of the masses, then it is not the mood of the masses but the authority of the leaders which is done for. In fact there is already such a keen mood of struggle in the working class that any public attempt by the trade union general staff to slow down the movement would only result in awakening criticism and protest in the ranks of the trade unions themselves. In the interests of "stimulating action", nothing would be better than if the trade union leaders were to appear on the scene with their 'big guns'; so that their arguments could be seen in the light of day and it could thus be confirmed how much the leaders lag behind the masses in their feelings and thoughts. That Comrade Kautsky has relieved the trade union leaders of this painful burden by himself first opposing public discussion and then, when this was no longer possible, by acting in public in order to divert — in his role as the theoretician of radicalism (1) — thoughts of and interest in the mass strike towards the coming Reichstag elections — that he has done this will certainly have met with the full approval of the General Committee of the trade unions. I doubt however that it was effective as a "stimulus to action".

Why has Comrade Kautsky then sounded this warning? From what dangers did the party have to be saved? Did someone or other perhaps consider ordering a mass strike from one day to the next? Or did, on the other hand, the danger consist of awakening unfounded illusions in the party with regard to the miraculous effects of the mass strike and thereby carelessly driving the masses into an action which they hope will solve all their problems at a stroke? Nothing like this is known to me, either from meetings or from the press. I gave no grounds for doubt in this respect.

I wrote: "A mass strike suddenly 'created' one morning by a simple decree of the party is merely childish fantasy, an anarchistic chimera. However a mass strike which occurs after a protest movement involving huge numbers of workers and which has grown over a number of months, a mass strike which comes out of a situation where a three-million strong party is faced with the dilemma; either forward at any cost, or the mass action under way will collapse in failure, such a mass strike born from the inner needs and the determination of the aroused masses and, at the same time, from the sharper political situation, carries with it its raison d'être and its guarantee of effectiveness".

"Of course, the mass strike is not a miraculous method which guarantees success under all circumstances. In particular the mass strike cannot be regarded as an artificial, one-off, mechanical means of political pressure, neatly applied according to some set of regulations and commands. The mass strike is merely the external form of action whose inner development, whose logic, whose growth, and whose consequences stand in the closest connection with the political situation and its further development. The mass strike, that is as a short one-off protest strike, is certainly not the last word in the campaign which is in progress. But it is just as certainly its first word in the present stage. And if the further development, the duration, the direct successes, as well as the costs and the sacrifices, of this campaign cannot possibly be calculated with pen and paper in advance, in the way that costs are calculated for an operation on the Stock Exchange, then nevertheless there are situations where it is the political duty of a party which has the leadership of millions resolutely to launch the slogan which alone can further advance the struggle which it has begun".

And in conclusion I stated quite clearly my opinion of what is involved:

"In no case, however, can it be expected that one fine day the 'command' for the mass strike will be issued by the highest leadership of our movement, by the party executive and by the General Council of the trade unions. Bodies which bear the responsibility for millions are by nature



cautious with decisions which others must execute. Moreover, the decision for an immediate action of the masses can only proceed from the masses themselves. The emancipation of the working class can only be the act of the working class itself — this guiding sentence from the 'Communist Manifesto' also means that within the class party of the proletariat the great decisive movements cannot proceed from the initiative of a handful of leaders, but from the conviction and resolution of the mass of the party's supporters. In addition, the decision to pursue the present struggle for the franchise in Prussia to victory in accordance with the words of the Prussian party congress — 'by all means possible', and thus also by means of the mass strike — can only be carried out by the broadest sections of the party. It is the business of the party and trade union comrades in every town and in every area to take a position on the questions of the present situation, to express in a clear and open way their opinion and their wishes, so that the opinion of the organised working masses as a whole can make itself heard. And if that takes place then our leaders will certainly be found at their posts as they always have been up to now".

The main question therefore was that the masses should take up the question of the mass strike and take a position on it. Whether a mass strike is possible, opportune, and necessary would then become clear from the further development of the situation and from the attitude of the masses. Comrade Kautsky's attitude, on the other hand, appears remarkable precisely from the standpoint of the Marxist conception. Comrade Kautsky himself bases his whole theory of the 'strategy of attrition' on the fact that we may find ourselves forced to use the mass strike, not now, but after next year's Reichstag elections. Comrade Kautsky himself further admits that "any sudden event, such as a blood-bath after a street demonstration", can make the mass strike quite spontaneously necessary. And he writes in conclusion: "In the whole existence of the German Empire, the social, political and international contradictions have never been as sharp as today. Nothing is more possible than surprises which lead even before the next Reichstag elections to violent outbursts and catastrophes in which the proletariat is moved to call forth all its strength and all the forces at its disposal. A mass strike under such conditions could very well be successful in sweeping away the existing regime".

If that, however, is the case, if there is even one chance that the mass strike will be used in the near future in Germany, then it is our duty as a matter of course to bring this possibility to the masses' attention, and to arouse sympathy for this action in the broadest possible circles of the proletariat, so that the workers are not taken unawares and so that they do not enter into it as a blind reaction, but with full consciousness, with confident awareness of their own strength, and in the greatest numbers possible.

The masses themselves should be prepared for all political eventualities and decide on action for themselves, not wait from the signal from above "at the given moment", as if they were "trusting their master who piously and lovingly protects the state through graciously honourable and wise rule", and it were always fitting for the party masses "to keep their mouths shut". The Marxist conception consists precisely in considering the masses and their consciousness as the determining factor in all the political actions of social democracy. In the spirit of this conception, the political mass strike — like the whole struggle for the franchise — is in the final analysis only a means for the enlightenment of the class and the organisation of the broadest sections of the proletariat. So how one can consider such actions possible in the immediate future, and at the same time forbid the masses to concern themselves with this problem, as if it were a matter of playing with fire from which the masses must be protected, is quite puzzling precisely from the standpoint of Marxism. All the modern and ancient strategies of war cannot explain this puzzle.

## II

CLOSELY connected with this conception of the mass strike as an action decreed as a general strike by the conductor's baton is the meticulous differentiation made by comrade Kautsky between the different types of strikes: protest strikes, strikes of compulsion, economic strikes and political strikes. Comrade Kautsky requires that they be sharply separated, since if the propaganda is not clear enough the masses may misunderstand us. Instead of holding the protest strike which we intend, they may unexpectedly hold a 'strike of compulsion'. For him, the merging of economic demands, or even demands for the eight hour day, with the movement for the franchise, could only damage the latter.

Now such strict definitions and classifications of the different types and sub-types of the mass strike may all be very well on paper, and may even be adequate for the usual everyday activity in Parliament. However once a time of great political unrest and great mass actions begins, these distinctions become muddled in real life. To a very great extent this was, for example, the case in Russia where protest strikes and combat strikes followed one another and where the perpetual interaction between political and economic action was precisely the defining characteristic of the Russian revolutionary struggle and was what gave it its strength. Of course, Comrade Kautsky rejects the example of Russia because at the time "revolution held sway in Russia". As he puts the Russian events under the heading of 'revolution', they are supposed to have no validity for other countries. But the closer we in Germany come to violent struggles by the proletariat against the prevailing reaction, the more the factors in a revolutionary situation come to be valid for us as well.

But even without considering Russia, we can see the inapplicability of this lifeless schema. We can see exactly the same in the suffrage struggle in Belgium, where neither war nor revolution occurred. Comrade Kautsky is of the opinion that "life has so far been sufficiently pedantic" to separate clearly economic and political struggles, at least "in the suffrage struggles of Western Europe the economic and political elements have been sharply

separated up till now." Comrade Kautsky is wrong.

The Belgian movement for the right to vote began in 1886 and, what is more, originated in a whole flood of economic struggles. First an ordinary miners' strike gave the signal for the upheaval. In almost all other towns and industries, the miners' strike was followed by other strikes, in which wage demands were predominant. The mass movement for suffrage in Belgium was born out of these purely trade union struggles. Almost everywhere the demand for universal suffrage was soon raised alongside the wage demands. By using the tremendous enthusiasm generated by the economic struggle, the young Belgian social democracy was able to call its first mass demonstration in support of universal suffrage, which took place on the 15th of August 1886 in Brussels.

This was repeated later. The great political mass strike of 1891 which forced the suffrage bill from the government, arose in connection with the struggle for the eight hour day, as an immediate result of May Day. The strike was the product of a series of trade union actions: another massive wage struggle by the miners, followed by strikes in the iron and steel works, and then strikes of carpenters, joiners, dockers and others. Out of these sectional strikes, there came, under the bold and firm leadership of the Belgian party chiefs of the time, the first mass strike for the franchise, which also brought the first success. After the political mass strike was over because of concessions by the government, the miners in Charleroi continued their strike for a shorter working day and higher wages.

Throughout 1892 there was a latent crisis in Belgian industry, which produced great activity among the workers and led to several strikes to ward off wage reductions. By the end of the year there was widespread unemployment. On the 8th of November 1892, the day the Parliament was opened, the party in Brussels organised a protest strike in all the factories. Yet in December of the same year Belgian social democracy took up the cause of the unemployed and organised some large-scale demonstrations of the unemployed. Thus the great mass strike for suffrage that followed and the decisive struggle of 1893 were prepared by a constant interaction of the protest strike and the "strike of compulsion", of economic and political action.

Comrade Kautsky strangely tries to belittle this victory by pointing out that "Belgium has still not achieved universal suffrage". This well known fact is only an argument against those who recommend the political mass strike as a panacea which will win everything at a stroke, rather like an anarchist recipe.

**'As he puts the Russian events under the heading of "revolution", they are supposed to have no validity for other countries'.**

For the present, we should recognise that the mass strike served excellently to allow the Belgian proletariat to be represented in Parliament at all and to enable it to win a fifth of the seats in the first elections it fought. We should also recognise that economic struggles played the major role in this movement for the franchise and formed the starting point and basis of the political mass strike.

But our own experiences have also contradicted Comrade Kautsky's premises up until now. At present we have the great struggle in the building trade. According to the above schema we should clearly separate this economic struggle from our movement for the right to vote, and indeed it would have been preferable for the struggle to be avoided if possible, as damaging to the interests of the movement for suffrage. In reality this separation just cannot be made, and it would probably be the most stupid thing we could attempt. On the contrary, in every meeting on the fight for the franchise, the speeches naturally take up the question of the lock-out in the building trade, in every meeting and demonstration those locked out form a part of our audience, and under the impact of the brutality of Capital in the building trade, every word of criticism of existing conditions gains a lively resonance in the masses. In a word: the test of strength in the building trade contributes to raising the fighting spirit for the right to vote, and conversely the gen-

eral sympathy and arousal among the masses in the suffrage struggle benefits the building workers.

Likewise we have actually sinned against this schema by having linked up the struggle for suffrage with May Day, and thus with the struggle for the eight-hour day, when we made the May Day celebrations a demonstration directly for the right to vote. But everyone understands that making this link was a simple imperative of Social Democratic tactics, and that precisely through making the link with the May Day slogans of international socialism our Prussian struggle for the suffrage was put into the correct context as a proletarian class struggle.

Here lies the very heart of the question. If we want to conduct our Prussian suffrage movement as a purely political constitutional struggle, in the spirit of bourgeois liberalism and in alliance with it, then a sharp separation of this movement from all economic struggles against Capital is certainly in place. And then the strictly political mass strike is condemned from the outset as a half-measure condemned to a fiasco, as shown by the fate of the Belgian mass strike of 1902. This might perhaps explain to Comrade Kautsky why "on the other hand, Belgium has even today not yet achieved equal suffrage".

If, on the other hand, we want to conduct the suffrage struggle in the spirit of purely proletarian tactics, i.e. as a partial manifestation of our general socialist class struggle, if we want to base it on a comprehensive critique of the general economic and political class relationships and make its foundation the proletariat's own power and class action alone, then it is clear that a 'sharp separation' from the economic interests and struggles of the proletariat is counter-productive and even impossible. It would then mean artificially paralysing the strength and the impetus of the suffrage movement and making it poorer in content, if we did not want to take up everything in it, if we did not let it be borne along by everything which affects the vital interests of the working masses and lives in the hearts of the masses.

Comrade Kautsky here gives expression to exactly that pedantic and narrow-minded concept of the suffrage movement which in any case has already damaged us. As we were seeing the first wave of demonstrations in the Prussian suffrage movement, in 1908 and 1909, the workers were getting a taste of the horrors of economic crisis. In Berlin there was a horribly high level of unemployment, and this expressed itself in indignant meetings of the unemployed and in demonstrations. Instead of directing this movement of the unemployed into the turbulence of the struggle for the franchise, instead of linking the call for work and bread with the call for equal suffrage, in quite the contrary fashion the cause of the unemployed was very sharply separated from the cause of the franchise, and "Vorwärts" spared no pains in public to shake the unemployed out of the lap of the suffrage movement. According to the schema of Comrade Kautsky this was a wise piece of "attrition strategy". In my opinion it was an offence against the most elementary duty of true proletarian tactics, and also a means of bringing the demonstration movement of that time to an early standstill.

By now again advocating sharp separation of the suffrage movement from the great economic mass struggles, Comrade Kautsky gives theoretical support to that very outlook in the party from which the tendency is to be explained of our leading party circles to hold demonstrations by preference only with organised workers. It is this spirit which conceives of the whole suffrage movement as a manoeuvre carried out under the strict leadership of the highest authorities according to an exact plan and rules, instead of seeing in it a great historical mass movement, an element of the great class struggle which draws its nourishment from everything which forms the present contradiction between the proletariat and the ruling class-state.

In a word, Comrade Kautsky gives theoretical support to just those prejudices and limitations in the conceptions of our leading elements which at present stand in the way of any larger and bolder political mass action in Germany, and which the pressing interest of the present suffrage movement demands should be overthrown.

Translated from the German by Stan Crooke.

## NOTES

1. 'Theoretician of radicalism': even as late as 1910 Kautsky was generally regarded as on the left of the SPD.

# The fight against the Industrial Relations Act

'THESE proposals are an outrage', wrote TUC General Secretary Vic Feather in 1970 in response to the publication of the new Tory government's Industrial Relations Bill. Such angry directness is rare from trade union bureaucrats. What was it that the Heath administration was proposing, and what difference would it make to the trade unions?

The Conservatives' election manifesto of 1970 insisted, to no one's surprise, that 'trade unions (should) be brought under the rule of law'. They were not just repeating a traditional Tory piety: the Labour leaders themselves had fought to bring in new laws to control trade union activities.

Labour's attempt was concocted by left-winger Barbara Castle, who, trying to claim radical credentials for these reactionary proposals, called them *In Place of Strife* — after Aneurin Bevan's *In Place of Fear*. Whatever the title, these proposals created more strife in the Labour Party than anything since Gaitskell's attempt to scrap Clause Four. *In Place of Strife* was finally defeated before it could get to the statute book by a grand coalition of the trade unions and their supporters, against the cabinet and its dwindling camp

followers.

This rift, setting the trade union leaders against the Labour Party leaders, helped boost the already growing rank and file radicalisation. Thus the Tories tried to 'bring discipline into industrial relations' at a time of heightened trade union militancy and at a time when trade unionists had just won a political victory over those trying to bring in laws controlling union activity. Things did not augur well for Heath even then.

Over the years of the post-war boom, British workers had gone in for what became known as 'do-it-yourself industrial relations'. They elected shop stewards — indeed the number of stewards and the number of full-time convenors increased massively over this period — formulated demands, struck, negotiated and returned to work largely without relating to the official union structures. This informality had two main consequences. Firstly, the wage rates agreed nationally between unions and employers had little relev-



ance in many industries — notably engineering — as actual wages drifted to much higher levels. Secondly, the close contact between stewards and the shop floor made it difficult for the bosses whose profit rates were now falling to end this trend by relying on the trade union bureaucracy.

The Labour government had seen this problem and instituted the Donovan Commission to try to come up with a solution. Donovan concluded that while it might be the stewards who were the problem, bringing the law *directly* into this aspect of industrial relations would probably be disastrous. But both Labour and Tory leaders were desperate to please the employers. Both adopted a strategy of trying to break the rank and file strength of the unions — actually strengthening the official union structure in relation to the shop floor, but at a cost of reducing the power of the trade union bureaucracy in relation to the state. It was this latter point that stung the trade union leaders into fighting *In Place of Strife* and the Industrial Relations Act. They correctly saw that the result of these proposals would be a reduction in the importance of their role as mediators in the class struggle.

## 1. 'Kill the Bill'

Opposition to the Industrial Relations Bill started as a grass roots affair, however, with the Communist Party-dominated Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions serving as a link. The left stance of some recently-elected trade union leaders — notably Scanlon of the AUEW, Jones of the TGWU and even Gormley of the miners — saw to it that the unofficial movement got plenty of official support.

On December 8th 1970, half a million trade unionists backed strikes and marches against the Bill. Eight days later the 'Kill the Bill' movement had TUC support in calling lunchtime meetings — which, the General Council cautiously whispered, could go on into working time. Midlands workers struck on January 1st, and on January 3rd the General Council of the TUC began its 'educational campaign' against the Bill. The AUEW took the firmest stand of the unions and gave its backing to a series of one-day national strikes. The TUC called a huge demonstration for February 21st, which was followed by a well-supported strike called by the engineering union on March 1st and, finally, a special TUC conference on March 18th. Many workers struck on that day, too.

That Conference took a line of complete opposition to the Tory Bill which was to become law that August (though certain schedules were not 'active' until the Spring of 1972). Feather was able to announce that Labour would repeal the Tory Act when it was re-elected. The Conference also decided not to cooperate with the Commission of Industrial Relations, the forerunner of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, because of its new role within the terms of the Tory legislation.

The TUC confirmed its stand at its September conference. It considered that one of the keys to the Tory laws was the matter of registration. The Bill stated that all bodies wishing to be exempt from taxation (as trade unions' funds are) and from certain penalties under law would have to register. The register included both employers' and workers' organisations. If an organisation did not register, then it was not considered to be a trade union within the definition of the Bill. But while registration gave a union the customary immunities from taxation and certain kinds of prosecution, it also gave the state the right to alter a union's rule-book. The TUC decided that member unions should also boycott the Industrial Relations Court set up by the new legislation.

The various parts of the Act came into effect between December 1971 and February 1972. Besides the question of the National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC) and registration, the new law laid down a whole series of actions that were 'unfair industrial practices'. Some of these were supposed to be a bait for the trade unions; for instance, it was an unfair industrial practice for an employer to show favour to a non-trade unionist over a trade unionist. In the main, however, unfair industrial practices of course referred to trade union practices. Some of these were unfair only if carried out by an unregistered body, and some were unfair in any case. It was an unfair industrial practice to induce or threaten to induce a breach of contract, whether a contract of employment or a commercial contract, only if you were an unregistered organisation. Yet some practices, like blacking and many other typical solidarity actions, were ruled out for all organisations, registered or not.

The Act made cooling-off periods and strike ballots compulsory if the government demanded, and it made all collective agreements binding in law unless the contrary was specified. Other provisions concerned recognised bargaining units and 'agency shops'.

There was a widespread belief — encouraged by the Tory press — that the Act came into effect after the miners' strike of 1972. But, as an officer of the NIRC wrote later, 'so far as the emergency provisions of the Act are concerned, this is not the case — they had been in force since December 1st 1972.'

Had the Tories invoked the Act against the miners, and under its emergency provisions demanded a cooling-off period (there had already been a ballot), the new law would certainly have been defeated there and then along with the Tories' first attempt at an incomes policy. As it was, the latter was torn to shreds and the Act kept on the shelf. The *Economist* pointedly asked 'If a cooling-off period were ordered, would the miners obey?'

In its early months, the NIRC subsisted on a staple diet of petty cases, including cases referred to it as the court of appeal for industrial tribunal cases. One of the early applicants to the court was the National Union of Bank Employees. Along with the National Union of Seamen and Equity (the actors' union) the NUBE was expelled from the TUC for refusing to de-register. The latter two were anxious to register in order to protect their closed shop arrangements.

Under the Act they could apply for sole bargaining rights. (1)

The most notable case before the Spring of 1972 concerned the attempt by the UK Association of Professional Engineers (UKAPE) to gain recognition as a bargaining agent. Many trade unionists feared that the Act would encourage the development of a host of 'sweetheart' unions posing as alternatives to bona fide trade unions; these existed among technician engineers, telephonists, electricity supply workers and firemen.

Had the idea of the IR Act been, as the Communist Party for instance claimed, to smash the unions, there is no doubt that UKAPE's bid to be recognised as an alternative to TASS at Reyrolle Parsons would have been supported by the NIRC. But all applications of this kind were turned down — in the first place, without the TUC-affiliated union even bothering to go to the NIRC. The idea behind the Act, after all, was not to smash the unions but tie them more firmly to the state and give the trade union leaders a bigger armoury for disciplining the rank and file. For this it was necessary to win the union bureaucrats' confidence and keep the union organisations intact, indeed make them stronger as official structures.

The central feature of the Act was the responsibility of the unions in cases of 'unfair industrial practices'. The first two cases (Kaymet and Ideal Casements) were easily resolved, but the third was to undermine the entire edifice of the new legislation.

## 2. The dockers' fight

The case, which was referred to the NIRC in March, was Heaton's Transport (St. Helens) v. the TGWU. The basic grievance throughout the docks industry was cut in jobs that followed decasualisation, leading to massive voluntary redundancies and the creation of a permanent pool of unemployed dockers on the 'temporary unattached register'. The main line of protest from the dockers was against 'groupage' work with containers, i.e. 'stuffing and stripping' of containers at inland transport depots, which took work away from the docks.

The Liverpool dockers were blacking Heaton's, who operated a small groupage depot at St. Helens. Heaton's responded by asking the NIRC for an order forbidding the blacking. The TGWU, in accordance with the TUC's boycott policy, refused to appear in court. A week later Heaton's approached the NIRC again (this time with another affected firm, Bishop's Wharf) asking for a further order and reporting the dockers' continued action as a contempt of court. The Court fined the TGWU £5,000.

**THE last time the Tories were in power, they introduced a great battery of laws to curb trade union activities: the Industrial Relations Act. It was a two-pronged attack. It put a limit on industrial action and it tried to put trade union leaders in a position where they would be eager to discipline militants.**

**The more moderate Tories were for it, and the Tory rank and file were ecstatic — even though they would rather have seen something more severe. But Heath's bid to curb the unions failed dismally. Indeed it was responsible for millions of working days lost and for making the government unpopular with the ruling class as well as with millions of workers.**

**In this article JAMES DAVIES looks in detail at what happened and why.**

Still the Liverpool dockers didn't budge, although the TGWU tried to pressure them into giving up the blacking action. The NIRC ruled that the TGWU was responsible for the action of its stewards even if it made plain that they were acting in defiance of union orders. In other words, unions would be held responsible unless they expelled militants — a course of action that the Court clearly encouraged them to follow. For continued contempt and for not paying the £5,000 fine, the TGWU was now ordered to pay a second fine of £50,000.

As everyone knows, trade union leaders have a heart of gold ... or whatever other metal is currency. Their funds are sacred. So, not surprisingly, it was when the NIRC imposed these big fines on the transport union that the TUC began to back down. Vic Feather appeared on TV wringing his hands between his knees and moaning softly that he had had no idea that the NIRC would have the powers of a High Court when he and the TUC recommended total non-cooperation.

From now on, affiliated unions could decide for themselves whether to defend their interests in Court when under attack. The £55,000 fines were paid (on May Day, as it happened) and the TUC made it easy on the T&G by letting it deduct the money from its TUC affiliation fees. Things looked good for the NIRC: fines were being paid and the TUC had started its slide towards adjusting to the Tories' laws.

At about the same time the NIRC intervened in the rail dispute. The actual difference between British Rail's offer and the unions' demands was very slight, but the three unions decided on national industrial action. They didn't call for an all-out strike but, as usual on the railways, for a work to rule and an overtime ban.

Although he had shied away from a cooling off period for the militant miners, Industry Secretary Maurice Macmillan

decided to put on a bold front to challenge the ultra-conservative leadership of the rail unions. Macmillan asked for a cooling off period and the Court obediently complied. Then the NIRC passed on the instructions to the unions and they complied. Such was the policy of non-cooperation!

The two weeks were supposed to be for 'conciliation', but the two sides hardly met. This further worried the TUC. It seemed to confirm their central fear that the IR Act was an *alternative* to consultation with the trade union leaders. Gormley had already complained: 'I've never met John Davies once, and he is the minister in chief of the whole question of the coal industry. It's fantastic ... to think they want to be so remote'.

When the cooling-off period was up, Macmillan asked the NIRC to order a strike ballot (the Court had already ruled that the overtime ban and work to rule constituted strike action). Again the unions complied. Victory, the Tories thought, was at last to hand, and they could make it look as if the new laws would break the momentum of any strike movement.

Their hopes were naive. Despite the small difference between the claim and the offer, and despite the conservative nature of the unions involved, the railworkers voted overwhelmingly to go on with their action. 95% of ASLEF members voted to 'strike', as did 88% of NUR members. Most surprising of all, so did 70% of non-trade unionists.

The Tories were stunned. The whole strategy had backfired. Instead of the rank and file being in a straitjacket, the union leaders were. After that ballot they could hardly refuse to call a strike. There was nothing BR could do but capitulate to the unions' demands, which they duly did. Ray Buckton, the ASLEF leader, cried on the shoulder of a *Financial Times* journalist 'we have been put in a straitjacket. It is going to be rather difficult to do other than what the members want'...

All this while, the docks dispute had been rumbling on despite the payment of the fines. After the Liverpool companies, a Hull company, Panalpina Services, complained to the Court — this time an individual shop steward, Walter Cunningham, was named.

While the TUC and the TGWU leaders were shuddering at the might of the new Court, the National Ports Shop Stewards told the government where to get off. 'We have no intention, either in the long term or in the short term, of removing the blacking. We consider the unregistered labour situation in and around the ports of this country is threatening the very existence of the registered dockworker, and therefore nothing short of our registered men working in these unregistered depots will persuade the committee to lift the ban.'

In June the dispute shifted to London with what came to be known as the Chobham Farm case. Again it centred on the dockers' demand to do the work in the container depots, though this time the case was not brought by the employers but by those workers — like the dockers, members of the TGWU — who, the dockers claimed, were doing a docker's job. An interim order was granted them, meaning that the dockers would have to stop picketing or defy the court. They defied the Court.

The next few days were a legal bedlam. First, the Court of Appeal overturned the Heaton's judgment and ordered that the £55,000 fines be returned to the TGWU. The point of law at issue was one that was crucial to the Act: the question of 'vicarious liability'. The Court of Appeal ruled that the union could not be held liable for the actions of those members that would not obey the policy laid down by the union leaders. This was in line with legal tradition, but if upheld would deal a death blow to the Industrial Relations Act, whose basic tenet was that the unions would be held responsible for the unofficial actions of the members.

The next day, the NIRC put on a bold face despite having been made to look foolish by the Court of Appeal, and began contempt proceedings against the three dockers named in the Chobham Farm case. The dockers of course refused to come to the Court and were vocal in their contempt for its practices.

Meanwhile, Master Seaton, the Court's Secretary, passed on the papers concerning the contempt case to that obscure legal officer, the Official Solicitor.

The Court of Appeal which had made a farce of the NIRC on June 13th now, five days later, proceeded to do the same again: it overruled the NIRC's judgment on the basis of the Official Solicitor's plea of 'insufficient evidence'. The farce had turned into a romp now — the Appeal Court said that it didn't have enough evidence that the named dockers were continuing to picket the container depot, while the same named dockers were appearing on television boasting how successful the picket was.

The NIRC's credibility was now at an all-time low.

## 3. Pentonville week

In early July, a similar case was brought against the same London dockers' leaders by Midland Cold Storage, part of the international Vestey empire. Again the tactic was for the firm to seek an 'interim order' outlawing the picketing. Later in the month the inevitable contempt case was heard and warrants went out for five dockers: Bernie Steer, Vic Turner, Alan Watkins, Tony Merrick and Cornelius Clancy. The dockers were arrested and thrown into Pentonville jail until they had 'purged their contempt'.

This time there was enough evidence, apparently. To get it, the NIRC had taken the unusual step of hiring a firm of private detectives, Eurotec, to spy on the dockers' leaders. This was supposed to be kept a secret, so when they were discovered entering the NIRC's headquarters in Chancery Lane by the back door, the detectives turned and fled.

When the Chobham Farm case had threatened to end with the militants being taken to jail, it was clear that Britain was hovering on the brink of a spontaneous general strike. The carworkers had pledged their support, as had the



miners. 450 Scottish shop stewards meeting in Glasgow had pledged action in the event of any militant being victimised.

Now, with five dockers in jail, the general strike movement was under way: dockers struck in every port, Fleet Street came out, and scores of building sites followed suit, as did many engineering works and hundreds of other workplaces outraged by the Court's highhanded action and determined to wipe the laws off the statute book. Day after day there were massive demonstrations to 'Free the Five' and 'Smash the Act'. Posters produced by the Bryant Colour Print workers' occupation appeared in many windows, even in shop windows.

On a motion of the TGWU, the General Council of the TUC called a one-day General Strike for one week after the five were jailed, and there was every likelihood that hundreds of thousands of workers called out then would refuse to return to work the next day.

Five days after they had been jailed, the Pentonville Five were released. They were carried shoulder-high from the jail to address the jubilant demonstrators who packed the road outside.

Again it was the Official Solicitor who acted as the government's safety valve, putting in (unasked by the dockers) a plea that their contempt of court had now been 'purged'. But as the dockers were clearly as contemptuous of the Court as they had ever been, the argument for their release had to be somewhat laboured.

His first argument was that the root of the dockers' grievance was the loss of jobs and the groupage issue. That issue, he claimed, had now been tackled with the publication of the official Jones-Aldington Report, essentially an attempt to buy off the dockers with lump sum severance payments. Yet the NIRC's president Sir John Donaldson had earlier — rightly — claimed that the Court was not concerned with the underlying issues but only with the means of force used, and with whether or not they were unfair industrial practices.

The Official Solicitor's second argument was no less absurd. He noted that the Law Lords had overturned the Court of Appeal's ruling on the Heaton's case. Implicitly he was saying that the IR Act was never supposed to be applied directly to the rank and file, but to the union as such to urge it to discipline the rank and file. Applied directly to the rank and file it was bound to rebound on the state.

The rank and file movement provided the perfect opportunity to go beyond the freeing of the Pentonville Five to a smashing of the Act, which by now was being opposed by leading Tories too. The September Conference of the TUC, however, after suspending no less than 32 unions (most of them very small) for not de-registering, confirmed its policy of non-cooperation mark two: do what the court says, defend yourself in the Court, only don't register and don't initiate cases. A motion sponsored by the AUEW and the Fire Brigades Union, which would have restored the original policy of complete boycott, was substantially defeated.

The NIRC continued with its daily trivia. The big industrial disputes of 1972 — the miners, the building workers, the engineers — were not touched by the Court. The only major dispute of 1972 that the NIRC had concerned itself with was the dockers' fight over jobs. The NIRC's activity had certainly not resolved that dispute — in fact, the Official Solicitor's plea amounted to saying that the traditional forms of negotiation (the sell-out of the Jones-Aldington deal) had resolved the crisis created by the NIRC.

After July 1972 the Industrial Relations Act was clearly useless for any serious class battle. If it had been allowed to rest quietly on the statute books, it might have become usable in time. In the remaining two years of its life, however, it became an embarrassment to the state, as a series of petty anti-union cranks used it to provoke new confrontations.

## 4. Attack on the AUEW

As 1972 started with the NIRC's challenge to the biggest union in the country, it ended with the second biggest union being fined. The case was brought by James Goad against the AUEW. Goad was a scab who was also a member of the AUEW, but one who had been lapsed by his branch (not for the first time) for non-payment of dues. The Sudbury branch of the AUEW had refused to let Goad to a union meeting, and for this they had their head office's backing.

The Court backed Goad. So long as the AUEW did not expel him, he was entitled to attend the branch meeting, it ruled. True to its principles, the AUEW maintained its stance, refusing to go to court and refusing to heed the Court. The first contempt motion was lodged at the beginning of November, when a £5,000 fine was imposed, and the second a month later when a £50,000 fine was imposed.

With the union refusing to pay the fine, the Court had to issue writs of sequestration permitting it to loot the union's funds to pay the fines. As the union was in the red, the sequestration had to be arranged with the union's bankers. To get the £50,000 it was necessary for the sequestrators to realise stock holdings. All this time the union maintained its non-cooperation stand, but it did not go onto the offensive. Many engineers struck in protest and thousands declared their readiness for all-out action to defend their funds, but there was no official call.

A NIRC official was later able to gloat about this period: 'Apart from the Goad case, this was a constructive period in which the non- and ex-TUC unions such as NUBE and Equity made full use of the facilities available, and in which many TUC unions (AUEW excepted) were by now familiar with the court and its ways. The contrast between the position of total boycott by TUC-affiliated unions in January and the last days of the Autumn term, which saw a leading TUC personality (Mr. Clive Jenkins) making personal application to the Court, indicates how far the Court had progressed in credibility and acceptability.'

The Goad case did not unleash thousands of similar applications. The attempt by an anti-unionist called Lang-

ton to use the Act against the tacit closed shop in Chryslers failed, and Goad did not return to Court for a third round. (This Tory ex-Baptist evangelist had already made plain that £30,000 would buy his silence... Presumably some kind person came up with the cash and Goad retreated the richer.)

It is important to note that Chrysler did not support Langston's application.

When a group of workers tried to get the NIRC to stop the TUC calling a one-day strike on May Day — something that was clearly against the law — their case was rejected. It was not until the series of confrontations arising out of the Con Mech case at the end of 1973 that the NIRC was in the headlines again. While the AUEW certainly took a firmly principled stand on the Con Mech case, Scanlon had by this time put forward proposals to reform, rather than smash, the Tories' anti-union law.

If the Goad and Langston cases were sparked off by Victorian-minded workers, the Con Mech case was triggered off by an equally backward employer, Mr. Robert Dilley. When two stewards at Con Mech, a small engineering firm in Woking, informed their employer that a union had been formed and they were to act on behalf of its members, they were sacked. Their fellow workers immediately walked out in sympathy and the strike was declared official by the AUEW. But Mr. Dilley went to the NIRC.



The Eurotec men [the NIRC's private eyes] flee the camera

The application resulted on September 27th 1973 with the NIRC finding that the strike was an unfair industrial practice. It ordered the AUEW, which refused to come to court, to call the strike off. The AUEW paid no attention, and the strike went on.

A fortnight later the NIRC decided to punish the AUEW. It instructed sequestrators to grab £100,000 of the union's funds and stocks, of which £75,000 was plundered as a Court fine. But still the strike went on. At this point the Labour Party leaders became most indignant: this £75,000 had come, they pointed out, from the union's political fund, and taking it was tantamount to taking it from the Labour Party. A parliamentary motion was duly debated and carried in favour of the Tory government.

The AUEW called strikes on November 5th and 23rd, but it stopped short of trying to organise sustained action capable of repeating the dockers' victory or going on to smash the Act and bring down the government.

The government, however, did soon fall — because of Heath's attempt to polarise the country in the Tory Party's favour over the miners' strike. Again the Industrial Relations Act was useless in preventing that strike. Heath was swept out of office, having failed to curb rank and file activity in the unions and having failed at the much easier job of getting millions to agree that the unions are too powerful.

But the end of Heath wasn't the end of the NIRC. The Heath government was defeated in February, but the Labour government did not immediately repeal the IR Act. The Act and its Court remained in force. Labour promised to scrap the Act and the Court by May Day. Meanwhile this embattled citadel of Toryism decided to fine the AUEW another £47,000 to compensate Con-Mech for the damage (2) caused by the strike the previous Autumn. Sir John Donaldson and his robe-and-ruff companions seemed determined to score against the AUEW before themselves disappearing from the scene. So when on May 3rd the union still refused to pay the £47,000 — Labour had, of course, already broken its promise to repeal the Act by May Day — the NIRC ordered the union's entire funds to be seized.

(Michael Foot, on behalf of the Labour government, tried to get the AUEW to give in. He promised that if they paid the NIRC fine, it would be returned to the union in addition to the money the Tories took off non-registered unions in the form of taxation. The AUEW took no notice. Labour, it appears, could not come up with the imaginative legal get-outs of the Tories (like the Official Solicitor) and dared not act without them.)

Three days later the union's funds were restored — minus £280,000. The union's call for an all-out strike the following day was not withdrawn. But May 7th didn't see the start of an all-out strike of engineers; instead it saw Donaldson's challenge to the AUEW deflated when an anonymous group of businessmen paid the NIRC £65,000 on the AUEW's behalf. Were these the same kind bosses who paid off Goad?

## 5. Labour and the NIRC

The NIRC ended with less than a whimper. It was wiped out by Labour's battery of legislation that restored to the trade unions their customary position in law, and established new rights for workers. These Labour laws, learning a lesson from the previous period, increased the power of the trade unions in the state and semi-state bodies.

The working class's experience of fighting the Tory laws confirmed in practice the Trotskyist analysis of the role and nature of the trade union bureaucracy and its relation to the state. Fundamentally that analysis says this: the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour Party leaders are divided not in type — they are both politically petty-bourgeois

elements within the workers' movement, acting as brokers between that movement and the bourgeoisie and its state — they are divided only in the areas of their activity and the 'competence' that derives from these.

The trade union leaders, by their brokerage, turn the trade unions into organisations which are not only the mass organisations of the working class but also the means of disciplining, containing, corrupting and defeating that class. 'From the example of England', wrote Trotsky, 'one sees clearly how absurd it is to counterpose... the trade union organisation and the state organisation. In England more than anywhere else, the state rests on the back of the working class... The mechanism is such that the bureaucracy is based directly on the workers, and the state indirectly, through the intermediary of the trade union bureaucracy.'

It is impossible to understand the rejection of the claims of the various 'sweetheart' unions like UKAPE, the guarantees given to the registered unions and the whole strategy of getting unions to expel militants to 'get off the rap', except from this standpoint. The Communist Party line which asserted that the Tories were out to smash the trade unions was nonsense. It was potentially dangerous nonsense too. Not only does it imply that the Tories are no different from fascists, but it implies that Labour's general stance in relation to the unions is fundamentally different — and thus less dangerous than the Tories'.

The dockers' struggles were a perfect example of what Trotskyists have been saying in relation to the trade unions in Britain for decades. What did the NIRC manage to do? It created a reaction in the ports which triggered off a movement heading for an all-out general strike. It ensured more working days lost in the docks than in many a year. Most important, its intervention led to an upsurge of self-confidence of dockworkers and a narrowing of the room for manoeuvre of their trade union leaders. Jack Jones, then the leader of the TGWU, lost much credibility in those days of Chobham Farm and Midland Cold Stores. When he was mobbed outside the T&G headquarters, the bourgeoisie saw a sight that terrified them a hundred times more than the average strike — and the press reactions made that clear.

The NIRC's intervention, in short, made it more difficult to solve the dockland situation in the interests of the bourgeoisie, while the traditional methods — the negotiation between Jack Jones and Lord Aldington — actually succeeded in defeating the dockers.

To put it another way: the immense strength of the trade union bureaucracy is an immense strength for the bourgeoisie. When Home Secretary Robert Carr kept insisting that the Industrial Relations Act was there to strengthen the unions, he wasn't lying. He meant just that: the Tories aimed at strengthening the bureaucracy. Why the laws didn't work, and where Robert Carr missed the point, is that that bureaucracy's capitulation to bourgeois interests doesn't mean that it has no independent interests, no stake in its own survival as a caste of brokers in an essentially open struggle.

Shortly before the Labour Party conference of 1973, Laszlo Kovats of the Society of Labour Lawyers wrote in *Labour Weekly* of 'the incomprehensible attitude of trade unions towards legislation concerning them as organisations'. 'The cry 'Kill the Bill', he said, 'is either dishonest or stupid'. And he warned: 'If democracy is the accepted form of government, legislative change cannot be brought about by unconstitutional means. There was clearly no earthly chance of killing the Bill short of revolution. It was equally clear that such a revolution was not forthcoming.' Yet the facts speak for themselves: the Act was smashed twice — by the dockers and those who supported them in Pentonville week of July 1972, and by the engineers and their supporters in 1974. The relative ease of these victories — both were won long before the full weight of the workers' movement was brought to bear — reveals the true capacity of the working class.

When the Industrial Relations Act was finally wiped off the statute books by the Labour government, it was replaced by a battery of commissions, committees, boards and councils whose job it was to tie the trade union bureaucracy closer to the state without narrowing its room for manoeuvre. These were designed to 'resolve' or defuse hundreds of more minor disputes — most of all those brought about by Dickensian employers, or reactionary workers: the kind that had taken up so much time at the NIRC. They were also designed to win the allegiance of trade unionists and to restore the status quo: bourgeois rule by courtesy of the rotten reformism of the Labour and trade union leaders.

1] At the TUC Conference of September 1973, it was announced that there had been 32 unions suspended for not de-registering. The Conference expelled 20. The NGA had withdrawn from the TUC, some of the 32 had reversed their policy, and one, organising a grand total of 43 workers in the cane and wicker industry, went out of existence. The majority of the unions expelled were tiny and unimportant: together they represented a mere 7% of TUC membership. The important ones were CoHSE (113,000 members), NUBE (103,000), the Bakers' Union (50,000), the NUS (43,000) and Equity (20,000).

2] The issue of compensation was linked to one of the potentially most draconian measures of the Act, the exclusion of non-registered unions from protection from prosecutions for torts. In practice this would have meant putting the trade union movement back to the days of the Taff Vale Judgment of 1901. Since the repeal of that judgment it had no longer been possible to sue unions for torts (civil wrongs). They could not be held liable for the losses incurred by a company through industrial action by its workers.

Non-registered unions, not having this immunity, exposed themselves potentially to huge fines for compensation for such losses. (The fines on the T&G had been for contempt of court, not for compensation). In 1973 the NIRC dealt with a number of cases of claims for damages from employers. The best known of these were the Con-Mech case and that of General Aviation Services (GAS) vs. the TGWU. GAS said that industrial action by TGWU members at Heathrow had lost it a million pounds! The NIRC was abolished before the Lords had made a judgment on the basic issue of compensation raised most dramatically by the GAS case.



## Post Office: unity needed to fight on wages and cuts

THE POST Office is currently £500 million down in its dispute with the CPSA over pay. After six weeks of selective action by the CPSA it faces industrial action from its management staff association on June 14th and a possible walk-out by Post Office Engineering Union (POEU) members from July 1st.

The original Post Office strategy was to take on the CPSA and break its selective strike action in two key computer centres, Leeds and Harmsworth (the two national 24-hour operation billing centres), with mass suspensions. They then planned to take on the POEU.

This strategy has failed so far. In many cases suspensions have hardened support for the pay struggle. Clever use of Post Office rules and procedure has resulted in chaos when attempts have been made to transfer work.

The CPSA's pay claim is basically for parity with fellow CPSA members in the civil service, an increase of around 20 to 30%. They also reject the proposed re-grading structure as a basis for pay negotiations.

The Post Office moved early on to break the strike in telephone area offices where cheques to a value of £10 million had piled up and were not being cashed. But they had little success.

As one member commented: "the Post Office seems to be trying to run the strike as if it has forgotten that the unions involved [CPSA and SCPS] both have over 95% membership".

The Post Office's offer is a package deal designed to weaken the union. It is 9%, plus 2 1/4% to offset a move in the pay date from April 1st to July 1st, plus 3 1/2% (including the proposed 1980 productivity bonus payment) for an agreement to negotiate over and implement a proposed re-grading

structure within one year.

This offer also includes clerical work measurement, widespread introduction of word processors, and agreement to the use of contract, agency and casual labour. The proposed re-grading is designed to increase job flexibility, reduce the number of grades by introducing 'pay bands' for pay bargaining, and to try to create more inter-union conflict.

It is crucial that the POEU take joint action with CPSA and SCPS over pay earlier than planned and thus confront the PO bosses with a united front which can not only win the pay battle but, as importantly, prepare the ground for united action at any move Sir Keith Joseph and his Stock Exchange friends may make to hive off the very profitable telecommunications side of the Post Office to GEC, Plessey, or some other company.

RAY SAUNDERS

# Workers' ACTION

## Sun workers show how the Times could win

TELEPHONISTS striking at the Sun newspaper have won a victory against the bosses' attempts to inflict severe blows to their organisation and working conditions.

The trouble began four weeks ago when their FoC [Father of Chapel] was sacked, £15 was knocked off their wages, and an overseer was installed in the switchboard room.

The main initiator of all these measures was Mr J A Britton. Not so long ago Mr Britton was FoC at the Times, and sat on the committee of the Fleet Street NATSOPA RIRMA branch, the branch which the telephonists belong to. He is now labour relations officer at News Group Newspapers Ltd, owners of the Sun.

As soon as he arrived he bragged he was going to take on the union. His first attack was on the switchboard workers.

Their productivity agreement was withdrawn, resulting in a loss of £15 for everyone except the supervisor, who lost £30 as he was also demoted to the switchboard! For some time the men had been complaining about the increase in work. The management's reply was to install an overseer, empowered to instantly dismiss anyone if he considered that their work was "not up to a certain standard".

When the FoC attempted to call a mandatory chapel meeting to discuss this, he was immediately threatened with the sack. How-

ever, only after repeated intimidation by the overseer and Mr Britton's statement that even though the men were working they would not be paid did the men actually walk out.

The sacking of the FoC followed soon after. At a meeting between management and union, the FoC was provoked into swearing at Britton. He was sacked on the spot with not a word of complaint from Hutchinson, the RIRMA branch secretary, who is an old friend of Britton's.

Britton also informed the union that all the other members of the chapel, having withdrawn their labour, would also be sacked.

The union refused to make the strike official, saying that the workers had acted in an unconstitutional manner by walking out before they got official approval. Hutchinson did however negotiate a 'peace' formula with the management.

It said that the men should go back to work immediately and lose their £15 pending a new agreement. The supervisor should stay demoted, and the overseer would remain. The FoC would be suspended for one month, pending an inquiry in which the onus would be on him to prove that he was unfairly dismissed.

Not surprisingly, the telephonists rejected this nasty little package, and refused to return to work. The officials' response was to allow scab labour into the switchboard

room to cover what were termed emergency services. Other workers at the Sun crossed the telephonists' picket lines; if they had refused, they too would have been charged by their unions of acting 'unconstitutionally'.

The telephonists were not deterred: they canvassed for support throughout Fleet Street and circulated statements explaining their case to other workers. Collections for them were held in many Fleet Street NATSOPA chapels. It had its effect.

Under pressure, the Executive Council were forced to consider the case, and reversed the decision of the NATSOPA RIRMA branch. The bosses backed down.

The FoC, George Hall, and all the workers have been reinstated, the £15 has been returned and the overseer withdrawn. The victory of the Sun workers shows strikingly that sticking out to defend your rights and fighting for support from other sections of workers is the way to win. It shows up completely the pathetic strategy of the union leaderships in a much larger battle, the Times dispute.

With the complete absence of a fightback at the Times and with many of the workers now in alternative full-time employment, it has been impossible to spread the struggle across Fleet Street. But the Sun shows that another outcome was possible. CLARE RUSSELL

## EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch - payment in advance. Send copy to Events, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

**SATURDAY 16 JUNE.** March against state racism and the Irish connection, organised by East London UTOM and local anti-racist groups. 2pm from Speakers' Corner.

**SATURDAY 16 JUNE.** Mass picket against the racist colour bar at Pollyannas club, Birmingham. Assemble Chamberlain Sq., 9pm.

**SATURDAY 16 JUNE.** Conference on Labour and the Crisis of Local Government Finance and Services. 10am to 5pm at Hampstead Town Hall.

**SATURDAY 23 JUNE.** 'Defend our Unions' conference, sponsored by Acton Works LT AUEW shop stewards' committee and several other trade union bodies. At New Century Hall, Manchester. Credentials for TU delegates £1 from 265a Seven Sisters Rd, London N4.

**FRIDAY 22 JUNE to SUNDAY 1 JULY.** Gay Pride Week: events include a Grand Carnival on Saturday 30 June (assemble 1pm, Temple Place, Embankment, EC4).

**FRIDAY-SUNDAY 29 JUNE-1 JULY.** Anti-fascist school organised by Oxford ANL. Details from 0865 52000.

**SATURDAY 30 JUNE.** 'Health not cuts' conference organised by 'Fightback'. At Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. Details: 560 3431 x 679.

**SATURDAY 30 JUNE.** Demonstration against recognition of Muzorewa's government. Assemble 2.30pm, Smithfield Market, London.

**SATURDAY 30 JUNE.** Day school on new technology organised by Fleet Street Women's Voice. 10.30am at Central London Poly, New Cavendish St, W1. Admission £1.50, unemployed/housewives 75p. Creche organised.

## TEACHERS SLAM PAY SELL-OUT

PROTESTS by teachers against the salary sell-out are mounting. Of the 13 associations which had met before half-term last week, 10 had rejected the terms. Several others have done so since.

Those rejecting the deal include traditionally moderate associations like Manchester and Swansea. Merton Association has called for the resignation of General Secretary Fred Jarvis.

In London, dozens of schools are carrying out unofficial action - withdrawal of goodwill, and no cover for absent teachers. Activists are campaigning for a half-day strike on Thursday 14th June and a mass lobby of the special salary conference on the 16th.

The proposed settlement is the lowest of the public sector deals - 9% now, plus 0.3% on the global sum to pay for anomalies, £6 a month on account and reference of the remainder of the 36.5% claim to the Comparability Commission (which will grant two phased payments over 18 months). Whatever the Commission comes up with can still be rejected by the employers, and the claim can be taken to compulsory arbitration under a Government-appointed 'independent' chairman.

The NUT National Executive has clearly caved in to the new Government, having no stomach to lead what would have

been the first union confrontation with the Tories. Given the strong response from the membership for stepping up the action, and the Tories' reluctance to confront the unions prematurely, the prospect of winning a substantial improvement was by no means slim.

Instead the National Executive called off the action, thus presenting the salary conference with a fait accompli.

Many association secretaries have not bothered to call meetings to allow the membership to express their attitude, and to elect delegates. They will send the same delegates as were elected to annual conference. Nevertheless, rank and file militants will be fighting hard for a substantial vote against acceptance.

If the settlement is accepted, many NUT members may become demoralised and leave the union. The National Executive must bear full responsibility for its failure to lead. It is essential that union activists argue in their schools and associations for members to stay in the NUT and carry on the fight for democracy and militancy in the union.

CHEUNG SIU MING

NUT Salaries Conference  
Lobby  
9.30am, 16th June, Central Hall, Westminster.

## Orange march flops

ONLY 200, instead of the expected 2,000, turned up for a planned Orange Order march in Coventry on Saturday 9th. And the march did not go through the Irish Catholic areas of the city as scheduled.

A counter-demonstration had been organised by the local United Troops Out Movement, and got about 80 to

100 people. Support from Birmingham ANL was first promised but then withdrawn under pressure from the Communist Party. But, looking for the Orange march, the counter demonstrators met up with a band of local youth who had also come out to oppose the Orange march.

A.C.

## Lucas sets strike for August

ON MONDAY 11th June shop stewards representing 12,000 Lucas production workers in 13 factories in the Birmingham area voted 500 to 4 to reject the bosses' offer on their pay claim.

They were claiming £15 across the board for all production workers, and the offer was £5.50. Even that was tied to swingeing productivity

and job mobility requirements. It is thought that Lucas' hard line is part of the Engineering Employers' Federation campaign to keep wages in check. The Lucas claim is the first big one to come up in this sector.

The stewards voted for an all-out strike as from the expiry date of the existing agreement, 1st August.

J.D.

## Stoke strike boosts unity

A MAJOR strike, which began at the beginning of April at William Doultons engineering works at Burslem (Stoke on Trent) over pay has created much stronger ties among the workers throughout the combine.

The strikers want a rise from £63 a week to the £80 a week that workers in other parts of the group already get. A spokesman told the local newspaper in the fourth week of the strike: 'We must be the lowest paid craftsmen in the country. Production is now crippled here and as far as we are concerned they can pay up or close up. The fight is to the bitter end'.

Despite no official backing from the T&G or AUEW, shop stewards called on hundreds of other engineers in the group to give support with token strikes. As a result 100 workers at Manor Engineering struck for one day, workers at another factory took action and others sent financial assistance. Another result was to bring stewards throughout the group together to create a group negotiating committee.

The company, which is a major employer in North Staffordshire, has refused to budge from its 10% offer. However, pickets have succeeded in turning away lorries. Blacking of Boultons' products would help too. But the best help would be a serious fight by the AUEW for the national claim.

A. BOUGH

## Cuts: Islington's Labour council outdoes the Tories

'PROFESSIONAL layabouts and bums', was how one Labour councillor described the Claimants' Union at a meeting of Islington Council's policy committee on June 11th. The attack was meant to justify a decision the committee made to cut off the council's grant not only to the Claimants' Union but also to almost every other voluntary group in the borough that has been receiving council money.

About 500 people protested outside the meeting, but their worst fears were confirmed. The committee voted to recommend to the full council that four community centres in the area be closed, removing the facilities available to pensioners' groups, tenants' associations, women's groups, English language classes and volunteer social work groups. An advice centre for teenagers in the borough, 'Grapevine', is also to be cut.

Islington council's Labour group, which has all but two of the council's seats, was taken over by a group of

right wing councillors at the start of 1979. They made the decision for one simple reason: not so much lack of money because of the cuts, as the fact that they object to council money being used to help local people getting to know their rights and organising to fight for them.

These cuts beat anything even the most right wing Tory councils in London have yet done, and if passed by the full council will have a dramatic effect not just on amenities for residents but also on the jobs of many workers in the projects facing the axe.

The Islington branch of TGWU-ACTSS, which organises those workers, has called a one day strike on June 19th to allow members to lobby the full council meeting. Left wing Labour councillors are attempting to get the recommendations thrown out.

Demonstration and lobby: 6.30pm, Tuesday June 19th, at Islington Town Hall, Upper St.

NIK BARSTOW

## CARF

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