No contract with capitalism on with the offensive

There can be no social contract between a capitalist government and the working class

Workers will never collaborate with those who exploit them. Such collaboration is what the Labour Government proposes in its ‘social contract’. What Labour says to the working class is this: if you will agree to accept a cut in your wages voluntarily, then it will not be necessary for us to impose wage cuts on you.

In the election period the Labour Party boasted that it had achieved a ‘social contract’ with the TUC which promised industrial peace. The nature of this contract was clear on April 6th at a meeting of the TUC and Government officials under the auspices of the National Economic Development Council, one of capitalism’s fronts organisations.

SPELLING IT OUT

There was a clear effort to make the Government do its best to keep wage claims within Phase III and to crack down on strikes. Union leaders agreed to use their influence to get their members to be ‘realists’ in putting forward wage claims and to bring about a situation in which there were “fewer strikes, particularly lightning strikes” and more negotiation based on “new forms of conciliation and arbitration”.

The TUC cannot speak for the working class in entering into any contract with the class enemies of workers. No more can union leaders speak for their members in accepting such a treacherous “agreement”. Furthermore, both of them know this and that is why they kept hedging every time the Government tried to make them present a favourable understanding of how they will police their side of the bargain.

THE WORKERS’ ANSWER

In our Party Programme, “The British Working Class and its Party”, we say that there can never be peace between exploiters and exploited, between capitalists and workers. “The working class lives in a state of perpetual guerrilla conflict with the employers”. This is the fundamental political fact which the Labour Party and the TUC would try to deal with their ‘social contract’. Already the honeymoon period of the new Labour Government is coming to an end. The engineers’ overtime ban, the NALGO action in London, are just the first signs of a growing campaign.

Roupaeau’s original social contract was based on a myth – that at some period in the past people had agreed to restraints on the freedom of the interests of an orderly society. It is an even more incredible myth that British workers would now, when their class political consciousness has never been higher, agree to restraints on their wage claims in the interests of their exploiters.

WHAT KIND OF A BARGAIN?

And what is the TUC supposed to have got for workers in exchange for such a bargain? A favourable budget? But when the dust raised by the Chancellor settled, it was found to be an anti-working-class budget as any devised by the Tories. Repeat of the Industrial Relations Act? But workers, led by the engineers, had already killed it.

Meanwhile, what did still matter to workers – the Counter-Inflation Act, Phase III – the TUC agreed would continue right up to the time when the Government could redefine it with their own “Conciliation and Arbitration Service”. The most Labour was prepared to promise in answer to the demand for the return of collective bargaining was to take wage determination out of Whitehall and into the conciliation and arbitration process. Wilson has boasted: “We know the trade unions ... we can get their cooperation.” We workers know the Labour Party, that concentrated expression of social democracy which is only capitalist ideology in a cloth cap. The Labour Party long ago signed away its soul in a compact with capitalism. Workers will never enter into any bargain with these creatures of the exploiting class.

Engineers against Phase III

The engineers smashed the Industrial Relations Act. It was their uncompromising opposition to the Act, their refusal to recognize the Industrial Relations Court set up, which made the various pieces of anti-trade-union legislation ineffective, so that the Labour Government could make the gesture of ‘abolishing’ it.

Phase III remains on the statute books because, apart from the miners, the working class has not yet made it completely unworkable by driving claims backed by industrial force right through the middle of it.

But, from April 15, 25 million engineering workers will be starting their action against Phase III with a ban on overtime. It will be remembered that the miners’ successful action began in the same way.

THE ENGINEERS’ CLAIM

The engineers’ claim in full, backed by the overtime ban, is a starting point; and the right pressure at the right time from that quarter in the Executive Council in closest touch with the real needs of the rank and file prevented all attempts to delay the kick off.

The National Committee met in November 1973 to discuss the Engineers Employers Federation’s ridiculous offer of £3.50 on the basic rate, no cut in hours, no increased holidays and a further postponement of equal pay. Acceptance of this derisory offer was rejected out of hand. An adventurous call for a ‘national strike’ which could not be sustained was also rejected. The guerrilla line of rolling regional actions, which our Party has put forward as the correct tactics at this stage for the working class in general as well as for the engineers in this particular struggle, was not adopted at the time, but it can develop out of the national overtime ban which the Committee left to the Executive Council to call at the most suitable time.

From the action beginning on April 15, engineering workers can go on guerrilla struggles best suited to their own strength and local conditions, turning each factory into a fortress, as happened all over the country in the nationwide guerrilla struggle two years ago when hundreds of employers were forced to settle well above the Federation’s offer – a rolling series of industrial actions as each district committee moves into struggle to the bewilderment of employers who will never know when and where they are going to be hit.

A STRONG UNION

It is the strength and initiative at rank-and-file level of the
ON THE INDUSTRIAL FRONT

SHIPYARDS

British Leyland replaced piece-work at their Cowley plant with measured day work three years ago. They are still having trouble getting the work measured. Small groups of workers have been walking out whenever industrial engineers and shop stewards have blocked the assembly line. Finally when the assembly line speed was increased from 35 to 29 cars per hour, 1300 men walked out.

PROVIDENT AGENTS

President Crotchet Supply Agents in Boudon and Merchopen struck for six per cent commission rate on personal loan business, instead of the present 4 per cent. The company has offered a 6 per cent rate across the board, meaning a reduction in some other sections. A new claim covers some 15,000 agents.

SU CARBORRETTES

This Birmingham works, which supplies the whole of British Leyland's Austin-Morris division with carburetors, was said to be locked out this week. 250 workers walked out, taking the mammoth total of the claim up to £250,000. A meeting of shop stewards, shop foremen and union leaders was called to consider the management reply to their pay claim, which includes demand for equal pay for women.

PERKINS

Thousands of workers at the Perkins engine diesel plants in Peterborough held a token stoppage to protest the employer's insistence on sick pay for union members. This was followed by other small stoppages.

£50 TUBE DEMAND

A mass meeting of workers at London Transport asked the company to turn down a recommendation by the Joint Workers Committee to accept offers of a new incentive scheme involving work study. Instead, by an overall majority, the three-and-a-half hour meeting of all unions instructed the negotiating committee to seek an alternative bonus scheme, to be paid in two increments of £50 per week and to recall the mass meeting in four weeks to discuss the next steps.

For the past eighteen months stoppages, go-slow and non-co-operation by the workers have been increasing. So far it has not been possible to identify the cause of the growing militancy.

The key union will probably be the Transport and General Workers' Union because of its membership of London Transport employees. This union has been saying for several months that no strike is likely to be effective in London without the support of a mass movement of workers in the capital.

LOND ON P AY battLe hot u p s

On April 2nd, at a meeting between the Secretary for Employment and the National and Local Government Officers Association, it was made abundantly clear how the Labour Government intends to apply the Plea pay machinery they have inherited.

The Secretary for Employment, that "most sincere champion of labour" in his own words, made reference to the Theory of the TUC called him, totally rejected the union's claim for increased rates, to which the Labour Government to which the present bonus system is geared. He, in fact, said that the Government was to put pressure on the employers for the terms of the London Pay Inquiry.

The question of the London Pay Inquiry, which is almost certainly the most important of the day's events, was raised by the Ministry of Labour, and there were arguments about the value of the London Pay Inquiry.

PUBLIC SERVICE SECTOR

At the same time a week when the TUC leadership was urging its members to improve their wage demands to a "realistic" site and to say greater emphasis on negotiations and less reliance on industrial action. As Public Service employees well know, negotiations are not always an easy place to be.

The public service unions have been taking place for over a year on the London Allowance whilst local government, London Transport and education services have been facing breakdowns because of the abnormal increase of staff.

Referring to the miners' victory, the General Secretary of NALGO said: "the lesson will not be lost on my members who are normally very difficult to provoke."

The lesson has also been lost on teachers who in the same week walked out of a number of schools in London, without notice, in support of the London Allowance.

YARDLEY STRIKE

500 women and 245 men, workers at Yardley's cosmetics factory, Bassetlaw, on strike demanding that their bonus payments be included in the basic rate, and therefore in the board's increase of £2.25 to be made to both men and women.

A TUC branch official said that though some workers thought that they had won a victory this was far from the truth, because the bonus shown at 15 per cent constituted no increase in basic rate and therefore had no relevance to equal pay. Further, that an increase of £2.25 across the board for both men and women was not demanded in the original dispute but was introduced into negotiations when the strike was days ago. A mass meeting outside the factory gate then voted overwhelmingly to continue the strike until a satisfactory agreement was reached.

The outcome of the action was that after further negotiations and over two weeks on strike, a final mass meeting voted to accept management proposals for bonus payments to be frozen at 15% and an across the board increase of £2.25 to be made to both men and women.

PICKETS at Pinford and Basildon successfully preventing the movement of moulds onto a waiting lorry - destined for London. On police advice the management closed the gate. The moulds - still inside.

Although the mass at shop floor level will always stem defeatist or adventurer policies, if we develop our struggle in this vein we can only win.

WIDESPREAD strike action marked the first mass strike at Yardley's, Basildon. It shows the increasing solidarity between men and women in struggle.

PERKINS

On Thursday 1st May at 7.30pm

MAY DAY MEETING

Camden Town Hall, Easton Rd, Kings Cross

Wednesday 1st May at 7.30pm
WE PARTICIPATE - THEY PROFIT

With "left-wing" Wedgewood Benn of the Industry Ministry we are getting a new wave of propaganda for "participation" which somehow seems to have become the cure for all the country's 'industrial troubles'. It may well be that Benn is trying to solve some of the country's economic problems but it means the same thing - workers are to be carried on for the employer's failure. Which country is always held up as the shining example of 'participation'? West Germany. Hardly a workers' paradise - or else why the recent massive strikes.

And what is the effect of it all? In poorly organised companies management often sees 'participation' as a way of setting up a kind of company union and keeping an eye on the workers. Every time, workers on the board have to accept the rules of the capitalist game. If the figures say the place is making a loss, something has to be cut. Of course the figures include interest payments to the bankers, artificial prices charged by other subsidiaries of a large group, etc. Benn is talking in money (it may be even if there are other little stories stretching from here to the Cayman Islands the workers' "representatives" end up by 'representing' the employer and telling the workers that redundancies or a wage freeze are inevitable. Just look at the history of the British Steel Corporation and its 'workers' directors'.

Under capitalism, 'participation' or even 'workers control' is as useless as having 'hel­tingers' in Parliament and with Benn, Feeth, Heffer, Orme, Old Uschi Tom Colby and all the Government know how useless that is. Just a load of extra per­sonnel managers. It is no use joining a cricket team if you want to score goals. Only when workers control the whole of society can workers control have real meaning.

MEREIDEN SIT IN

The workers at the famous Triumph motorcycle plant at Meriden near Coventry are still in occupation since having taken over their factory on October 24 last year. They had hoped to form their own cooperative under the guidance of the Banking and Labour MP Leslie Bedford. Norman Willett and a group of people about 8½ and now Mr Wedgewood Benn, with his well known pre­occupation with the word "participation", has offered government assistance. Workers have reported that often the cooperative terms have been agreed in prin­ciple, the management has con­ceded that the factory is profitable but the men's future is still unclear.

The Triumph men have shown that the plant is produc­tion­able and have gained wide sup­port from Coventry and the dis­trict and the press after the NUT set up. Unfortunately about one third of the workers have left. Although there is still a good deal of capital­ist interest, the cooperative is in a serious position and the TGWU is involved. In the end, all agreements will have to be changed. The roles of the workers and the management will have to be revised.

The TGWU claims that the Meriden factory is a mortgageable asset. With liquidity problems so acute government or other invest­ment after a period of Triumph needs working on the lump in the coming year, the end result would be a viable cooperative for NUT. The Investigators Chronicle concludes 'But above all Meri­den shows that sale of every part of the enterprise to the workers concerned adds a further dimension to the problem:•

Trade Unionism in Banking Must be Defended

The most important matter for discussion at this month's Annual Conference of the National Union of Bank Employees, is the pro­posed merger of NUHE and the banks' Staff Associations. Though a final decision will not be reached at Conference, the decisions reached will have a decisive bearing on the merger talk and the future of the merger itself. The proposed merger - the Association of Banking and Financial Unions - were to mean the liquidation of the Staff Association, for over half a century the trade of the employ­ers and the trade of the trade in banking and union, would be the most useful step, ABfu believed, to help make a real co­operative in banking, it would be a most useful step. ABfu believed, to help make a real co­operative in banking, it would be a most useful step. ABfu believed, to help make a real co­operative in banking, it would be a most useful step. ABfu believed, to help make a real co­operative in banking, it would be a most useful step. 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Glorious Easter

In this issue we pay tribute to the Irish Citizen Army, which, with the Irish Volunteers, played such a glorious part in the Easter Rising of 1916. We salute the indomitable Irish people who gave birth to such fighters, who are still battling valiantly against their age-old enemy and oppressor, British imperialism.

1916 was the most important rebellion against British rule that Ireland has ever seen. It did not have the mass support it deserved, yet it laid the foundations for the greatest ever infiltated on British imperialism in Ireland. It was the first blow to be struck against colonial peoples throughout the world, a war which the Irish people themselves have yet to complete.

Although it was a failure, it was, like the Parma Commune and the Revolution of 1805 in Russia, an action which brought the world of the people forward, and thus it was a great event.

The reasons of 1916 are still with us. The teachings of James Connolly are still with us. They will remain with us because these are reasons for the forward march of humanity, part of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism. All that remains to be done is to fight for the Irish working class, the inheritors of the struggle for Irish freedom, now a greater than ever, to set upon them, kick out the British and get on with the task of building socialism in Ireland.

The British 'secret war' in Ireland guts dirtler and less secure. The great powers, the US and the German, the government of Ireland has told us that the Special Air Service is operating in Northern Ireland. Brigadier Flight, the director of the infamous pseudo-gangs is appearing in its terrible reality. The monster, once alive, no longer has been killed. We have seen British troops, in plain clothes, killed in cold blood by the Ulster Constabulary, also in plain clothes. Then there is the new regiment, recently formed, which by former Minister of Defence admits using as an agent 'because it might save the lives of British soldiers' - if you have time.

Once last year, 'party's dem­and is the only way forward, British Troops Out of Ireland Now.

Penguin - A HIGH PRICE FOR CLOSURE

At Penguin Books and Penguin Education, warning in early February of impending redundancies was not the only cause for concern. A new management team, before Christmas, eighteen months the struggle by SNU members for union recognition and their first wage claim had finally borne fruit - the first basic salary structure and backdated increases between £5 and £3 in excess of the Phase II Award, to apply to the whole of the company.

But in this area of the working class, there have been once again shown that every agreement is an armistice, and that the final right of decision and right to be, enforced by workers, is never put within the power of man.

Because it works in harmony with the Labour and true National Movements and thus embraces all that makes for Social Welfare and National

BELLMAN BOOKSHOP

155 FORTESQUE ROAD LONDON NW3

Classic 19th century Chinese novel, "The Scholar" £2.50 post paid.

"Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action". Find out more about the revolutionary ideology of Marxism-Leninism as it is being developed by the Irish Volunteers in the first time in Britain, the oldest capitalist country. For books, pamphlets or information visit or write to the above bookshop up any of the shops listed below.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Apr. 18th THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT, Bellman Bookshop, 7.30 p.m.

Apr. 25th VICTORY TO THE PEOPLE OF DISOBED: the Arab People's struggle against imperialism. Bellman Bookshop, 7.30 p.m.

LIVERPOOL MAY DAY MEETING

Wed. May 1st Old Hall, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool 3, 7.30 p.m.

TEESIDE MAY DAY MEETING

Wed. May 1st The Star & Garter, Middleborough, 7.30 p.m.

If you do not usually receive a programme of public meetings held by the Joint Union Committee, please obtain a copy from the Joint Union Committee, C.P.M.U., 155 Fortesque Road, London NW3.

The road to freedom

The Labour Government hovers between Europe and the United States, hesitating in its search for a saviour. For the capitalists, the near bankruptcy of the United States is a windfall. For the working class, it is a time to realize that Britain will only thrive when she has become independent.

A few years ago it was said that Britain was made largely of coal and surrounded by fish. Only an organizing genius could arrange for a shortage of coal and fish in Britain at the same time. It is important to them.

Not only has capitalism succeeded in creating a shortage of fuel and food, it has also created a shortage of men. The United States has never had a draft, the United Kingdom has been in full blast.

Successful governments have made to reduce Britain to the "black mass of Europe". Today, Labour holds sway. In its last period of office, 1945 to 1970, Labour was a champion of the role of the United States and Britain in superpower status. It is not possible to mention here.

The Vietnamese toppled the American giant. The United States was receiving vast amounts of food (200 million dollars) and bowing to the master on their knees. The Vietnamese lifted the spirit of the working class.

For the working class it is not a question of cheap Communist food as opposed to the Common Agricultural Policy. It is not a question of easier markets in Europe as opposed to the Common Agricultural Policy. No, they will grow our own food, and industry will produce for our own use.

For the working class it is not a question of cheap food, it is a question of free and full employment. As the AUEW has shown, it is a question of the right to the only way forward: the right to live, the right to eat, the right to be treated with respect and dignity as human beings.

Just as every collision brings a test of the fighting spirit, so does the struggle against the United States and Britain.

The road to freedom is only for the people of the world who are willing to struggle, to fight, to believe in the future, to struggle for the right to live, to struggle for the right to work, to struggle for the right to the only way forward: the right to live, the right to eat, the right to be treated with respect and dignity as human beings.

NIRC

Still out for blood

Although the Co-operative strike is finished, and the National Industrial Relations Court will soon be finished, that does not stop us replacing the national Defence Act with the Act of 1889, which would not only make the industrial unions illegal, but which would also bring the atom bomb to this country.

On the 18th March, the AUEW called a national meeting in the Adelphi Theatre, London.

The national defence of the working class and the people of this country is the only way forward.

NUS conference

Continuation of the Grants Campaign and the defeat of the NUS were major topics at the Easter Conference of the National Union of Students, held in Liverpool.

The demands, for higher grants and fees, have been met. Just as every collision brings a test of the fighting spirit, so does the struggle against the United States and Britain.

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