



SMASH TORIES ON ALL FRONTS!

STRIKE & VOTE - TORIES OUT!



Despite the massive 81% vote of miners in favour of strike action, Joe Gormley now thinks the whole thing is a mistake: 'we ought not to fight an election in the current climate, and therefore a strike ought to be deferred.'

Miners' strike must go on

Speaking at a meeting sponsored by Brent Trades Council last week, Jack Collins, Kent Area delegate to the NUM executive, pointed to the central feature of the present situation when he said: 'It is my feeling and the general feeling of the Kent executive, that if the miners go out on the streets, they should not go back until the Shrewsbury 3 are released.'

There are hundreds of ways — like the 3-day week, the wage freeze, and the jailing of the Shrewsbury 3 — in which workers have come under attack from the Tories.

The miners, by coming 'out on the streets' could become the spearhead of a united working class fight back. The aim of Heath in calling a general election is to try and stop the miners going 'out on the streets', and thus prevent the working class fighting back against the Tory attacks.

There is absolutely no reason for the miners' strike to be called off because the Government has resorted to this latest trick. Only the interests of the ruling class would be served by such a move. However, the Labour Party leaders and the

NUM right wing will be sure to urge such a course. But rank-and-file miners must not be led along such a disastrous road. If the executive fails to call the national strike as planned, there should be mass walkouts from every pit, and the Area Committees should meet to organise area-wide strikes. Flying pickets should be sent out from the militant pits and areas to rally their comrades in more backward areas.

The interests of the rest of the working class can only be served in a similar way. Conferences of the entire labour movement must be organised in every area to organise and coordinate the struggle against the Tory Government, both in the factory and at the polls. The organisation of concrete and practical forms of solidarity with the miners, and launching of industrial action against Phase 3, the Tory lockout and the jailing of the Shrewsbury workers, and plans for a mass anti-Tory campaign of rallies, demonstrations and strikes for the election, should be on the agenda of such conferences.

Workers at the occupied McLaren Control factory in Glasgow have shown the way by writing to the NUM executive and local miners' lodges offering the use of their factory to the NUM during the strike. This sort of initiative should be taken up by engineering workers everywhere.

Such demonstrations of practical solidarity with the miners are the best means of encouraging the militants in the pits to continue the fight against the Tories. The launching of massive industrial action by the miners in the face of the election call would spell the failure of this manoeuvre, and open the way to the total destruction of this vicious enemy of the working class, the Tory Government.

The Tory Government's decision to call a general election was forced on it by the massive display of fighting determination revealed in the miners' ballot, and the prospect it opened up of a full-scale working class offensive against the Government.

This election is nothing more than a political manoeuvre. Unable to defeat the miners in the open class struggle the Tories have decided to try to do the same job in a different way, through a 'red scare' union bashing election.

They are aided in this by the cowardly positions of Wilson and the Labour Party leadership. The Labour leaders have consistently refused to support the miners strike, and have aided the Tories by their red baiting attacks on miners' leader Mick McGahey.

But the working class can still defeat these well-laid plans of the Tories. The steps forward in the industrial struggle — with an 81% vote for a strike — can be turned into a victory on the electoral field.

But this can only be done if every effort is made to prevent the election breaking up the fighting unity of the working class.

For that, of course, is what Heath hopes to achieve by an election: the struggles will be suspended, workers will return to the normal routine of home and job, and the Tory lie machines of the press and television will get to work on them individually. Workers in this position are far more vulnerable to all the rubbish about the 'rule of law', the 'national interest', and the 'sovereignty of parliament' — ideas which are supported by the Labour Party leaders and the union bureaucrats as well as the Tories — than are workers united in a common struggle against all these institutions of capitalist class rule. Thus the Tories have the best chance of winning an election under conditions such as these.

Already the 'leaders' of the trade unions and the Labour Party are falling into the Tories' trap. Wilson has appealed to the ASLEF men to call off their action. He will almost certainly appeal to the miners to do the same. Gormley said, when the election was announced 'we ought not to fight an election in the current climate and therefore a strike ought to be deferred'. This would play right into the Tories hands.

Instead of playing into the hands of the Tories and responding to the general election call by halting the struggle, all the struggles should be stepped up. The miners must proceed with their strike. ASLEF should step up its industrial action.

One powerful group of workers who could seal the Tories' fate is the engineers. A national engineering strike in solidarity with the miners and for the full engineering claim should be launched immediately. The AUEW executive will certainly not take this step. But moves are already under way to recall the national conference of engineering convenors which met in Manchester last year. This body should meet immediately and, breaking with all nonsensical ideas of an overtime ban, undertake to launch district engineering strikes

and coordinate them on a national basis.

Other groups in struggle with the Tory Government — such as students — should seize the opportunity of the election to step up their struggle.

In fact, the whole election campaign, and particularly polling day, must be the occasion for a massive wave of strikes and demonstrations against the Tory Government. The best situation for an election would be a general strike — which would pose going beyond Parliamentary elections to real workers elections.

United front committees and local conferences of the labour movement must be organised in every area to prepare such a campaign.

The working class movement must fight in every way possible to smash the Tory attempt to fragment and individualise it. Instead, the industrial power, numbers and organisation of the working class must be used to determine the outcome of the election. In this way every section of the working class, including those that do not usually vote and even some who vote for the Tories can be swung into action.

If the Labour Party were a real party acting in the interests of the workers, it should long ago have swung all its resources behind the miners and other workers in struggle. It should have campaigned for a general strike to bring down the Tory government. Now it should call for a massive display of strikes and demonstrations in the election campaign.

But there is not the slightest chance of it doing so. Wilson & Co not only fail to pursue the goal of socialism, they even refuse to carry out a real struggle against the Tories.

The International Marxist Group is in favour of people voting Labour. A victory for the Tories would be a defeat for the working class, while a victory for Labour would encourage the fighting spirit and self-confidence of the workers' movement. For this reason the outcome of the election will affect not only Parliament but also the far more important struggle outside.

But no confidence whatsoever can be placed in the Labour traitors. We say: *Vote Labour - But rely on your own struggles.* Only through resolute mass actions — through strikes and demonstrations — and on the basis of shedding all illusions about the reformist class traitors who lead the Labour Party, can the working class both defeat the Tories in this election and prepare to deal with whatever Government comes out of it.



'It is quite useless for a string of CP speakers to record impressions about their particular localities. What is needed is a practical test of the willingness of the workers to act in defence of the Three.'

SHREWSBURY CONFERENCE VOTES FOR TOKEN ACTION ONLY

By DAVE BAILEY

When 800 delegates to the recall Liverpool Conference on Shrewsbury met in St George's Hall last weekend, the first thunderclaps of a miners' strike were breaking over their heads. But the delegates voted for a plan of action which seems to have been drawn up in the expectation of distinctly milder weather.

The resolution moved by the Liverpool Trades Council called for a national day of action to be held during the week commencing 18 March. The form of action to be decided by meetings of workers at factories, docks, building sites etc, but mass support for a national demonstration in London and lobby of Parliament should be a first priority.

The platform did not seem to notice that by March we might be slap in the middle of a miners' strike, with the country on a 2-day week, and the Tory Government fighting for its life. Under these circumstances, a national day of action on Shrewsbury would hardly be noticed by the Government—whereas indefinite strike action over Shrewsbury could put the boot in once and for all.

CP VICTORY

The Trades Council line is even more short-sighted in view of the ruling by the High Court last Friday. The appeals are now set to start on 19 February, one month before the action proposed by Liverpool Trades Council. The platform adjusted to this situation only by calling for a lobby of the Appeal Court on the 19th.

The Conference was another victory for the politics of the Communist Party in the Shrewsbury campaign. The CP believes that the official leaderships can be activated only so long as the rank and file do not take any independent initiatives which might antagonise them. In this conception of the world, the new opportunities created by the struggles of other groups of workers such as the miners are in practice irrelevant, and the objective needs of the situation, such as the need to respond speedily when militants are thrown into jail, are ignored.

Those who spoke of the need for tough and speedy action to release the Three were said to be ultra-left and unrealistic. One speaker after another spoke of the widespread ignorance over Shrewsbury, that the national press had totally ignored the trials, and that it would not have been possible to get a movement like the one which released the dockers from Pentonville. 'We've got to start where the lads are, not where we would like them to be,' as Pete Carter put it.

It would certainly be foolish to claim that every worker, or even the majority of the move-

ment, understood the issues at Shrewsbury and were prepared to take action. On the other hand, speedy action is imperative. Any serious working class leader would try to find a way to solve this very real dilemma, instead of harping on exclusively about the subjective deficiencies of the movement.

FLYING PICKETS

A solution could be found if the building workers in the major centres—a group of workers who are substantially educated over Shrewsbury—took the lead in strike action. Flying pickets would then be available to spread the struggle to groups who aren't. Thus the tasks of getting a strike movement under way and of educating other workers are not in the least contradictory. It was precisely to combine these two things that the flying picket was invented—the very weapon the 800 delegates were supposed to be there to defend.

In any case, political backwardness over Shrewsbury is not just simple ignorance of the issues. What is really at stake is whether workers are prepared to act. It is quite useless for a string of CP speakers to record impressions about the mood in their particular localities, impressions which generally contradict one another depending on the point being made. What is needed is a practical test of the willingness of the workers to act in defence of the Three. The flying picket is the best test so far devised.

But the CP are opposed to a builders' strike—official or unofficial. As Kevin Halpin put it: 'The builders can't lead... We must kill this stone dead.' This of course is exactly what the CP has been doing. The North Wales Defence Committee told men to go back to work on 1 January, and the Birmingham UCATT resolution for a national stoppage starting in the Birmingham area was killed by a wall of silence.

MINERS' STRIKE

Only two speakers understood how the miners' strike provided a new opportunity for developing other struggles of the working class, including the fight to free the Three. Cathy Adams, a NUPE shop steward and member of Southwark Trades Council, spoke about the need to go beyond solidarity with the miners, and for all workers betrayed by their leaders over Phase 3 to re-submit their claims.

Terry Barrett, Chairman of the Barking and Dagenham Defence Committee and convenor of William Warnes Rubber Co, said a strike on

the 18th was pointless unless building workers take indefinite strike action. He went on to say that a building strike around Shrewsbury should be linked to the miners' strike, and that the miners should explicitly have as one of their demands in a strike the freeing of the Three.

This is the way forward for the campaign. A miners' strike, where picketing becomes the key question for the miners and the millions of workers who will be in solidarity with them, could be used to deepen and escalate the struggle over Shrewsbury.

The NUM should immediately adopt as official policy the demand for the release of the Three and an end to the trials. It should be added to the demands at present contained in their claim.

The NUM should also conclude reciprocal agreements with the T&G and UCATT at all levels under which these unions would join the miners in strike action to free the Three, to free manpower for the miners' mass pickets and to

lead into strike action other sections of workers prepared to fight for the release of the Three.

Local Shrewsbury Defence Committees should now be setting about the creation of picketing pools in every area, with special reference to the need to defend the miners' pickets.

Two things came out of the Liverpool Conference which could assist in this struggle. It proposed a series of regional conferences to be held throughout the country before 18 March. Some of these are already planned. Others should be organised as rapidly as possible and should include speakers from the NUM.

DEFENCE OF PICKETING

Liverpool Trades Council also decided to accept an amendment which said: 'The aim of this Conference should be to establish close links between the miners' strike and the fight to free the Three.' However, this was not made clear to the conference, so most delegates will be unaware of the implications of the amended resolution. The Trades Council should clarify this by taking the lead in organising action along these lines, such as making a public approach to the Lancashire NUM delegate who spoke at the conference in a typically sectional manner on the theme of the energy crisis—or by taking the lead in organising an action such as a mass picket which includes a large body of miners.

A joint struggle by miners, building workers and others around the defence of picketing could provide one of the avenues along which the miners' strike could be turned into a general strike.

UCATT leadership scabs on Three

Only a few days before the Shrewsbury Three appeal in the High Court against their convictions, the leaders of UCATT continued their consistent betrayal of the Three by issuing a statement to strengthen the hand of the judge.

The statement speaks of the 'criminal techniques the Shrewsbury pickets decided to adopt', thus condemning the Three as guilty of the charges.

The statement goes on to discourage other workers from defending the Three by fostering the illusion that 'the trial of the workers at Shrewsbury cannot be viewed as an attack on picketing in general... The fact is that it was a question of enforcing existing law rather than a new departure.'

The scabs of the UCATT Council know this is a stinking lie. The UCATT Council hopes to spread confusion and make it easier for the High Court to keep the Three in jail. They know full well that the extension of criminal conspiracy to the everyday actions of trade unions opens the way for extensive

attacks by the police.

While the UCATT Council asks the TUC to plead to the Home Secretary about the length of the sentences, the Three are to be sacrificed on the altar of bourgeois legality. 'We have no power under union rules to grant legal aid to the Shrewsbury pickets who are charged with committing such [criminal] acts, nor would we be seen to be condoning the use of these techniques to further industrial ends, however legitimate these ends may be.'

This last statement is an open invitation to the State to step up its attacks on workers, along the lines of Shrewsbury, secure in the knowledge that UCATT at least will not even put up money for their defence.

The Council makes it clear: they will abandon any member who is even charged (let alone found guilty) with a criminal offence in the course of fighting the class struggle. If this policy is carried out consistently many trade unionists will find themselves in prison for want of legal aid, or will simply refuse to go on a picket line at all.

Is this what the UCATT Council wants?

The decision to hold a national miners' strike from 10th February opens up, just as the 1972 miners' strike did, enormous possibilities for working class victory. But in 1972 the great fruits of victory were wasted. The Tories were left in office and they masterminded a counter-attack which ended in the imposition of Phase Three. This time there must be no such mistakes. JOHN MARSHALL details the crucial steps which the working class can take to ensure the miners' victory and sweep the Tories from office

A PROGRAMME FOR THE MINERS' STRUGGLE

Joint action with other groups of workers

According to the press and to Jim Callaghan, the miners' struggle will be a long and bitter one. This will undoubtedly be the case if the rest of the working class stands idly by. But it need not happen if the rest of the working class joins in a combined offensive. This will ensure that the struggle will be won and the Tories defeated swiftly and decisively.

Undoubtedly big working class solidarity with the miners will be shown. This is needed but it is not enough. All experience shows that massive involvement in a struggle can only be gained when all those involved are also fighting for their own demands.

This means that engineering workers must strike for their pay claim; Vauxhall and Ford workers for their recently submitted demands; ASLEP should call a national strike: industrial action should be taken to free the Shrewsbury 3 and stop the trials; power workers should refuse to operate government cuts and impose workers control on the power industry; students should take all-out action to win their grants demands, and so on. If this is done an irresistible weight will be thrown against the employing class and the chances of every section winning will be enormously increased.

In the case of the engineers, the Manchester convenors' meeting should be recalled to take national strike action, and district shop stewards meetings should call regional strikes. In the case of Fords and Vauxhalls, the shop stewards committees can lead action. All this must, of course, be in addition to full solidarity action with the miners.

Self defence of picket lines

In the 1972 miners' strike, the Government and the employers used massive repression against picket lines. Since then they have become even better prepared through the creation of police anti-picket squads, the setting up of a national anti-picket centre, the sentences in the Shrewsbury trials, and the use of the army in the Glasgow firemen's strike.

In 1972 the way to defeat these attacks on pickets was demonstrated. At Saltley, the massive 10,000-strong picket defeated the police. In other areas scabs wielding iron rods were smashed.

This time again defence of picket lines on a massive scale must be organised. This must be prepared immediately through the creation of picketing pools and pledges of groups of workers to defend each other's picket lines. The struggle to free the Shrewsbury Three and stop the Shrewsbury trials is a key part of the defence of picketing.

Non-trade union sections of the population must be brought into the struggle

In the 1972 strike, apart from the support gained from the labour movement, many other layers and organisations aided the struggle. Even more could be brought into the struggle this time.

In particular, the following groups must be rallied in support of the struggles:

Tenants associations can house flying pickets and provide all sorts of support;

Organisation of women in the strike can play a key role. The women's centres established

by the women's liberation movement, for example, can provide accommodation and help to co-ordinate local picketing pools;

All student organisations must be placed at the support of the miners and other groups in struggle as well as launching an all-out fight for their own demands;

Labour Councils and Labour parties must place all their facilities at the support of the strikers.

Democratic organisation of the struggle

In order to ensure maximum participation in the fight and its victory, every struggle must be organised and waged in the most democratic way possible. In the 1972 miners' strike the lack of such democratic organisation led to a crippling weakness when the union leaders called off the pickets, thus effectively ending the strike—before any decision had been taken by the NUM members. This would never have happened if democratically elected strike and picket committees had been established. It would have been these committees which would have set up the pickets, decided when to call them off, and conducted the general running of the strike, whether to end it and so on.

Democratically elected strike committees together with frequent mass meetings must be established as the rule right at the beginning of the strike, for all groups of workers engaged in struggle. The Glasgow firemen showed the way here since it was through these methods that they were able to obtain the solidarity necessary to win their great victory.

Organise action committees and councils of action

In 1972 the solidarity miners received from the working class and many other sections of society was magnificent. But it was often too unorganised. Only in a few areas, particularly in East Anglia, were real democratic solidarity action committees set up which involved other trade unionists as well as miners and which also organised student and tenants' associations. The organisation in parts of East Anglia was very successful, helping to plan the defence of pickets, watching the ports for import of coals, and so on. But in other areas things were dangerously ramshackle.

This time right from the beginning action committees and councils of action must be set up which can co-ordinate the struggle. Already in some areas, such as Rotherham, Oxford, and Chesterfield, conferences have been held which drew together forces to discuss the way forward for the struggles.

Initiatives of this kind can be organised in other areas. The aim must be to develop real councils of action of the type that developed in the 1926 General Strike.

Vote Labour but rely only on your own struggles

One development which the working class movement may well be faced with in the coming weeks is a general election. The Tories have failed to break the resistance of the miners through the three-day week, the red scare, and the relentless press campaign. Now the Government is playing with the idea of an election. The working class movement must be very clear what such an election would mean. It would be an attempt to use the cowardly

retreat of the Labour Party leadership and the political backwardness and reformism of the working class leadership in general to try to achieve by the ballot box what the Tories cannot achieve in the open field of class struggle.

The aim would be to defeat the industrial power of the working class by a political offensive. A general election would be designed to convince them that the solution to their problems lies not through struggle but through Parliament and the rule of law.

This is the main fact which revolutionaries must explain in any election. The tasks which flow from this are very clear:

To oppose all moves to call off struggles during the election period. Struggles must be intensified at this time;

To intervene in the campaign in such a way as to break down the attempt to atomise the working class. This means by organising demonstrations, strikes, and so on.

Of course, in any election called now socialists must argue for a vote for the Labour Party where there is no revolutionary alternative. The victory of the Tories would be seen by the working class as a setback and would decrease confidence and combativity. A victory for Labour would have the opposite effect.

However, the main aim of any campaign must be to stress that the electoral game will not decide anything in itself. That Labour or any government based on the Parliamentary machine cannot be trusted and that all struggles must be continued to achieve their goals regardless of what government is elected. The slogan 'Vote Labour but rely only on your own struggles' must be the key one for any election campaign.

The most important lesson of the 1972 miners' strike and what has happened since is that never again must the Tories be left in office to pull capitalism's chestnuts out of the fire if the employers suffer a defeat in the strike.

This time the working class must go for the kill. A general strike can achieve far more than just changing a government but at the very minimum it must set itself the aim of driving the Tories out. Arthur Scargill, whatever the reformism of the rest of his politics, showed the way here when he openly called for a general strike. He said: 'I call on the whole of the trade union movement for a general strike. If we have to strike the whole 10 million workers in the TUC should give full support by joining in a general strike.'

He is absolutely right. But it must be a general strike to bring down the Tory government. Only this can once and for all stop the Tories in their attacks and manoeuvres and can open the way for socialism.

Arthur Scargill was also right when he said: 'If the TUC give the call for action it can be carried through at a moment's notice.' Every militant must fight for the recall of the TUC precisely to organise such a strike. But this must not be waited for.

As with the freeing of the Pentonville Five and with Saltley, the most effective action—and the one that in any case stands the best chance of getting the trade union leadership to act—is immediate action. Apart from joint struggles for claims, any big local working class strike action in the coming period can lead towards a general strike. The slogan

From a miners' strike to a general strike to bring down the Tory government

is above all the one that must echo through the working class movement in the weeks to come.



Teachers from more than 20 schools gathered on Monday to denounce their union leadership

Militants challenge NUT sell-out

When Max Morris, President of the National Union of Teachers, arrived at Marylebone Town Hall last Monday to put the stamp of approval on the Union's acceptance of an offer of 7 per cent, he was met by over a hundred teachers from six local NUT associations and more than 20 schools.

The picket had been organised at short notice to show opposition to the sell-out and to what is in effect an act of scabbing on the miners. It was the first indication of the boost which the miners have given to workers in the public sector whose leaderships have settled within Phase 3.

The claim made to the picket by Edward Britton, NUT General Secretary, (that he was a 'realist' and knew what was available at the present time, did not impress the teachers. They argued with him that the only way forward is to link the teachers' struggle with that of the miners. A victorious miners' strike would open

the way to a renewed offensive by all workers whose claims have been 'settled'.

At a meeting called by the pickets, it was decided to set up an ad-hoc committee to build strike action among teachers against the sell-out, and in solidarity with the miners. The committee is to consist of delegates from local associations and schools who support this initiative.

The committee's aim should not simply be to develop solidarity with the miners' struggle. It should fight for an agreement of mutual support between teachers and miners. Teachers should not wait for this or that local association to endorse the committee. If they are prepared to fight the sell-out they should attend the first meeting.

Further information can be obtained from J. Duveen, 01-226 2491.

JIM DONDGHUÉ

Tuesday has put the much heralded Pay Report on relativities to one side for the time being. The Government made a very definite and determined bid to use the framework of the relativities report as a means of reaching a deal with the TUC. The TUC has so far rejected this, but on the grounds that the report is 'complex', leaving the door open for further discussions.

In fact, the report is extremely simple—it is an integral part of the Tories' incomes policy, and its acceptance means acceptance of that policy.

The report makes no bones about this fact. It begins: 'Our task has been to examine the problems of pay relativities arising within and between groups of employees, bearing in mind that the aim is to find ways of making progress in dealing with these problems within the overall pay limit set for the counter-inflation programme.' (author's emphasis)

By 'relativities' the board refers to the relationship between the levels of pay of groups of workers who are not members of the same negotiating group. The term 'differential' is used in a special sense to denote pay differences within a single negotiating group.

As the report points out, Phase 3, by applying its '7 per cent or £2.25' limit to the total wages of a negotiating group of workers, does allow for the adjustment of 'differentials', in this sense. But the relativities are a different matter.

An incomes policy which sets a low ceiling on wage rises will tend to freeze the existing structure, because most groups of workers will negotiate rises at or near the legal limit. Thus it will be virtually impossible to alter the relationship between the pay levels of different groups.

PERMANENT AND STABLE

Herein lies the real importance of the relativities report. Some means of adjusting pay relativities over the long run must be worked out if a compulsory incomes policy is to be both permanent and stable.

In the words of the Pay Board: 'There can be little doubt that some element of flexibility is necessary for the stability of incomes policy if it is to last more than a short period.' Or again: 'We therefore recognize the desirability, indeed the necessity, to adapt a continuing incomes policy so that some provision can be made for resolving problems of pay relationships.'

A pay structure arising from wage bargaining unregulated by the state is never rigid. A variety of circumstances operate to produce frequent shifts in the structure. Indeed, such shifts are essential for the smooth functioning of the capitalist exploitation of wage labour.

The report points to two areas in which serious difficulties can ensue if provisions are not made for a similar adjustment of wage relativities under incomes policy. The first is labour shortages. The level of wages is a crucial factor in attracting labour into particular industries and jobs, and changes in demand for labour require adjustment in relative wage levels, if labour shortages are not to develop. The current crisis in the public services—particularly in London—is a case in point.

The other area which the board points to is the feeling of a particular group of workers as to the 'fairness' of their pay, which, the Board argues, is nearly always perceived in terms of relativities. Again, a variety of factors can alter the basis on which relativities are evaluated and the attitude of a group of workers towards the 'fairness' or otherwise of their wages.

For example, technological change can upgrade the skill and training required in a particular job, and give rise to feelings that wages should be upped accordingly to bring workers in line with others whose jobs require similar attributes. A system which is unable to make these sorts of adjustments is bound to engender very bitter conflicts as groups of workers attempt to push for what they feel to be more just wages, despite the wage limit imposed by law.

CONCEPT OF FAIRNESS

In fact, this concept of 'fairness' is a false one. It obviously has nothing to do with attacking exploitation under the capitalist wage system—quite the opposite, it is designed to ensure its most trouble-free operation. The demand for 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work' is no more than a demand that the rate of exploitation should be uniform throughout the capitalist economy—a demand for equality of servitude. As Marx remarked more than 100 years ago, this miserable reformist slogan must be replaced by the revolutionary demand 'abolition of the wage system'.

But the Pay Board's argument does strike a sound chord with the trade union bureaucrats

RELATIVITIES — the sugar-coated tip of the Phase 3 iceberg

The Pay Board's report on wage relativities seeks to strengthen the Government's incomes policy by allowing for adjustments necessary to ensure its long-term stability.

CARL OWEN examines the proposals and their implications



Counter - Inflation Act 1973

CHAPTER 9

The Relativities Report is based solidly on the Tories' 'counter-inflation' policy. Despite its stance of opposition to Tory wage controls, the TUC has left its options open on the Report. Is this just the beginning of an attempt to smuggle acceptance of the incomes policy in through the back door? Will the TUC and the Tories try to do a deal in which concessions are made to the miners in exchange for the TUC underwriting Phase 3 through cooperation in the procedures set out in the Relativities Report?

who have long invoked the reformist argument of 'fairness' as a central negotiating principle.

In the past this could be a successful bargaining device, giving rise to 'leap-frogging' in wage negotiations. One group of workers would negotiate big wage rises to narrow differentials, and another would then argue for similar rises to restore differentials, all in the name of 'fairness'.

Such tactics were always potentially divisive and dangerous. But under a compulsory incomes policy they become disastrous. The application of Phase 3 limits to group wages already serves to open up sharp divisions within groups who accept the Phase 3 rises, as they are forced to haggle over who gets what. The relativities report proposes to extend this principle of 'divide and rule' by applying it to relations between different groups.

The basic idea is that a group could apply for a wage rise above the legal limit, on the ground that special factors entitle them to an adjustment of their relative position in the wages league table. To satisfy the conditions for such a rise they would have to make a case that they were entitled to a rise which no other group of workers deserved.

SAFETY VALVE

'The essence of a claim under the heading of relativities is that one group should move in relation to others' (author's emphasis). This is, of course, the logic of the 'special case' which the TUC has swallowed completely in the case of the miners. The net effect of all this would be to channel the energies of the trade unions away from an attack on the principle of an incomes policy and towards fighting

among themselves over the division of the total sum that the incomes policy allots them.

The relativities mechanism is also a useful safety valve to permit concessions to any powerful group of workers, without allowing a hole to be punched in the policy through which the rest of the trade union movement can march. The idea of 'fairness', in the language of the Pay Board, is barely distinguishable from the idea of 'bargaining power'. The board suggests that '... the main concern should be with the possibilities of achieving significant shifts in relativities for cases usually affecting considerable numbers of employees which are of importance to the community as a whole.'

But problems of fairness in pay relativities could equally well arise among a small group, of very limited importance to 'the community as a whole' (for which read 'the ruling class').

The relativities mechanism would allow the Government to head off a major challenge to its policy by concessions which the rest of the working class would then have to underwrite. At the same time it would enable the Government to blame its failure to do anything about the plight of the lower paid on the 'greed' of the more powerful sections.

There are certain conditions that must be met to make such a scheme effective. The Pay Board notes: 'On the assumption that the amount available for all wage increases is limited, other groups must bear the cost of any special treatment. The number of beneficiaries must therefore be kept small.' If the refusal to grant special consideration, or the deduction of the cost of extra increases for some out of the pay packets of others, is seen exclusively as the action of the Government, then the Government will achieve little in the way of defusing opposition to its incomes policy.

The report suggests one major way around

INVOLVING THE TUC

this—the direct involvement of the TUC in the relativities mechanism. It would be risky to involve the TUC too closely in the working of the policy, for that would just give rise to endless haggling. It must be brought close enough to lend its blessing to the business, but not so close as to jam up the works.

The report proposes that the CBI and the TUC should be involved in a preliminary selection process to determine who is eligible for special consideration; that a Government body should evaluate the case and make recommendations; and that the final decision should be made by the Employment Minister. The Government would thus retain the whip hand.

At the moment the TUC is maintaining its stance of total opposition to Phase 3. Any open retreat from this position would be seen by many workers as a great betrayal and would greatly weaken the influence of the TUC. But a more devious retreat is well within the realm of possibility. Already many trade union leaders—including 'left-wingers' like Scanlon and Jones—are going along with Phase 3 in practice, while continuing to oppose it in words.

As *Red Weekly* pointed out some time ago, the Tories will only make substantial concessions to the miners if the TUC agrees to underwrite Phase 3. The TUC cannot do this in so many words, but the Tories have made it clear that they would go for acceptance of the relativities report, precisely because it is nothing less than the sugar-coated tip of the Phase 3 iceberg.

If the trade union movement accepts the relativities report, it is then on record urging unions who are unhappy about Phase 3's impact to go for a relativities claim, rather than oppose the incomes policy as such. This may lead to concessions for some workers (it certainly would for the miners), but only at the expense of others. The working class as a whole would be more firmly imprisoned than ever within the Phase 3 trap.

If the Government is able to weather the national miners' strike for any length of time, or if the union bureaucrats get worried about the scale of the struggle against the Tories, the TUC is almost certain to buy the Tories' relativities scheme. No matter how it is dressed up, this would be a colossal betrayal and a serious defeat for the workers' movement.

An immediate programme of explanation about the nature of the Pay Board's proposals must be undertaken throughout the trade union movement, and resolutions passed calling for unconditional rejection of the relativities report, and any machinery connected with an incomes policy under capitalism.

There is one sure way of making it impossible for the TUC to engineer such a deal. Every group of workers who have a claim that goes against Phase 3, or are dissatisfied with their Phase 3 rise, should join the miners, in a massive united onslaught on the Tories' pay policy. Then there will be no 'special case' to bargain over.

CARL OWEN

University of Warwick: IRISH FORTNIGHT

Monday 11 February (7.30 pm): Public meeting, 'The present situation and the tasks of the Provisionals'. Speaker: Seamus Loughran, Belfast Provisional Republican.

Thursday 14 February (1.00 pm): Public meeting, 'Repression and the law'. Speaker from the National Council for Civil Liberties.

Wednesday 20 February (7.30 pm): Public forum, 'Have the Provisionals advanced the struggle for national liberation and socialism in Ireland?' Speakers from Sinn Fein, International Marxist Group, Communist Party, Clann na h'Eireann, and IS.

ALL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK, COVENTRY.

The dilemma of the trade union lefts

Preparing for the miners' strike

The launching of a national miners' strike on the basis of last week's massive pit head vote for strike action is only the opening round of what could become a major show of strength between the Tory Government and the working class.

For the next few weeks the centre of attention will shift away from NUM headquarters in London and the to-ing and fro-ing at Downing Street and Whitehall, to the power stations and the miners' picket lines across the country.

LEFT IN THE FOREFRONT

This shift will inevitably involve a retreat — into the background — albeit temporary — for NUM President Joe Gormley and his fellow right-wingers on the executive. These are not the people who will be leading the struggle on the ground. That job will fall to the NUM left — the men who come from the most powerful and militant mining areas (Scotland, Yorkshire, South Wales) and who can claim a real base of support among the men in the pits.

Last week we looked at two of the most important trade union lefts of the 1920's, A.J. Cook and Herbert Smith, leaders of the NUM's forerunner, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. We pointed out that, despite their militancy, class consciousness and willingness to lead a hard fight against the employers and the Government, the political weaknesses of Cook and Smith turned out to be fatal flaws when the crunch came. The weaknesses in their leadership allowed the right-wing bureaucrats in the TUC to retain a hold on the mass working class upsurge and to lead it to defeat and disaster.

SAME MOULD

In many ways today's NUM left are in the same mould as Smith and Cook. They are not like the 'limp lefts' of yesterday or today — leaders who engage in very left-wing talk, take 'hard line' stands on paper, and are often willing to give rein to militants to carry on the struggle, but will not themselves give any kind of lead and run from any real fight. In this respect Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon seem like veritable reincarnations of their predecessors. Ernest Bevin, founder of the T&G, and A.B. Swales, President of the AEU in the 20's

The NUM lefts have, and will, lead real, hard-fought struggles. The crucial question is will they lead them to victory, and will they seize on the tremendous opportunities that such a determined struggle opens up to strike a fundamental blow at the capitalist system and win permanent gains for the entire working class?

In a recent interview with *Red Weekly*, South Wales miners' President Emlyn Williams made a number of excellent statements. Among those was a criticism of the TUC:

'The TUC, without being mandated by the miners, were prepared to make commitments to a capitalist government that did in fact defeat the cause of the miners. We've come out to defeat Phase 3, and by the TUC acquiescing to the acceptance of Phase 3, they were not assisting the miners but adding fuel to the fire as far as the Government were concerned.'

Yet last week this same Emlyn Williams could be seen on TV urging that the miners' claim be met under the Pay Board's relativities report. But the relativities report, as its text makes perfectly clear, is part-and-parcel of Phase 3, and a condition of its operation is the active collaboration of the TUC. The effect of Williams' appeal is simply to bolster up the manoeuvres of the TUC right wing and to facilitate some form of under-the-table acceptance of Phase 3 by the TUC in exchange for concessions to the miners — exactly what Williams had attacked one week previously.

ELECTION

Another of Williams' excellent statements to *Red Weekly* concerned the prospect of an election:

'We've got a Conservative Government now, but a Labour Government would have almost the same policies as those which were projected by the Labour Government of 1964-70. So there are very few alternatives for the miners if we mean to settle our claim. I'd vote for a continuation of any positive action irrespective of an election or irrespective of who the government of the land would be.'

This is a correct and very important position but it does no good floating around in the head of one man, and only limited good being told to the tiny readership of *Red Weekly*. A general election is a powerful weapon in the hands of the Tory Government and even if it backfired

and a Labour Government were returned this Government too, like all its predecessors, could be simply another tool in the hands of the capitalist class.

It is not enough to have a correct position on what attitude to adopt towards an election, the mass of workers — both miners and the rest of the working class — must be politically prepared for such an eventuality. If this is not done many will be thrown into confusion by the calling of an election, and the hand of the Tories strengthened.

GENERAL STRIKE

The NUM lefts are clear that their fight is against the Government, that they are fighting on behalf of the entire class, and that the rest of the workers' movement has a responsibility towards them. Both Emlyn Williams and Arthur Scargill have called for a general strike to back up the miners. Scargill views this mainly as a matter of solidarity: 'When the state machine takes on a section of workers we expect everyone to strike.' Williams seems to have a broader view: 'I think that the function of the TUC should have been to reconvene a special congress, and at that congress there should be a recommendation for all Trade Unions to carry out an immediate attack on the government through industrial action.'

Admirable sentiments! But how is this general strike movement to be forged? It is necessary to demand that the TUC take this step, but that is also an easy thing to do. What is much more difficult is to take further steps when the TUC refuses to act — and that

willing to break through these boundaries even when the workers' struggle is crying out for forceful leadership.

Thus it is that none of the NUM lefts have been willing to seize the bull by the horns and proclaim themselves in favour of industrial action to drive the Tory Government from office, despite the fact that this Government is the most immediate and central enemy of every group of workers, and the call for its overthrow the firmest foundation that could be laid for the forging of a general strike movement.

For the NUM lefts believe their only responsibility is getting on with the 'industrial struggle', and the making and breaking of Governments is the concern of the Labour Party. In the words of Mick McGahey, Communist Party member and leading NUM left, Governments are changed by the 'good old traditional British method of the ballot box'. Of course McGahey, as a Communist Party member, agrees with the CP theory that the political power of the capitalist class can be broken and the road to socialism opened up through a general election and Parliamentary struggles. This is a view shared by those lefts who are not in the Communist Party.

PARLIAMENT AND POLITICS

Such a view sees the importance of mass struggle and industrial action, but only as backing in the real centre of events — Parliament. It is for this reason that the lefts combine a militant industrial stand with an



Even the NUM left has gone for the idea that they could claim a 'miners' rise' under the Pay Board's relativities report. But this report is part and parcel of Phase 3, and the whole idea of 'relativities' is to put workers at each others' throats, fighting for a bigger slice of a cake that will remain within Phase 3 limits. The workers' movement must not fight over the relative position of each group of workers, but for the right of every worker to a decent standard of living for himself and his family. On this basis a fighting unity can be built and the whole Phase 3 scheme smashed, along with its Tory masterminds.

is something that the NUM lefts have neither done nor proposed.

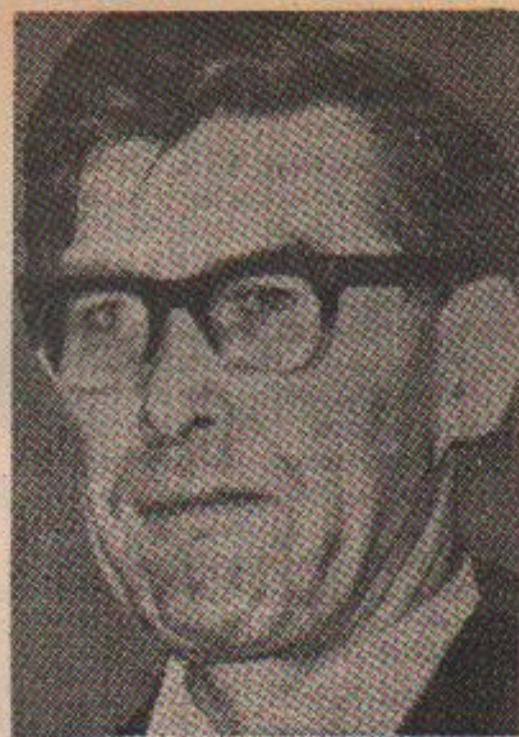
After all, what is the purpose of making demands on the TUC? Surely the NUM lefts are under no illusions that these veteran bureaucrats are prepared to lead a real struggle? The experience of their own union in 1926 is bitter evidence of the falsity of such a view.

Demands on the TUC serve only one purpose — they are a means of winning the hundreds of thousands of working class militants who look to this body for leadership to the programme of action necessary to defeat the Government. But the most correct programme in the world is useless unless it is put into practice. Thus demands on the TUC must be coupled with practical proposals for action which can be undertaken by those who are convinced by such demands. Militants must be urged to go beyond calls on the leadership and actually launch and organise the struggle themselves.

It is this latter step that the NUM lefts both of yesteryear and of today — are not prepared to take. Their political ideas are trapped within the formal boundaries and rules of the official trade union structure, and they are un-

adamant insistence that there is nothing 'political' about their struggle. In the words of Arthur Scargill, 'The miners have made a wage claim. Our aim is simple. The Tories' have made it political. We do not believe going outside these confines will help the miners or the trade union movement.' In the same vein is McGahey's statement, 'This is a wages struggle. It is not politically motivated'. Similar comments have been made by almost every NUM left-winger.

The Communist Party and the trade union lefts seem to see things developing in the following way: first sections of the working class will go into struggle, making Tory policy unworkable; then the Tories will call an election in desperation; finally, the Labour Party will rally workers at the polls and turn out the Tory Government. This scheme fits in neatly with all the political prejudices of the trade union lefts: it does not require the development of a mass struggle going beyond the bureaucratic boundaries of the official trade union movement, it respects the division of labour between the trade unions and the Labour Party on 'industrial' vs. 'political'



According to McGahey: 'This is a wages struggle. It is not politically motivated.' Similar comments have been made by almost every NUM left-winger.

questions, and it allows the question of Government to be settled by Parliamentary methods in the 'good old traditional British method'.

In fact many trade union lefts — including the Communist Party — have been afraid of keeping to even this scheme, and have retreated from confrontations with the Government (over the national engineering claim or the jailing of the Shrewsbury 3, for example). Only the NUM left seems to be prepared to stick to its logic.

NO PLAN FOR VICTORY

But it is not a plan for working class victory. First, by refusing to take up the political implications of their industrial action, the NUM lefts leave important political weapons in the hands of the Tories. The Tories can talk about the 'national interest', the problems of the pensioners and the low paid, the supposed world energy crisis, the difficulties of the British economy, and spiralling inflation. What solutions do the NUM leaders propose to these problems? Of course there are working class solutions to each of these questions — solutions which could rally millions of workers against the Tories — but they cannot be put forward by someone whose main concern is to deny that his struggle has any political objectives at all.

Moreover, by setting up a wall between the 'industrial struggle' and the 'political struggle' the NUM lefts make it more difficult for workers to draw political conclusions from their industrial struggles. Yet every time a Tory Government is elected it is with millions of working class votes, so the defeat of the Tory Government depends first and foremost on establishing an understanding of the connection between the industrial struggle and politics.

Of course, if the NUM left fails to face up to its political responsibilities, there is a political alternative to the Tories — the right-wing, Parliamentary leadership of the Labour Party. The NUM lefts are all ardent socialists, and harsh critics of the Labour Party right. But by arguing that the question of Government must be settled in Parliament, they lead the working class right into the fold of these right-wing traitors.

The political weaknesses of the NUM lefts, like those of their predecessors Cook and Smith, hold great dangers for the struggle ahead. The only way of avoiding these dangers is by adopting a clear-cut position on the way forward and the central steps which the working class movement must take to defeat the Tories and emerge victorious from the coming confrontation.

Every trade union militant must demand that the lefts — both in the NUM and elsewhere — take a clear position in favour of a general strike to bring down the Tory Government, and against any retreat or suspension of struggle in the face of an election. These must not be just paper positions or calls for someone else to act: they must be the basis for a campaign of political education, and in favour of direct rank-and-file action, throughout the working class movement. *

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Above: members of the Irish Citizen Army guarding trade union headquarters at Liberty Hall in Dublin; right: drilling practice for an ICA unit . . . 'Work to arm the masses is a difficult job, but it can be done. In Ireland, James Larkin, founder of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, formed a Citizen Army in 1913 to defend workers' struggles from the police and bosses' thugs.'

The recent army manoeuvres at Heathrow, and the threat of the possible use of troops in the miners' strike, has brought discussion on the role of the armed forces to the forefront of current debates in the workers' movement. It is vital—literally a matter of life and death—that the working class movement clearly understands this question.

The capitalist army is the most carefully protected of all the organisations of the State. Although he draws completely wrong political conclusions, Communist Party member Jack Woddis described the nature of the army very well in his pamphlet 'Time to Change Course':

'The upholders of the establishment are given all the facilities they require to mould the minds of the army men, to foster anti-democratic conceptions and influence them to regard civilian activities for the redress of grievances or for changing our society as dangerous heresies that must be repressed by force.'

'At the same time, the members of the armed forces are denied democratic freedoms, and are banned from participating in normal political activities or belonging to trade unions or political parties.'

'The politics of preserving the status quo are dinned into troops every day; but the politics of working for progressive change are disallowed.'

LAST LINE OF DEFENCE

The reason for this careful screening is that the army is the last line of defence for the capitalist class and its property. The *Daily Telegraph*, for example, has pointed out that in the event of a General Strike the employers would 'have to rely on the police and the army'. Every army in the world is a positive hot bed of extreme rightist and fascist plots.

In Italy a fascist group, the MSI, has as its candidates in elections a host of admirals and generals, and the Pisa military training centre is being used to give military training to the fascists. In France it was army leaders like General Salan who led the fascist OAS, and now still stand behind the fascist right. In Britain the NF and other such groups are full of Colonels, Generals, and Air Vice Marshals. In every country in the world where there has seemed to be even the slightest whiff of a socialist triumph—for example Chile, Greece, Spain—the army has intervened.

But if there is general agreement on the left regarding the nature of the capitalist army there is complete disagreement on what must be done about it. The Communist Parties around the world, instead of keeping to Lenin's position that the capitalist army must be smashed, have arrived at the absurd conclusion that the army can be bargained with or won over. This can reach lunatic lengths. Luis Corvalan, leader of the Chilean Communist Party, had the following to say only a few weeks before the coup in Chile:

'Some reactionaries have begun to seek new ways to drive a wedge between the people and the armed forces, maintaining little less than we are intending to replace the professional army. No sirs! We continue to support the absolutely professional character of the armed institutions. Their enemies appear not in the ranks of the people but in the reactionary camp.'

POLITICAL PREPARATIONS

This 'absolutely professional army' showed a far clearer understanding of its role by arresting Corvalan, torturing him, and threatening to execute him. This was the inevitable result of the line spelled out so clearly by Allende in a speech he delivered in September 1972:

'There will be no armed forces here other than those stipulated by the constitution, that is to say, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. I shall elimin-

ate any others if they appear'. (Speech of 10 September 1972)

This was precisely the problem when the coup came in Chile—there was only one armed force and it did not belong to the workers. As a result thousands of workers are now suffering mass torture and murder at the hands of those 'forces stipulated by the constitution'.

Of course the political preparation necessary to deal with the army, precisely because of the nature of the armed forces, is the most dangerous of all political work. It has nothing to do with playing around at being Che Guevara on Hampstead Heath, nor anything to do with the activities of the Angry Brigade. What it does involve is, right from the beginning, orienting the workers' movement towards the political task of breaking up the bourgeois army and arming the working class.

If this is done it is quite possible to achieve real results. Particularly impressive in showing this was the GI movement against the Vietnam war inside the United States armed forces, which affected tens of thousands of soldiers.

The remarks of Mick McGahey in relation to troops in the miners' strike, despite their limitations, point to some important possibilities, precisely because the army is now likely to be used against the civilian population in relation to the army. There is some tradition in Britain of this type of activity. The most famous was probably the 'Don't Shoot' leaflet, for which Tom Mann was jailed in 1912, containing the words

'You are workmen's sons. When we go on strike to better our lot which is the lot also of Your Fathers, Mothers, Brothers and Sisters, YOU are called upon by your Officers to MURDER US. Don't do it . . . Think things out and refuse any longer to Murder Your Kindred.'

While, as we shall see, this idea that soldiers are simply 'workers in uniform' leads to very serious mistakes, nevertheless this type of material can teach some useful lessons.

LABOUR BUREAUCRATS

The row over McGahey's statements has shown the total bankruptcy of the Labour Party and trade union bureaucrats on this question. What McGahey actually said was the following:

'If the troops were called in I would speak to them. I don't see them as a reactionary mass, there are many working class lads in the armed forces and even some miners' sons.'

He also said he would not call on the troops to mutiny but

' . . . would let them know the facts of the dispute. We would do this by distributing leaflets and information to them, but that would only be done after they were called in.'

According to the *Evening Standard* on 29 January, when McGahey was asked to clarify what he meant he said:

'I would not ask any troops to disobey orders. Far from it—I would not ask them to accept the responsibility for the miners' struggle . . . This is not conspiracy. This is not mutiny. This is only allowing other people to understand the purpose for which they are employed.'

The reaction to McGahey's speech from the Labour Party was despicable. First off the mark was that most open enemy of the working class within the Labour Party—Reg Prentice. Next was pseudo-radical Willie Hamilton, who declared McGahey would be shot for saying such things in Russia. This is, unfortunately, true, but what Hamilton does not point out is that it is true in about 85 of the 100 countries of the so-called 'free world'. Gormley and other representatives of the NUM right-wing also disowned McGahey, on the not very reassuring grounds that the NUM executive had never discussed what to do in the event of the army being called in.

Finally the Labour Party joined the fray officially, with a statement from Callaghan and



Hayward, Chairman and Secretary of the Party respectively. This said, in part:

'We utterly repudiate any attempts by communists or others to use the miners as a political battering ram to bring about a general strike or to call on troops to disobey lawful orders in the event of a strike. This is silly and dangerous nonsense.'

Callaghan also went on the BBC's 'World at One' on Tuesday to say 'No political party could call on troops to disobey lawful orders'. This is just arrant nonsense. When the forces of the German army were used by the 'lawfully constituted' head of the Government, Hitler, to smash the trade unions, should German workers have urged soldiers to obey those orders? Would Callaghan and Hayward have advised the soldiers of the Greek, Chilean and Spanish armies to obey their orders when the ruling class in those countries staged coups?

The line of the Labour Party is an open betrayal of the working class, and McGahey must be completely defended against their attacks. But McGahey's statements pose only part of the problem. The question of the use of troops to strike-break is understood by at least some sections of the Communist Party. CP industrial organiser Bert Ramelson speaking at the CP executive said that the use of the army at Heathrow was part of the scheme 'to con on the public to see the army in use in our cities. It could veil preparations for what the fear may be the successful development of a mass movement towards a general strike'. (*Morning Star*, 14 January).

The trouble is that the Communist Party not see that the job of the army will not be a bit of peaceful scabbing, but, in the first crunch, it will be called in as an *armed power*

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faced with the threat of a national miners' strike and a possible general strike, a discussion took place in Lloyd George's coalition cabinet on precisely this question:

'The discussion then moved to the question of troops. We had 18 battalions of which 7 were Irish and we were not sure of their temper.'

'Sir L. Worthington-Evans [Secretary of State for War]: We need 18 battalions to hold London... Our reinforcements would thus be 2 from Malta, 4 from Silesia, and one or 2 from Egypt.'

'Lord Curzon [Foreign Secretary] urged that to withdraw battalions from Silesia would produce a possibly serious disaster.'

'Mr Chamberlain [Leader of Commons]: We are in front of a situation here which may require all our forces. I am for holding the British coal fields rather than Silesian...'

'Sir R. Horne [Home Secretary]: You cannot run any risk. There might be trouble by the end of this week... They will urge extreme courses because they have no funds.'

'The P.M.: Then we must take troops from Silesia...'

'The P.M. remarked that the miners in the Scottish villages were a savage folk... police aid from quiet areas could not be spared... the Chief Constable of Fife reported that only naval or military assistance would be effective.'

The ruling class has not changed its spots in Britain since then. The NATO treaty, of which Britain is a signatory, quite explicitly allows for the use of NATO armies against 'civil disturbances' in member countries. Heath himself said in a speech to the United Nations in October 1970 'in the 1970s civil war, not war between nations, will be the main danger we face.'

Of course this does not mean that the majority of the ruling class favours a military coup at this very moment. That will only come later, when class tensions have reached a far higher level. What it does mean, however, is that even now processes are under way which lead the army towards its eventual role as the final defender of the capitalist class.

Even now, as secret documents of the French army published by the former Ligue Communiste show, every European army has contingency plans for civil war. The experience of the British army in Ireland speeds up all these processes. Jack Woddis gives an excellent description of this although he of course refuses to draw the logical conclusions:

'Involved as it is in military operations against urban fighters in Northern Ireland and in repressing sections of the civilian population, it [the army] is not only gaining experience in combatting political discontent in that territory, but being trained and psychologically prepared so that, if the monopolies feel it necessary for the defence of their profits and their system, it could perform a similar role in keeping down the British people.'

BREAK RULING CLASS MONOPOLY

The ruling class has, at present, a monopoly on the means of armed violence. This monopoly must be broken, both by breaking up the bourgeois army and by arming the working class. These two things must be carried on alongside one another, or they will have no effect.

A purely military defeat of a bourgeois army by the working class is practically ruled out. But, at the same time, those who limit themselves to carrying out propaganda within and directed at the army will not have much impact either.

The reason is simple. The psychological, political and organisational development of class consciousness within the army takes place in a different way, and with a much slower rhythm, than within the working class. A soldier cannot afford to make political mistakes. If he chooses the losing side he risks death.

If substantial forces of self-defence are not created by the working class, capable of protecting rebel soldiers and military units for at least some time, then the first cases of indiscipline

within the military will be put down with a bloody repression which will far exceed anything done to the civilian population. In Chile for example, those small sections of the army which acted against the coup were liquidated a man. Indeed, such cases of isolated rebellion can be an important stimulus to a coup, if the ruling class chiefs feel that such a move involves little risk: for they know that under no conditions can they allow the army—the final line of defence—to be undermined.

For these reasons, work in, and directed at the army must always be tied up with work to arm the masses. This is a difficult job, but can be done.

The most famous example is, of course, Ireland, where large numbers of weapons have been held for years by the IRA, and where James Larkin, founder of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, formed a Citizen Army in 1913 to defend workers' struggles from the police and bosses' thugs.

On a more modest scale these things took place in Britain in 1926. In his book on the General Strike, Michael Hughes describes the circumstances which gave rise to embryonic workers militias:

'The young Nye Bevan, cutting his teeth as Chairman of the Tredegar Council of Action was told by the local police chief "if there's any trouble here we'll have the place running with blood", a fairly commo threat. In a few places where trouble from the fasci the OMS or the police seemed certain "Workers' Defence Corps" were formed... Abe Moffat has given us a picture of one such "special platoon" in Fifehire, carrying defensive weapons, led by a Great War veteran and drilling in the streets, "a really spic did sight, well disciplined and determined to stand their ground."

CONCRETE MEASURES

All political work on this question must be directed towards two central aims:

- *abolition of the standing army
 - *arming of the working class and formation of a workers' militia
- But in the course of the struggle for these objectives particular issues will come to the fore as the focus for concern and the basis for mobilising large numbers of people. It is by agitation on such issues that the workers' movement can be educated as to the nature of the capitalist armed forces, and concrete steps taken towards undermining the foundations of capitalist class rule. Concrete demands which should be put forward include the following:
- *End the colonial wars. British troops out of Ireland and the Arab Gulf; an end to all overseas bases.
 - *Withdrawal from NATO and all similar counter-revolutionary alliances. No stationing of foreign troops in the country.
 - *Full rights of trade union and political organisation in the army.
 - *End the segregation of the army from the civilian population: an end to barracks and all regulations confining soldiers to military territory when not on active duty.

*An end to all separate military codes of law. For the training of the entire adult population in the use of weapons, under the control of the trade unions and organisations of the working class.

*An end to the laws banning the possession of arms, which have never prevented criminals arming themselves and only serve to deprive the working class of any means of defending itself against the forces of the state.

*For the acquisition of arms by the trade unions and working class organisations, and the establishment of armed self-defence forces.

Without the adoption of measures such as these the working class in Britain will—when the crunch comes—be just as much at the mercy of the ruling class and its army as was the Chilean workers' movement. These measures are necessary to ensure the victory of the working class in the struggle for socialism.

ROGER SMITH

on the side of the capitalist class. The CP claims this will not occur. They say in Britain that Parliamentary traditions are too strong ever to permit military intervention. The same Mick McGahey who speaks of leafletting the troops also talks of 'the good old traditional British method of the ballot box' (*Evening Standard*, 29 January). This type of idea is criminal stupidity. It is exactly what was said about Chile—with the well known results.

What is worse, it is even more backward than the thinking of the ruling class itself. The army officers, for a start, are under no illusions about their role. Here for example are the views of Brigadier Frank Kitson—who holds the crucial position of head of infantry training:

'If a genuine and serious grievance arose such as might result from a significant drop in the standard of living, all those who now dissipate their protest over a wide

variety of causes might concentrate their efforts and produce a situation beyond the power of the police to handle. Should this happen, the army would be required to restore the position rapidly.'

Unlike the Labour Party, the army officers have no illusions that they will simply carry out their 'lawful orders'. In 1914 the army officers openly said they would not carry out the Bill giving Home Rule to Ireland. In 1964 one of the reasons why the use of military force against the Smith regime in Rhodesia was ruled out was the danger that officers would simply refuse to carry out their orders.

ARMY OF CIVIL WAR

Nor have capitalist Governments felt that the use of military power against the working class was incompatible with 'the good old traditional British method'. In April 1921,

TRADE UNION REGISTER: 3, edited by Michael Barratt Brown and Ken Coates (Spokesman Books, £1.50p)

Registers of trade union activity in Britain are not scarce. But the title of this particular volume is imprecise, only a small part of it being devoted to the 'factual' recording of union developments, in the form of statistics, a diary of main events and the reprinting of some key trade-union documents. The vast bulk of the book is devoted to articles which mainly express the elastic political philosophy of the Institute of Workers' Control. Bearing in mind that Wedgwood Benn has recently been extolling the virtues of this political formation in glowing terms, the volume is worth glancing at.

Ken Coates' long review article 'Converting the Unions to Socialism' sets the general tone of confusion and omission. A colourful summary of the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act totally omits to mention the LCDTU, and ends up with the somewhat unjustified conclusion that 'the unions are well capable of defending themselves against future provocations.' Neither is there a mention of the deliberate manoeuvrings of the trade union bureaucracy or the danger of racism to organised labour. Worse, the proposed road to achieving socialism is shrouded in mist, with vague talk of a process of 'democratising' society through 'an aggressive erosion of managerial prerogatives' and 'reclaiming' the Labour Party for socialist policies.

The remaining hotchpotch contains some useful and some disastrously bad material. For example, Norman Lewis's offering on the Industrial Relations Act concludes that it would be 'a tragedy' if this act brought all labour law into disrepute! Even Coates does not capitulate to the 'age-old flummery' of English capitalist law in this shameful manner. Another article which follows this path is the one entitled 'Women's Economic Revolution' which uncritically applauds the TUC for its 'honourable part' in promoting equal pay for women and puts its faith in further State legislation against discrimination.

The better section of the book is the 'Round the Industries' review of developments in engineering, the docks and elsewhere, in which the details are less smudged by reformist interpretations. Some good material then, but skip half of it.

ALAN GIBBS

WOMEN'S RIGHTS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE; by Anna Coote and Tess Gill (Penguin, 60p)

This collection of information about 'women's rights' is a useful handbook for women trying to thread their way through the network of discriminatory legislation in this country. The information is roughly classified under two main headings—women and the welfare state, and women and the law.

The chapters on the welfare system are an invaluable guide to all the stages at which the system applies contribution-related benefits. The second section—while also covering housing, consumer laws and immigration—is largely devoted to the law as it relates to sex, marriage, divorce and children. The sheer mass of material here is in itself an indication of the pressures towards 'legalised union' and the maintenance of the nuclear family. But no alternatives are argued at all strongly—a weakness of the book which is a further indication of the strength of this institution under capitalism (the draft co-habitation contract offered serves more or less the same function as the legal contract).

Valuable and well-researched as this information generally is, there are nevertheless certain drawbacks in its presentation. Firstly, there is a confusion about the kind of audience it is geared to—evident in the unevenness of tone and curiously patronising comments such as, 'solicitors tend to wear suits and have their offices in the smarter parts of town'. More importantly, the book is devoid of any consistently analytical framework. Why exactly do laws work against women in these ways? How do they contribute to reinforcing women's passive acceptance of the situation? Lastly, the book could have pointed out the way to begin to fight the situation through a series of demands against the main areas of discrimination covered by the book.

NICO NEWMAN

ARMED PEASANTS CHALLENGE BOLIVIAN REGIME

The government of Bolivian President Hugo Banzer seemed on the verge of collapse this week, after a series of massive strikes during which up to a hundred people are thought to have died in armed clashes with troops sent in to suppress the revolt.

The outburst started on Monday 21 January after the regime decreed rises of more than 100% in the price of basic necessities—rice, flour, pasta products and coffee—as well as increased charges for public transport. Another decree gave workers a pay rise of £8 a month, but this was rejected as totally inadequate by mass meetings up and down the country, and next day both the miners' unions and the National Confederation of Factory Workers voted for a 24-hour strike.

As the week progressed, protest demonstrations were held in the capital, La Paz, and other major centres, while further groups—bank workers, builders, and bakers—also voted for strike action. The effects of this were most marked in the central city of Cochabamba, where police opened fire on demonstrators after a series of clashes with striking factory workers who were blocking the streets with motor vehicles. Prolonged clashes between police and striking miners were also reported in the towns of Oruro and Huanuni.

CITY CUT OFF

However, the bureaucratic leaderships of the various trade unions had only called 24-hour protest strikes, in an effort to contain the militancy of their members. By the end of the week the aftermath of these was beginning to

die down, when suddenly a new and unexpected factor came into play. This was the revolt of the peasants around Cochabamba, who on Friday 25 January set up barricades manned by armed guards across the three main roads into the city, effectively isolating it from the rest of the country.

The peasants at first demanded simply the cancellation of the decree authorising the price increases, but rapidly stepped up their demands as the scale and significance of the confrontation became clear. On 29 January, after kidnapping the newly appointed military governor of the province, General Juan Perz Tapia, a mass meeting called for Banzer's resignation. However, the next day a massive assault by the Seventh Army Division involving troops, tanks and T-33 combat aircraft succeeded in forcing a way through to the city again. Peasant casualties were officially put at 13 dead and 10 wounded, although on Sunday a Roman Catholic watchdog commission accused the regime of carrying out a 'massacre' in which, 'according to witnesses nearly 100 peasants were killed'.

Despite this show of force, however, and the fact that a 'state of siege'—martial law—has been imposed throughout the country, further repercussions are widely expected. A 48-hour wild-cat strike by 4,800 tin miners in two of the country's largest mines was announced at the weekend, while the peasant unrest continues and further armed clashes have been forecast by General Adriaola, president of the Armed Forces' Joint Command. In this situation—reports of deep divisions within the armed forces and plots to overthrow the President are now rife.



Troops are now on every street-corner under Banzer's 'state of siege'

Few would be surprised by such a development. A succession of military dictators using the most intensive methods of repression have proved incapable of solving the country's economic problems as a client state of imperialism, and Banzer has already lasted longer than most. Despite his attempts to crush the workers' movement and rout out every last militant after the overthrow of the Torres regime in August 1971, the cracks have been growing steadily wider in the last 18 months.

The first major upset came at the end of October 1972, when thousands of workers came out on strike in protest at a 60% devaluation of the Bolivian peso. Further demonstrations also took place last year, when a failure to re-adjust the value of the peso after the devaluation of the US dollar meant in effect a second devaluation. The focus of struggle also began to spread, with a demonstration of 15,000 workers in La Paz on May Day 1973 demanding that their trade union federation, the COB, be legalised again.

Banzer's response was to attempt to divert the mass struggle through the promise of elections some time in 1974. But this manoeuvre only deepened the contradictions within the regime. Within days the chiefs of the army and air force had publicly denounced any such plans. Shortly afterwards, the defection of one of the partners in the coalition, the MNR led



MNR leader Paz Estenssoro—growing resistance to Government prompted his defection

by former president Paz Estenssoro, confirmed the prospect of a new period of instability.

CONSERVATIVE FORCE

The depth of the crisis for the regime is most strikingly illustrated by the revolt of the peasants. Despite some isolated, individual struggles the peasantry have in the past tended to be a conservative force. Their representatives in the leftist Popular Assembly which functioned under Torres were few in number, and they were not slow to rally to Banzer when he launched his coup.

Indeed, when the first strikes broke out Banzer clearly hoped to use the peasants again to break the back of the resistance. After receiving a delegation of support from the leaders of the bureaucratized peasants' organisations, he is even reported to have announced that the peasants 'must be ready to take up arms'. And take up arms they did, but—under the impact of a rise of almost 280% in the cost of living since August 1971—it was against Banzer and not for him.

Banzer's days are certainly numbered after this development. But the key question is who will replace him. The peasants themselves demanded his replacement by a new military junta. But that was before dozens of them were massacred by that same military machine.

Such a situation opens up a real possibility for revolutionary change. Whether it is realised or not will depend on the ability of the vanguard to break the grip of the reformist bureaucrats and open up the way for a united struggle of the peasantry under the leadership of the working class for the seizure of power. But one thing at least is clear from the events of the last fortnight in Bolivia: the Chilean coup did not solve imperialism's problems in Latin America, it merely postponed the day of reckoning.

MARTIN METEYARD

WHAT'S ON?

EDINBURGH SOCIALIST FORUM: 'Labour's Programme for Britain', Tuesday 12 February at 7.30 pm in Trades Council rooms, Picardy Place (top of Leith Walk). Further information: J. Murphy, 10 Wardlaw Street, Edinburgh 11.

'THE FIGHT AGAINST THE TORIES': Cambridge IMG public meeting with Bob Pennington (IMG National Secretary), Monday 11 February at 8 pm in the Chatwynd Room, King's College.

'SALT OF THE EARTH': Film about the struggle of miners' wives during a strike in the US, to be shown at Socialist Woman Forum together with discussion with Cynthia Brailford (miner's wife

from Kent), Wednesday 13 February, 7.30 pm in University of London Union, Malet Street (Goode Street tube).

SOCIALIST WOMAN: New Spring issue out now. Articles include General Strike, SPUC, Equal Pay, etc. Orders to: 21 Highview Court, College Road, Harrow Weald, Middlesex. Price 10p plus 3p p&pp, 10% off on orders for 10 or more copies, sent post free.

'NATIONALISATION OR EXPROPRIATION?' pamphlet translated from original by ex-Ligue Communiste, French section of the Fourth International. Copies still available from: Alex Stein, c/o 72 Cambridge Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham. All profits to Red Weekly Fund Drive.

'FIGHT AGAINST TORY POLICIES': Cities of London and Westminster Trades Council and

London Co-op Political Committee public meeting, Tuesday 12 February, 7.30 pm in Porchester Hall, Porchester Road, W2. Speakers include: Arthur Latham MP, Reg Taylor (LCS PC), and representatives of NUM, ASLEF, and AUEW.

'LOCAL ACTION AGAINST PHASE 3': Bob Pennington speaks at IMG public meeting, 7.30 pm on Tuesday 12 February at the People's Place, Derby Terrace (near Public Baths), South Shields.

CRITIQUE SEMINAR: Robin Blackburn speaks on 'The Chinese Cultural Revolution', Friday 8 February at 7.30 pm in Room S17b, London School of Economics, Houghton St (Holborn tube).

BENGALI FRIENDS in Europe and elsewhere, for Bengali books and *Lara'i* (Fourth International paper), contact: Bengali, Mullvadens, Box 3274, 10365 Stockholm, Sweden.

'THE WAY FORWARD': Public meeting, Sunday 17 February at 2.30 pm in AUEW House, Cross St., Preston. Speakers: P. Heathfield (Derbyshire NUM), Dave Jackson (Shrewsbury Defence Committee), Len Brindle (AUEW NC and convenor, Leyland Motors). Organised by Preston Liaison Committee.

LONDON RED FORUM: Every Tuesday at 8 pm in the General Picton pub, Caledonian Road, N1. (15 mins Kings X tube). This week (12 February): 'Stalinism and the theory of socialism in one country'.

NOTTINGHAM RED CIRCLES: Wide-ranging series of discussions based on the politics of the Fourth International. Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday in the month at 8 pm in the Lion Hotel, Clumber St.

troops from Vietnam, and the turning over of the war to the Vietnamese, the Nixon doctrine of 'Asiatization' lies nakedly in ruins.

Without the vigorous backing of US B-52s, US-manned tanks, and US marines, Thieu has shown himself completely unable to maintain the interests of American capital—or of anyone else for that matter—in Vietnam. Every move he makes is a desperate attempt to hold on in the face of his continuing decline.

The South Vietnamese Army (ARVN)—the main prop keeping him in power—is completely impotent. In villages which are supposedly held by Saigon, only 20 miles from the city, NLF cadre are openly recruiting members, holding public meetings (even with the militiamen themselves), and executing 'headmen' and other officials of the regime with ease. The much publicised drive by the ARVN to recapture the base at Le Minh near the Cambodian border has still not been completed after two months, despite the commitment of over 600 men, tanks, and massive aerial bombardments to the task.

Much less publicised has been the steady increase in domestic opposition to Thieu. Demonstrations by supporters of the 'Third Force' (mainly confused Buddhists, pacifists, and intellectuals around Madam Ngo Ba Thanh) have been held in Saigon. Demonstrations also erupted at the time of the National Assembly debate on the changes in the Constitution.

More significantly, there has been an increase in the combativity and self-organisation of the working class in the cities. All references to this in the bourgeois press are very muted (e.g. a report of a picket line in the *Times* on 18 January—implying that there was a strike), so it is unclear how extensive such actions are. But what is certain is that mass unemployment, soaring inflation, and starvation have destroyed any urban base that Thieu ever had.

REGIME CRUMBLING

Far from Thieu's regime being stabilised by the ceasefire of a year ago, it has simply crumbled more and more, while the withdrawal of US troops and planes from Indochina (forced by the success of the NLF's offensive) has been shown conclusively to be a victory. Of course

Indochina: puppet regimes close to collapse

none of the points of the ceasefire have been fully implemented, but the terms crystallised the balance of forces inside Vietnam very much in favour of the revolutionary forces. There are still US 'advisers' in Vietnam, but Thieu can no longer call on the B-52s to keep him going. US planes and tanks are still being supplied, but the trained personnel to man them simply do not exist. The US bases have not been dismantled, but the ARVN troops who took them over have no interest in maintaining them. The International Control Commission is in operation, but it is in no position to prevent the consolidation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government's base.

One of the main points which has not been implemented at all is the agreement to release all political prisoners. Despite the repeated announcements of a settlement on this issue, it is extremely unlikely that Thieu will release any other than a few liberal dignitaries. All of them, by their nature, are dedicated opponents of Thieu, and he dare not have them free in the cities—just as he dare not hold the elections he agreed to, or allow the democratic freedoms he pledged himself to maintain. His only hope of staying in power depends on the total suppression of all opposition.

This is why he has made no attempt to disband any of the army, despite the fact that it is a major contributor to the inflationary nature of the economy, taking over 40% of the budget. This is also why he pushed through the Constitutional amendments in January. Not only did he give himself a virtually unlimited period in office, but he also abolished the (theoretical) elections of province chiefs and

the selection of Supreme Court judges by the National Assembly. From now on, all of them will be chosen by Thieu himself.

This makes his grip over the executive and judiciary total, and since the province chiefs (as before) are all military commanders, it means that he now directly controls the repression outside Saigon as well. A further point about these manoeuvres is that the creation of posts dependent on total loyalty to his policies is an attempt to regain some of the base he previously had amongst the bureaucracy.

In the Mekong Delta and the Central Highlands, the invasions of PRG territory are still going on. As well as the obvious aim of securing rice and territory, these expeditions are intended to maintain the level of repression in general and to keep the Army busy. But the systematic defeats of ARVN adventures by NLF troops are ruining this part of Thieu's strategy. The ignominious defeat suffered by sections of the army and navy in the battle over the Paracels Archipelago did not exactly boost morale either. Moreover, this particular defeat also raises a big question mark over Thieu's hopes of gaining foreign currency through the sale of bits of the Vietnamese coastline to oil concerns.

SIEGE OF PHNOM PENH

The situation in Cambodia is also rapidly adding to the ruin of the Nixon Doctrine. On 21 January, Sihanouk declared that the Cambodian liberation forces would do their utmost to end the war before the end of this year, and stressed that any compromise solution was completely ruled out. It is quite clear that Sihanouk no longer has any restraining influence on the Red Khmer militants, and that his statement is a reflection of their determination to free Cambodia soon. All the indications are that they will do exactly that.

As the dry season reaches its peak in Cambodia, the bombardment of the capital has been stepped up. Strategic areas of Phnom Penh have been hit repeatedly by very accurate artillery and missile bombardment. Despite the napalm bombing of villages outside the capital, and the few big pushes made by regime bandits, the Red Khmers have not been weakened on any front. In fact their positions to the South and South-East have been consolidated, while in the South-West area leaflets were circulated on Tuesday warning that attacks would begin in three days' time.

All roads into Phnom Penh have now been completely cut—only one convoy has been through since the end of last year. For long periods each day the airlifts of supplies into Pochentong airport have also been halted, and the lack of any rejoicing in the bourgeois press over the arrival of convoys along the Mekong River suggests that the river route too has been cut. Despite their lack of military supplies, the insurgent forces have continued to strengthen their grip on the city, and this is being complemented by the activity of Red Khmer militants inside Phnom Penh itself, amongst the workers and refugees.

All the indications are that by the end of this year a final victory in Indochina will be just around the corner. There are really no more options left open to Thieu, only variations of past manoeuvres. For Lon Nol in Cambodia, there are just no options at all.

It seems clear that the only way in which the situation can be salvaged for imperialism is either by a reintroduction of US military aid—unlikely but not impossible—or through the sabotaging activities of the Peking and Moscow bureaucrats. Constant vigilance is therefore necessary for socialists the world over. In the situation which is now on the cards, the weight of international solidarity could well be the vital factor in tipping the balance towards a final revolutionary outcome to the long drawn out war.

David Johnson



Cambodian Army gunner lets fly—but in vain, as Red Khmer units slowly but surely tighten the noose around Phnom Penh

Red Weekly to sponsor school on Indochina

The IMG Committee, which met on 26 January, considered the organisation's Indochina work.

In view of the attacks, and threats of bigger assaults, by the Thieu regime against the liberated zones, and the upsurge of fighting in Cambodia, which poses a renewal of US intervention, the IMG NC took the position that there is a need to step up action in solidarity with the peoples of Indochina.

In light of this, the committee decided:—to allocate more comrades to this activity;—to organise a national school on South East Asia, to cover topics like the crisis in Thailand, how the solidarity movements in other countries operate, Vietnam since the accord, etc.

—to appoint a delegation to meet with representatives of other organisations with a view to laying the basis for united action in solidarity with the peoples of Indochina.

The committee also considered the appeal for united action on Vietnam issued by the Political Committee of the Communist Party on 21 January. It decided to write to the CP suggesting a meeting with their representatives on the question.

The school will be open to non-members of the IMG, and will be sponsored by *Red Weekly*. Anyone wanting further information about the school should write to: IMG Indochina Commission, 97 Caledonian Road, London N1.

'Gairy must go' say Grenadians - but what then?

The confrontation in the Caribbean island of Grenada between Prime Minister Eric Gairy and the 'Committee of 22' organisations shows no signs of easing with independence due to be granted on Thursday 7 February.

On the contrary, there is widespread speculation that Gairy will use the occasion to declare a state of emergency and round up all the main opposition leaders. He himself described the opposition's fears on this score as 'not without some measure of justification' at a press conference earlier this week, held just after he had rejected any possibility of talks between the two sides.

Opposition to Gairy's methods has gradually crystallised over the last nine months, so that the island is now gripped by its third general strike in this period. In 1972 he won a clear majority with 58% of the votes in an election in which the main issue was independence, but since then his failure to institute serious social and economic reforms has led to widespread support for the radical New Jewel Movement (NJM). At the same time, Gairy's increasingly arbitrary methods—he rules mainly through the use of a large secret police force made up of ex-criminals and gangsters—have turned trade union leaders and wide sections of the business community against him.

In fact, it was an incident on 18 November—when Gairy's secret police savagely beat up three leaders of the NJM—which sparked off

the present wave of unrest. A series of strikes have gradually brought almost all business life on the island to a standstill, reaching a crescendo on 21 January when members of the secret police opened fire on a protest demonstration, killing the father of one of the NJM leaders and injuring several others. Since then the decision of Gairy's former supporters in the Technical and Allied Workers Union to take an active part in the opposition movement has produced a full-scale general strike.

Small as Grenada is—the total population is less than 120,000—the issues which the present situation raises are nevertheless extremely important. Not only do they highlight the continuing role of imperialism in the area, but they also illustrate the problems of working out a viable strategy in opposition to it.

At present there are three camps in the dispute. The first consists of Gairy and his supporters, who have been backed to the hilt by the Tory Government—negotiations are proceeding to speed up more than £2m. worth of British aid to the regime, and there has also been talk of using the naval force now on exercises in the area to intervene in the event of further serious disturbances. It is obvious that the key spokesmen for British imperialism still regard Gairy as the most reliable protector of their interests.

But at the same time widespread support has also been given—notably by Lord Brockway and other prominent figures in the Labour

Party, but also by some Conservative MPs—to the idea that independence should be shelved for the moment. This reflects the very real fear of certain imperialist interests that there will be no return to stability and 'business as usual' while Gairy remains in power. The consequences of the present strikes are already becoming serious—for instance, it is estimated that 200 tons of bananas a week are rotting because there is no-one to load them onto the Geest Industries' boats which regularly call.

Unfortunately it is this demand—for the shelving of independence—which has also been voiced by much of the opposition movement in Grenada itself, not excluding even some leaders of the NJM. This expresses very well the confused nature of the coalition which has grown up in opposition to Gairy, ranging from the business community which seeks British protection for its own position vis-a-vis Gairy, through to those who believe that a delay of independence will give British 'fair play' time to sort out the island's present problems.

Only a small minority of the opposition, representing a militant section of the NJM, seems at present to be advocating a struggle for 'independence without Gairy'. While this expresses a basic anti-imperialist consciousness, however, it needs to be radically developed before it can provide any viable alternative to imperialism's plans for the area.

Of key importance here is the fact that a



Demonstration in London last Sunday reflected the same confusion on independence issue

State the size of Grenada is simply not in a position to challenge the might of imperialism on its own, even if it is formally 'independent'. Hence the most urgent need is clearly to work out political perspectives for combatting imperialism not just on one island but throughout the Caribbean area. The strength of imperialism lies in the complete fragmentation of the area; only if struggles such as that in Grenada are developed through integration into a wider struggle for a federation of Socialist States of the Caribbean can this crippling weakness be overcome.

JOHN MARSTON

As the dust kicked up by the Sunningdale negotiations begins to settle, it is becoming evident that the political furniture in the North of Ireland has been moved around the room.

The statements by the UVF calling for an end to sectarian killings, by the UDA calling for an end to the force-feeding of the Winchester prisoners, and the obviously reciprocal ending of military action against off-duty UDR members by the IRA emphasise the importance of the changes.

The statements by Boal and Paisley calling for the British to get out of Ireland might be dismissed as rhetoric, or an especially devious tactic, but the evidence of a rapprochement, however limited and temporary, between a section of the loyalists and the Republican Movement is there for all to see.

RATS IN A TRAP

No one who has followed *Red Weekly* will be surprised that this has happened. Ever since the British White Paper, we have been forecasting the destruction of the Orange monolith, and its regrouping around new political objectives. The split between those who support the Union with Britain and those who wish to maintain the Protestant Ascendancy has created a deep crisis among the protestant plebeian elements of the former monolith.

Like rats in a trap they have scurried frantically in every direction, only to find no escape. It was inevitable that sooner or later some of them would venture timidly up the path that leads to some kind of understanding with the Republicans. The only surprise is that they found it so soon.

The Republicans can congratulate themselves. They are reaping the harvest of having smashed Stormont; they have fragmented the most powerful anti-national force in Ireland; and may eventually win new allies in the struggle to drive the British out of Ireland.

On the other hand, British imperialism has achieved a closer alliance with Cosgrave, while the SDLP is a dagger aimed at the heart of Republican support in the catholic ghettos. And, of course, the loyalists have not yet been won over to the side of the Irish revolution. The path forward is a very complex one. So the Republicans had better be very sure that their politics are adequate.

THREE-WAY SPLIT

The fact that sections of the Loyalists are now hostile to Britain does not mean that they will move towards common political conclusions. On the contrary, they will scatter in at least three directions.

Faulkner and the Assembly Executive may be able to win or buy support from the skilled protestant workers, particularly in the shipyards. Sandy Scott of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, who is a leading shop steward in the yards, has forcibly pointed out that the immediate economic interests of the shipyard workers lie with the Union, the British market and British subsidies. The NILP could revive itself on this platform.

The sectarianism of the Loyalist organisations has not yet been destroyed. Their hatred of Britain overshadows their hostility to the catholics and a united Ireland, but only because Britain has sold out the Protestant Ascendancy. And a small section of the Loyalists, ably assisted by the Military Reaction Force, will try to wreck any rapprochement between Loyalists and Republicans, through intimidation and assassination.

A recent issue of the Provisional Sinn Fein newspaper 'An Phoblacht' challenged revolutionary Marxists to debate criticisms which they have of the policies of the Republican Movement. 'Red Weekly' welcomes this challenge and here BOB PURDIE discusses the new situation in the North and the relationship of the upsurge of the Southern working class

The Republican struggle, protestant reaction, and the Southern working class

A section of the Loyalists will, doubtless, jump over the wall, and join with the Republicans and socialists in fighting for a new Ireland. But the proportions of this three-way split cannot yet be forecast. The Republicans must act now to ensure that the largest possible forces are drawn into the latter category.

LOYALIST-REPUBLICAN LINK-UP

With the Loyalists in their present mood, a debate over ideas is irrelevant. In a world of bewildering change they are looking for new certainties, and the biggest asset of the Republicans is the determination of their struggle against the British Army and the mass resistance of the anti-Unionist population.

The best way to destroy sectarianism, and to isolate the opportunist leaders of the protestants, is to broaden the social base of the opposition to British imperialism.

This must mean the development of mass

opposition among the working class in the South to the coalition, and its collaboration with Britain, through the integration of the current industrial upsurge in the South with the national struggle in the North.

THREAT TO SUNNINGDALE

The recent rejection of the National Wage Agreement in the South heralds a long series of industrial struggles, which will be strengthened by the backbone of the rank-and-file shop stewards movement, principally the Dublin Shop Stewards Committee, which campaigned for the rejection of the agreement.

This wave of industrial militancy has a direct bearing on the Sunningdale agreement because it could eat away one of the props—the Southern Coalition Government. A major Governmental onslaught against the industrial working class would destroy the Labour Party and leave as the only credible government a



'A section of the Loyalists will, doubtless, jump over the wall, and join with the Republicans in fighting for a new Ireland... The Republicans must act now to ensure that the largest possible forces are drawn into this category.'

Fianna Fail which has not been able to accept the full implications of Sunningdale.

But while the objective results of industrial struggle in the South could undermine Sunningdale, conscious leadership is required if the national struggle and the working class struggle are to be integrated sufficiently to guarantee such an outcome. At present the leadership of the industrial struggle does not, in the main, understand the implications of that struggle. They will lead it as if it were simply a question of getting higher wages.

The Republicans have supported the struggle against the National Wage Agreement but as an issue quite separate and apart from their own struggle, and have approached the workers mainly on national issues.

REPRESSIVE LURCH

No revolutionary can afford to leave out of account the tremendously uneven development of the crisis in Ireland. In the North the struggle of the catholic minority against British imperialism leads towards the socialist revolution; in the South the working class struggle objectively poses the problem of uncompleted national revolution—but not yet as an immediate problem.

There is no guarantee that both struggles will grow together automatically. What is needed is a strategy based on an understanding of the long term need for a combined struggle, and which pinpoints those aspects of the immediate struggles which can lead to a closer integration.

The main opportunity, open at present, to draw the struggles closer together is the building of mass opposition to the repressive lurch of the Free State, taking up such issues as the Offences against the State Act, and the current recruitment campaign for the Army. Republicans are suffering now from this repression, and increasingly trade unionists will get it in the neck as well.

FUSING THE STRUGGLES

If the national struggle being carried out by the Republican Movement can be combined with the industrial struggle in the South, the resulting fusion between the minority in the North and the working class in the South will produce a force with sufficient social weight to pull the protestant workers in the North behind it.

If, to take advantage of the new situation in the North, the above steps are necessary, then what we are talking about is the transformation of the anti-imperialist struggle in the North into a much broader struggle which spills over into the working class socialist revolution.

The challenge to the Republicans can be summed up in one question: Does the Irish revolution consist of those measures necessary to drive the British out of Ireland, or is the smashing of British imperialism the most important component of a much broader and more profound process which will transform Ireland, politically, economically and socially?

The answer given to that question delineates the boundaries between the revolutionary Republicans, and the revolutionary socialists in Ireland today, just as the attitude to the national struggle has separated the revolutionaries from the reformists.

This is the first of two articles. In the next, Bob Purdie will take up the Republican Movement's policy on regional government.

Were councils of action bureaucratically deformed?

A READER WRITES TO RED WEEKLY:

Comrade,

I would like to raise some points concerning councils of action which you have mentioned in recent issues of *Red Weekly*. You assume that these really were the 'highest forms of the united front' as Trotsky called soviets. Tom Brown — who was at the time the CP industrial organiser in the Midlands, and kicked out of the Party soon after as a leftist — analysed the running of the General Strike and the Councils of Action in his native Durham in issues of *Direct Action* published in the winter of 1962/63.

Councils of action were confined to existing counties and a man who lived just on one side of the border and travelled across the border to work was linked, in the union, with people at the other end of his county and not with his workmates. He was not asked to picket his own place of work, but to go to others perhaps miles away.

Less than a quarter of all the unionised workers in the county were in fact called out on strike. The councils of action acted to prevent other workers coming out in solidarity or to forestall any form of picketing which went beyond that prescribed.

The councils' composition was not notably democratic and it had little contact during the course of the strike with much militant opinion. Indeed such a depressing picture did Brown paint that he commented at the end — after quoting some CP theorists who said: 'In Russia these councils of action were called soviets' — 'Now we know what soviets were.'

Unless, of course, they were right and the bureaucratic deformation lay in the soviets at the height of the October Revolution as well as in the fact that those soviets 'look over almost intact the whole apparatus of the Tsarist state' (Lenin).

Which would of course mean that such workers' power as existed operated on a Tsarist civil service and army personnel through deformed soviets, and through this Tsarist apparatus over what was — until after Lenin's death — a predominately capitalist economy.

Perhaps you should look more carefully at the councils of action.

Fraternally,
Laurens Otter

Editor's Reply:

Comrade Otter is correct to criticise our equation of councils of action with soviets. The councils of action, as they existed during the general strike, were certainly no more than embryonic organs of workers' power and never developed to the level of soviets.

At the same time, Comrade Otter appears to be misinformed on some factual questions concerning the councils. These bodies were not organised on a county basis but on a local basis, usually based on existing trades councils. There were more than 90 such bodies in the London area, for example.

In some cases the council of action was established as a sub-committee of the trades council. More frequently the trades council enlarged itself by canvassing for delegates from previously unaffiliated branches, and co-opting representatives from the various individual unions' strike committees in the locality. In other cases the council of action — usually termed a 'joint strike committee' — was just a federation of union strike committees.

Durham, to which comrade Otter refers, is one of the very few cases in which a regional structure was erected. But this was not on a county basis. It was a general council representing the strikers of Durham and Northumberland. When a regional conference was convened by this body some 28 councils of action and 52 strike committees in the two counties sent delegates.

The councils of action did indeed suffer from many weaknesses, some more so than others. But they did provide a framework within which the mass struggle of the entire working class could be united and organised, and the workers could start to take over the administration of social life from the capitalist state machine.

As the strike progressed — despite continual obstruction from the TUC General Council and problems of trade union sectionalism — the Councils were forced to take on wider and wider responsibilities: the control of transport; the administration of power supplies; picketing; the dissemination of information; and the establishment of organs of workers' self-defence.

A continuation of the strike would have necessitated a drastic overhaul in the structure and operation of the Councils. But there is every reason to believe that this transition could have been made, and genuine organs of workers' democracy and workers' power would have come into existence.

We cannot expect workers' power to suddenly spring forth in all its purity. It will emerge bit by bit out of the harsh logic and objective necessity of the class struggle, marked by all the weaknesses of the class which gives birth to it — trade union sectionalism, political backwardness, reformist illusions, continued ensnarement in bureaucratic ideas and procedures.

It is the job of revolutionaries to transform what may at first seem like a rather pathetic offspring into the full-blown expression of the power of the working class.

Kent students occupy

More than five hundred students at the University of Kent occupied the registry building on Tuesday afternoon to demand the reinstatement of Joe Connor, a CP member who has been asked to withdraw from the university. He was originally told that this was because he had missed two seminars, but when he disproved this charge, he was informed that his academic record was unsatisfactory.

Trade unionists on the campus have been asked for support, but the university has refused to hear representations from the trade unions on the case.

Students disrupt RAF recruiting

Students at the University of East Anglia harried a senior RAF officer, who had come to interview potential recruits to the armed forces, last Thursday. As the interviews were transferred to another building demonstrators chanted: 'Troops out of Ireland - Internees out of Jail', and 'No campus recruitment for armed forces'.

Following the success of this demonstration, which was organised by the International Marxist Group and supported by the Students Union, there are plans to organise a protest on 11 February, when a team from the Ministry of Defence will interview women for jobs in the intelligence service.

Support committee in Haringey?

Haringey Trades Council is to consider the setting up of a support committee for the miners, following a public meeting on the struggle against the Tories held by the Trades Council on 31 January. A resolution to this effect was moved by IMG member Val Graham, who is assistant secretary of Haringey NUT, and was enthusiastically supported by the one hundred trade unionists present.

Alan Tattam, regional organiser of UCATT, speaking on the Shrewsbury 3, said: 'Take away the picket line and the strike is impotent, that's what the Shrewsbury 3 is all about.' Joe Burke, Kent NUM President, speaking on the witch hunt against the miners, said: 'When we go out on strike in February the miners will be carrying a burden for the entire working class - and we will never have been prouder.'

Police raid London squatters

Early on Wednesday morning two houses in Elgin Avenue occupied by squatters were raided by police. The raid involved members of the Special Patrol Group, the Special Branch and CID. They claimed to be investigating the bank robbery at Stanstead Airport, but evinced great interest in political literature, and took away some IMG internal documents.

Four Irish people were taken away for questioning, but all were released some hours later. It is evident that the raid was yet more intimidation against this militant centre of the squatters' movement in London.

New racism conference planned

The problem of racist influence on workers was discussed at a special delegate conference called by Haringey Trades Council last Sunday. In the recent borough elections in Tottenham the Labour Party only just scraped home in one ward, with 964 votes to the 730 votes for the openly racist National Independence Party, and 50 for the National Front. This has shown up the paralysis of the Labour Party in face of the racists.

The conference decided to set up a working committee, and to seek sponsorship for a broader conference from all organisations of the working class and their allies in the Haringey area.

International Marxist Group
(British Section of the Fourth International)
97 Caledonian Road,
London N.1.
I would like more information about the IMG and its activities.

NAME

ADDRESS



Photo: Workers Press

The Art Castings workers last Saturday . . . 'there can be little doubt that without the solidarity of local militants, the combination of management victimisation, police harassment, and delay by the foot-shuffling T&G bureaucracy would have broken this important struggle.'

Art Castings strike finally made official

The Transport and General Workers' Union has, at last, after more than two months, given recognition to the strike of 83 Asian workers at Coventry Art Castings, Nuneaton. The management was informed on 2 February that the rest of the workers would be called out within seven days.

The dispute is part of a long struggle against management attempts to break the union in the factory. The strike began on 10 December after a worker in the die-casting shop was sacked for not working fast enough. This shop was operating an overtime ban at the time, in pursuit of a wage claim, and the workers took the view that this was an attempt to intimidate them.

Despite the lack of solidarity shown by other workers in the plant, support for the Asians has been growing steadily in the local

labour movement. At a mass meeting on 1 February the Art Castings workers were joined by striking workers from the Southall Textile factory, which has been out for ten weeks, representatives from the Stirling Metal factory, and Coventry busmen who are operating a work to rule over non-payment of New Year's Day earnings.

TASS members in the Alvis factory in Coventry have succeeded in getting Art Castings products blacked, and now that the strike is official such action should be widely extended.

This outside solidarity worried the management, especially when it resulted in mass pickets being formed. On 27 January a mass picket was attacked by police, and four members of the local trade union action committee were arrested. The four were, Jack Sprung, a

well-known local militant, his two sons, and Gwyn Jones, Coventry IMG and UCATT member. Trade union officials present protested to the police at what they said was a quite unprovoked and violent attack.

This attack was only the tip of the iceberg. The Asians have suffered constant harassment, including demands to produce their passports, and threats of arrest as illegal immigrants.

There can be little doubt that without the solidarity of local militants, the combination of management victimisation, police harassment, and delay by the foot-shuffling T&G bureaucracy would have broken this important struggle, which confirms the power of picketing.

It is the attack on this right which has put the Shrewsbury 3 in jail, and is the basis of the charges against the four Art Castings action committee militants.

'Women against the Tories' conference to take up three-day week struggles

As the case of Jean Jepson (see page 12) shows, the three-day week has hit women workers more severely than other sections of the working class. Not only are they among the most poorly organised, but short-time working aggravates the special problems which they face as both women and workers. If husband and wife are both working a 12-hour day, for example, who is going to look after the kids?

The Tories have tried to shift the responsibility for the three-day week on to the NUM, and the problems which women face make them especially vulnerable to this attempt to split the rest of the working class from the miners. It is essential that the isolated struggles which have broken out among women over the three-day week are given the maximum co-ordination as part of a united thrust against the Tories.

This is one of the important tasks of the conference on 'Women Against the Tories', initiated by the IMG in London. So far workshops have been planned on general problems such as equal pay and trade union democracy, as well as on specific issues like the role of women in the miners' strike, the struggle against British Imperialism in Ireland, the three-day week, and the Shrewsbury anti-picketing trials.

The conference will take place on Sunday, 17 February, at Imperial College Students' Union, Prince Consort Road, London SW7. A creche will be provided. The registration fee is 25p at the door, and any further details required can be obtained from the IMG, (Womens' Conference!), 97 Caledonian Road, London N1.

Students plan solidarity action with miners

As we go to press students are preparing for a massive demonstration in London this Friday, in opposition to the Government's attacks on the living standards of students and workers. They will demand a 30 per cent increase, to bring the basic grant up from £485 to £655, and full grants for all students.

This demonstration can be the focus for national direct action on these demands and the initiation of a campaign to beat back the massive cuts in educational spending by the Tories. It is also the first opportunity for students to solidarise with the miners' struggle.

Unity between students and workers has already been reflected in the pledge made by ASLEF, to ensure that trains carrying students to the demonstration will get through, despite the sabotage attempts by British Rail. And a sizeable contingent of miners will march in the demonstration to express solidarity with the students' demands.

In the University of Kent students and the local labour movement are discussing proposals for a picketing and transport pool, and the taking over of accommodation in the university to aid the miners. They are also providing accommodation for a big conference of East Kent trades councils, which is being backed by the

NUM. Similar initiatives have been taken by the London Student Organisation.

Broad-based support committees should be set up, and mass meetings between students, local trade unionists and miners should be held, so as to involve the maximum possible number of students in such solidarity activity.

A high level of local militancy is being shown on the students' own demands. At Oxford Polytechnic and University a conference on grants is being organised. It will be addressed by Dave Jackson of the Shrewsbury Defence Committee, and an NUM speaker. Manchester students will be holding an area rally to discuss the way forward for the grants campaign, in alliance with the miners' struggle.

Students at East Anglia University, following their occupation last term in solidarity with the Essex students' struggle, have forced their vice-chancellor to concede a price freeze, a demand already won at Oxford Poly.

The experience in these colleges confirms that the only way to make sure that price freezes are enforced is to hold over the heads of the authorities threats of direct action, and active co-operation with campus workers.

RAY BURNS

Fascist thugs strike in Brighton

Four fascist thugs made a lightning attack on the bookshop of the CPB(M-L) in Brighton last Saturday. They turned over furniture, threw books on the floor, and tore down posters. The comrade looking after the shop was knocked to the ground.

They then sought out Cam Matheson, President of the Students' Union at Sussex University. They intimidated Cam, who is a member of the CP, into sticking up a National Front poster, and warned that they would return a week later to see that it was still up. They also made anti-semitic remarks about a girl typist, and threat-

ened to smash the glasses of the editor of the Union paper 'into his eyes'.

It seems unlikely that the four were from the Brighton area, but known NF members were seen on the campus the week before, possibly on a reconnaissance mission. If this means that the Front are organising groups of travelling thugs, the implications are serious. Any attack must be met by the united self-defence of all working class organisations, and this must include the expulsion of all NF members from the NUS, and the rigorous exclusion of all NF activities from colleges.

Woman convenor fired for refusing to abandon 40-hour pay guarantee

As the two-day lockout bites, many small and medium-size engineering firms are trimming their wage bill by refusing to abide by agreements which lay down a guaranteed basic wage. Often for male workers, three days' pay plus two days' unemployment benefit can be more than the guaranteed minimum wage. But for women workers who earn less, and receive lower unemployment benefit - if any - the guaranteed wage is often crucial.

Three weeks ago, Jean Jepson, a militant T&GWU convenor at Armstrong Patents Ltd., in Beverley near Hull, was summarily sacked for refusing to sign away the guaranteed 40-hour week. The tactics of her employer and the response of the union are revealing. In the following interview she describes what took place and below is a late-news follow-up.



Jean Jepson, the sacked convenor: 'I realise now that trade unionism is subject to savage political attacks'

'The company regarded it as imperative that the workforce should, where necessary, go onto a three-day week and sign on as unemployed for the other two days. My refusal to endorse this plan by the company to obtain state aid for the purpose of financing a two day lock out resulted in the company sacking me. They accused me of "continuous and deliberate disruption".'

'I was acting on the official union instructions, which were that no local branch official had the authority to sign away an agreement negotiated at national level. And I was not willing to participate in what amounted to the people at large subsidising the company through unemployment benefits, while the workers involved suffered financial hardship as the result of a three-day week introduced by a Tory Government to which the company makes political contributions.'

'It is true that only about a hundred workers followed me out but I consider that there were three basic reasons for this. Firstly, the three-day week, as it was designed to, has made the average worker uncertain of his or her earnings potential, and this has had a definite regressive effect on their militancy.'

'Secondly, the company mounted a massive propaganda campaign against the workforce, laced with a strong element of intimidation. The workers were subject to regular fac-

tory broadcasts informing them that they were not to support me, on pain of redundancies, sackings, layoffs and what have you.

'And then the T&GWU district officer and me were obstructed at every turn by the company in our attempts to talk to the membership, a completely flagrant breach of all procedures between the union and the company. I believe that the company intends to break the union at the factory, and sees my dismissal as the first step towards that end.

'I realise now that trade unionism is subject to savage political attacks and I know that in future I will have to bear this in mind.'

The dismissal of Jean Jepson was later confirmed at a kangaroo court held at Bridlington, Yorkshire, on 21 January. The judges comprised four management representatives and two shop stewards picked by the firm and two women shop floor workers chosen by Jean Jepson. Only the two women voted for Jean Jepson. The latter was not given the right to attend the enquiry, let alone speak.

While publicly declaring that the convenor 'must be supported', Les Upfold, the T&GWU regional organiser, has agreed to participate in the setting up of the election of a new convenor, and is preparing to take Jean Jepson's case before the Industrial Relations Court. Hull dockers and workers at Fenners' engineering works have agreed to back Armstrong's material and strikers now plan to tour the country for wider support.

IMG IS SPONSORING A CONFERENCE ON 'WOMEN AGAINST THE TORIES'

ON 17 FEBRUARY
See page 11 for details

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WORKERS BLACK LENTILS TO FORCE PRICE REDUCTION AND INQUIRY INTO HOARDING

Is your employer a hoarder? Is he holding back goods to benefit from rising prices? This is the question which workers at a Glasgow food warehouse are asking, and they are taking industrial action to get the answer.

Seventy drivers and 120 warehousemen at the Thorniebank warehouse of Allied Suppliers (Scotland) Ltd. have blacked stocks of 30 tons of lentils since 15 January when the company decided to begin to distribute them to some of its 800 retail outlets in Scotland and the North of England.

Lentils are in extremely short supply, and few stores have any on their shelves. All lentils are imported from the Lebanon, and costs have increased from £138 a ton last June to £345 in November. Retail prices have shot up correspondingly.

HOARDING INQUIRY

What the workers at Allied Suppliers want to know is why did their employers hold back 30 tons of the cereal they received in November until the retail price had increased from 18p to 23p a pound in January? And this question, combined with the blacking, has so scared the company that it has taken large advertisements in the Scottish press to justify its position.

The warehouse workers, members of the T&GWU and USDAW, are demanding that the retail price of the lentils be reduced! And reduced to 18p a pound!

The workers are also demanding an enquiry into the whole affair. But finding a body of the capitalist state willing and able to conduct one has so far proved difficult. The Prices Board, on a variety of grounds, cannot do the job, despite all the Tories' talk of 'curing inflation at a stroke'. And although the management and the union officials are approaching the Department of Trade & Industry, the DTI has no power to act in this area.

So far the workers have not been very clear about the composition of the enquiry they want. But one thing seems very clear. The capitalist state was not made to do things like reduce the price of basic bread and butter items of the family budget.

But the workers should turn to their own resources. The trade union movement should hold its own enquiry in public. Members of the Pay Board, consumer bodies, and the company, could all be invited along to answer questions. If they showed up, all to the good. An audience of trade unionists and vigilant housewives would soon get at the truth. If they failed to show up, the public could draw its own conclusions.

The enquiry would publish its findings and the next steps could then be discussed. The support generated by the enquiry would provide the basis either for tougher industrial action to force the company to lower its prices or to organise the distribution and sale of lentils by the workers themselves.

PIONEERS

This action at Allied Suppliers is of more value to the workers movement than all the pious speeches of the labour leaders about inflation. Actions like these could begin to have some effect on rising prices, as well as win support for the trade union movement from among many people who have been kidded along by the Tories' promises and conked into supporting their bashing of the unions.

It is not individual acts of profiteering which lie behind the astronomical rise in food prices. Nevertheless, struggles by workers against cases of profiteering can lay the basis for a serious effort by the workers movement to combat price rises.

What the workers at Allied Suppliers have done is to show that the workers movement need not rely helplessly on the Government or the authorities to take action against rising prices. On the contrary, the initiative of workers in the factories and warehouses is indispensable. The bosses are not at all frightened by the civil service, but they are thrown into



Stocks of 30 tons of lentils sitting in the warehouse of Allied Suppliers in Glasgow. They arrived in November, when the retail price was 18p a pound, but the company did not begin to move them until January, when the price had increased to 23p. The workers then immediately blacked them

a panic when the workers begin to interfere with matters which the bosses think they have every right to keep secret.

If the demand of the labour movement for a future Labour government to freeze prices were met, the bosses would resort to all manner of sabotage, bribery of the authorities, creation of artificial shortages etc. To make any price freeze effective, workers throughout industry would have to follow the example of

those at Allied Suppliers. Everything to be checked, nothing to be kept secret! This would lay the basis for a real deterrent over the bosses - workers organised to exercise direct coercion against offenders.

The example set at Allied Suppliers should be generalised and extended across the workers movement. Why are food prices rising? Part of the answer may lie in the warehouse in the factory yard. Why not take a look on Monday morning?

Women plan two-day fast and vigil in support of hunger strikers

A group of women are to hold a 42-hour fast and vigil outside Brixton Prison in solidarity with the Price sisters, and the other prisoners on hunger strike. The vigil is being organised by the Women in Ireland Collective, and will begin at 9 p.m. this Friday evening. It will last until the arrival of an Irish Political Hostages Campaign march, at about 3 p.m. on Sunday, 11 February. The march will begin at Clapham Common at 2.30 p.m.

Actor Cyril Cusack, and Derry journalist Eamonn McCann were additions to the platform of the IPHC public meeting in the Conway Hall on Thursday. Other speakers included soccer-player Eamonn Dunphy.

The IPHC is keeping up the pressure of its campaign, a car cavalcade through London's West End attracting considerable attention last Saturday. Leaflets were distributed and balloons painted with slogans released into the air. Gaelic football players stopped their game to support an IPHC picket when it marched

through playing fields at the back of Wormwood Scrubs Prison on Sunday. Dr. Dominic Costa, and Brian Rose Smith of the Haldane Society. This indicates the breadth of support for the return of the prisoners to finish their sentences in the North of Ireland.

Supporters from London and the Midlands will join a picket at Gartree Prison in Market Harborough, near Leicester, at 2.30 p.m. on Sunday 17 February. Coaches will leave Quex Rd., off Kilburn High Rd., London at 10 a.m. that morning. The return fare is £1.

Meanwhile in Canterbury the executive of the Students' Union at the University of Kent passed a resolution last week calling on the NUS to launch a campaign in support of the 'Winchester Prisoners.' And a general meeting of the Union at Canterbury overwhelmingly passed a resolution, to be debated at the Liverpool Conference of the NUS, calling for the withdrawal of British Troops from Ireland, and the release of all Irish political prisoners.

FUND DRIVE

A CHALLENGE TO ALL READERS:
SMASH FEB FUND DRIVE TARGET!

After a good start our emergency fund drive has reached a slightly disappointing end. It closed at £1,792.92, which is £207.08 short of our £2,000 target.

The crisis in Britain has deepened, and the miners are preparing a historic struggle. That's why we are back this month with 12 pages, with more news, more analysis, more background material, and more discussion of the strategy for victory.

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