



FORCE LABOUR TO FREE PICKETS

The first thing Roy Jenkins should do this week, as Labour's new Home Secretary, is grant a pardon to all the building workers convicted at Shrewsbury. All he has to do is sign a piece of paper and they could be free with a clean slate.

By this simple act, Jenkins could override all the Court decisions so far made against the Shrewsbury pickets. No time should be lost. On the very same day that Wilson arrived at Number Ten, Lord Denning made yet another tough decision in the Appeal Court.

He rejected John McKinzie Jones's appeal against the Charges of conspiracy and unlawful assembly and upheld his nine month jail sentence. Jones is the first of three to have his appeal heard. The other two have no reason to expect better treatment.

by CHRIS BALFOUR

Labour has promised to repeal the Industrial Relations Act. This Act is the most concerted attack by the state on the trade union movement for decades. But the Shrewsbury jailings under the conspiracy laws are part of the same attack. They followed the victory by the dockers pickets over the NIRC and the miners pickets over the Tory pay norm in 1972.

A pardon for the pickets would be a real defeat for the ruling class's attempts to hamstring and weaken trade union organisation. Unlike the repeal of the Act, this needs no new legislation to be introduced through the House of Commons. Labour's minority position in Parliament cannot be used as an excuse for delay.

Such a move would be the clearest pledge by Labour that it intended to act in the interests of workers rather than capital, that it recognised the need to defend and strengthen workers' organisation for the struggle against capital.

Despite the presence of the Labour left in the cabinet, the Shrewsbury case has not even been mentioned by the Government. In the Labour leaders' eyes the capitalist Constitution ranks higher than workers' interests. Thus they may be prepared to repeal old laws—following all the rules of Parliamentary procedure—but they will not condone those who break the law in struggle, no matter how rotten and repressive those laws may be.

This has been shown clearly in the betrayal of the Clay Cross councillors by Labour's refusal, when in opposition, to guarantee repayment of the surcharges they incurred in the fight against the Housing Finance Act.

Industrial Action will still be necessary to repel the Shrewsbury attack. At the moment one group of workers virtually holds the Labour Government in the palm of its hand—the

miners. Labour ran in the election on the basis of immediately settling the miners' strike, and is hurriedly trying to do so. Any demand insisted on by the NUM would have to be met by the Labour Government.

Shrewsbury is not just an issue of concern to building workers. It affects the entire workers' movement. Miners are aware that they may well have to take up the industrial struggle again in the near future, and the defence of pickets right now is essential preparation.

The call from Jack Collins, Kent area delegate to the NUM executive for the NUM to refuse to return to work until the Shrewsbury pickets are released should be endorsed by the NUM executive immediately. This would get Roy Jenkins signing the Shrewsbury pardons within hours.

Birmingham UCATT shop stewards agreed this week to circulate a petition calling on the NUM to take up the demands of the Shrewsbury campaign. Over 500 signatures had been collected from Birmingham building sites by Thursday's meeting of the NUM Executive.

In any event, the movement to free the Shrewsbury workers must be given a big push forward. The conference called by UCATT and TGWU in London on 16 March promises to be well attended. The conference has been endorsed by the London Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions and speakers will include Labour MP Norman Atkinson. This conference must make a clear commitment to a mass campaign in defence of the Shrewsbury workers, leading to indefinite industrial action if Labour refuses to issue an immediate pardon for all the Shrewsbury militants.

The opportunity to begin such a campaign comes on Wednesday 20 March when the 'Day of Action' called by the Liverpool Shrewsbury Conference takes place. A mass demonstration and lobby of the House of Commons will be held in London on that day. The entire Labour movement must use this opportunity to give a massive warning to the Labour Government of their determination to fight, by whatever means necessary, to free the Shrewsbury militants and break the ruling class offensive against picketing.

MINERS: LABOUR KEEPS TO SIDELINES

It is certain that the miners will soon settle their strike for something very close to their full claim.

With almost the entire ruling class backing big concessions to the miners even before the election, this is one election promise that Labour was bound to keep.

But the way in which Labour has gone about resolving the dispute is a rather ill-omen of what we can expect from the Government in future.

They could have met with the miners immediately upon taking office, found out exactly what the NUM wanted, and promptly agreed to meet their demands in full. Such a course would not only have been the quickest way to end the strike, but it would have been the clearest declaration possible that the Government intended to act in the interests of working people.

Instead, despite the fact that veteran 'left' Michael Foot was assigned to run the show, the Government bent over backwards to remain aloof from the settlement of the strike. It simply informed the NUM and the NCB that they could resume negotiations unfettered by Phase 3.

This was intended to have two effects. First, to see if there was any way of whittling down the miners' full claim without the Labour Government appearing as the one doing the whittling. Second, to preserve the image of the Government as 'neutral' and above the struggle between bosses and workers (even when it is itself the 'boss').

This, of course, is the much-vaunted 'restoration of free collective bargaining' which trade union bureaucrats, Labour Party spokesmen (left and right), the Communist Party, and even some muddled-headed revolutionaries, have been calling for.

Certainly, we should be in favour of



The miners got tea and sympathy from Michael Foot. They should have got immediate support from the Government for their full claim.

'free collective bargaining' as opposed to intervention by a capitalist Government on the side of the bosses through an incomes policy. But let's not forget that workers have been exploited for decades under capitalism precisely through 'free collective bargaining'. Workers have been starved, evicted, beaten, arrested, jailed and even murdered — all in the process of 'free collective bargaining'.

What we really want is not a Government that stands by with arms folded while all this is going on, or even one that stands on the sidelines and shouts words of sympathy as workers get kneed in the groin, but a Government that intervenes on the side of the working class.

That is the sort of response the miners should have got from Labour, rather than tea and a pat on the back from Michael Foot.

But the miners can count themselves lucky. They at least got a friendly reception. The next group of workers who go to Downing Street to discuss a big wage claim will probably check the address as they leave to make sure they hadn't

turned up at Tory Party headquarters by mistake.

The miners should make the best of their present opportunity. They should not budge from the demand for the full claim, and should insist that the settlement is back-dated to November 1, both as compensation for the long strike they have been forced to wage and to strengthen their bargaining position for next time. They can strike a blow for the whole working class by insisting that Labour pardons the Shrewsbury workers before the miners return to work.

The rest of the trade union movement must treat the miners settlement as a precedent. From now on the watchword must be 'nothing short of the full claim'. The winning of such demands will take a hard fight, and preparations must begin right away to forge the sort of united, all-out action that can carry the day, despite the determined resistance of the bosses and the class collaboration of the Labour Government.

Rav Alexander

CALL FOR OFFICIAL BACKING IN T&G VICTIMISATION FIGHT

The strike at Armstrong Patents in Beverley, near Hull, which began in January over the sacking of factory convenor Jean Jepson has yet to be made official by the TGWU.

This is in spite of the fact that she was victimised by the management for following national union policy and refusing to sign away a nationally-negotiated guarantee of 40 hours basic pay during the Tory-inspired 3-day week.

Without this protection, many of the 500 women employed at this

car component factory are finding that 3 days wages combined with 2 days dole money (for those who are eligible) leaves them short of their previously guaranteed basic by as much as £6 a week.

Important trade union support has been gained locally, especially from the dockers, and the blacking of Armstrongs Patents products has now been extended to all registered ports. The Armstrong strike committee is calling for this blacking to be taken up throughout the trade union movement, especially in the car industry.

The behaviour of the T&G in this

case has been scandalous. The strike committee is appealing for a massive campaign inside the T&G to gain official recognition of the strike. Resolutions to this effect are urgently needed from TGWU branches and shop stewards across the country.

The dispute is now entering its seventh week without official support, and is desperately in need of financial assistance.

Messages of support and contributions should be sent to: Armstrong Strike Committee, 39 Hildas Street, Bridlington, Yorks.

Tories hit most by Scottish Nationalists

Harry Selby, rising like a diminutive phoenix from the ashes of the SNP win at the Govan by-election, showed that Heath's confrontation tactics had succeeded in rescuing the Scottish Labour Party from its own inability to deal with the nationalist challenge. Labour's traditional base was mobilised, and there was a significant turn back to Labour in the urban working class centres, with the possible exception of Dundee.

Indeed it was the Tories who were hurt most by the SNP. Large sections of the middle class, squealing at the erosion of their economic security, voted SNP in protest.

But the Labour Party cannot afford complacency—disillusion in another Labour Government could extend the nationalist support to the Labour heartland, from its now well-established bases in rural areas and the smaller towns. Already the SNP has broad support amongst young skilled workers, and in the new towns.

This is a result of the crisis of social-democracy, and not of the intrinsic merit of the SNP, which concentrated on glossy and misleading propaganda about what could be done with the profits from Scottish oil. As the oil has seeped into the SNP, the radicalism of the older nationalist movement has seeped out.

The Communist Party also suffered from the broad desire to get the Tories out, but this cannot explain the meagre 5,000 vote for Jimmy Reid, nor can the disgusting campaign of slander against him in the press. The fact is that for nearly two decades the CP has not broken a voting pattern which gives them an average of about 500 votes in industrial areas in the West of Scotland. Central Dunbartonshire (where Reid fought), and Central Fife (Willie Gallacher's old constituency, where the CP polled over 1,000) have been exceptions, but not exceptional enough, and despite the CP's illusions, and the pouring of all of their resources into Clydebank, Reid never had a chance. What price the British Road?

GAVIN ROBINSON

LABOUR: PRISONER IN THE GOVERNOR'S SUIT

Harold Wilson, browsing through the morning papers after his first night back at number 10, must have been reassured by the warm welcome he received from the principal ruling class organs.

The *Times* undertook to plead Labour's case: 'We did not in the least want the election of the Labour Government... Our testimony may therefore be given some weight by those in Britain or abroad who fear a Labour Government.' It's all right, it reassured the capitalist class 'in Britain or abroad': 'This will not by any means be a government of wild men.' It went on to list the 'principal members' who would probably make up the Government, 'not one of whom is other than a thoroughly responsible and experienced moderate.'

PALATABLE 'REDS'

Lest it be accused of trying to sweep Labour's 'reds' under the rug (or is it the bed), the *Times* dragged them out into broad daylight and demonstrated their basic palatability by swallowing them whole: 'Mr Foot... is a devoted traditional parliamentarian, and Mr Benn... has proved himself a capable administrator...'

It then goes on to counsel cooperation in the ranks of the Parliamentary opposition: 'It would be very welcome if the Conservative Party were to show the new Labour government a tolerance and understanding which was not shown to them by the Labour Party in opposition... for the present the new Government must have the best support it can in facing the world crisis.'

This note was also struck by that foremost voice of the business community, the *Financial Times*: 'The task of restoring international confidence and self-confidence to the country cannot, however, be left solely to a minority Government; the parties who now find themselves in opposition are also challenged by the situation to support the Government in sensible policies to meet the national emergency.'

Another item in Tuesday's papers may go a long way to explaining the concerned, cooperative mood of the ruling class towards the Labour Government. The international, Government-sponsored economic agency, the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and

'The ruling class is prepared to accept - and even assist - a weak Labour Government that can, at least temporarily, sweet-talk and soft-soap the trade unions to achieve the same ends that the Tories would have accomplished by more direct and ruthless methods.'

Development) is predicting big economic problems for all the advanced capitalist countries. But Britain is really in the firing line: the economy is expected to decline (for the first time in over 20 years) by 2.5% in 1974; at the same time the rate of inflation will zoom up by two and thirds, and the trade deficit will more than double.

Well may the ruling class talk about 'world crisis' and 'national emergency', and well may they worry about the sort of Government that will be at the helm of the capitalist State while it is in such stormy waters.

NEXT BEST THING

Of course, there was almost total agreement among the ruling class before the election. They wanted Heath back with a big majority, and a strong Tory Government returned which could get on with the job of bashing the unions and protecting capitalist profits.

But the working class didn't quite see it that way. So what is the next best thing to a strong Tory Government? Why, a weak Labour Government, of course.

As the *Financial Times* said last Monday, 'Without the authority bestowed by the possession of the largest number

of seats in the House, Mr Heath could not count on the forbearance of the Labour Party or the cooperation of the trade unions. Not only would there be no honeymoon period, there would be a positive torrent of partisan opposition.' That downright vanguard organ of the ruling class, *The Economist*, saw the light even earlier and more clearly. Last Friday they were writing: 'Britain would be rather badly governed by a minority Heath cabinet... A minority Wilson administration could also have on its side a trade union movement which felt some obligation to try to keep a weak government in office, instead of to make a last heave to get a weak Tory government out.'

The ruling class is prepared to accept—and even assist—a weak Labour Government that can, at least temporarily, sweet talk and soft-soap the trade unions to achieve the same ends that the Tories would have accomplished by more direct and ruthless methods. When the time comes, Labour can be thrown aside like a soiled dish rag.

CONCESSIONS

In the meantime, Labour must be kept in office. It must be allowed to dispense

enough small doses of reform so that it can retain credibility with the trade union bureaucrats and allow them to do a deal with the Government without provoking massive opposition from the rank and file. Whatever happens, Labour must not be permitted to go to the polls on some issue of great significance to the working class which would allow it to win a resounding victory and confront the ruling class—horror of horrors—with a majority Labour Government.

It is universally agreed that concessions will have to be made. Thus the *Financial Times* last Monday said of Wilson, 'He would have no mandate to put the Labour manifesto into operation in its entirety. There are, of course, commitments contained in that document... which it would be unreasonable to expect him to throw overboard. The promise to repeal the Housing Finance Act and to ensure that excessive profits are not made from North Sea oil could arguably be reconciled with ideas of national unity, and, as such, would probably command the support of the House of Commons.'

But there are some things on which the ruling class is not prepared to concede an inch: 'Other measures such as the large-scale shopping list of nationalisation would arouse strong partisan controversy, even if they did not bring down the Government immediately.' In case this thinly-veiled threat went by unnoticed, it was repeated in Tuesday's edition: 'In spite of Mr Wilson's brave words in recent days, he can hardly wish to give his opponents occasion to force an election on the more controversial items in Labour's programme—specific acts of nationalisation, for example.'

The ruling class has its plans for the Labour Government. But the working class is not likely to find amusing the spectacle of a Labour Government held prisoner by the Liberals and Tories—even if the prisoner is allowed to dress up in the Governor's suit.

If the workers' movement insists that the 'thoroughly responsible and experienced moderates' go beyond the sops which the ruling class will allow them to hand out, if workers fight for immediate action *precisely* on the 'more controversial items in Labour's programme', and if they show that they are prepared to take direct action based on their own organisation, going *beyond* the Labour programme, to defend working class interests—then all these well-laid plans of the ruling class will be ground to dust in the crucible of the class struggle.

Labour Party humiliated in Blyth

There are some contradictions within the Labour Party that even the unifying panic of an election campaign cannot paper over. In the course of the campaign yet another crack appeared in the tortuous attempt of the Labour Party establishment in the North East to pose as the party of the working class, while at the same time acting as the well-paid agents of property speculators and big business.

The victory of Eddie Milne, standing as an Independent Labour candidate in Blyth, Northumberland, inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Prentice-ite put up by the party machine, and will assist in the exposure of the edifice of corruption which has lined the pockets of the North East Labour bureaucrats.

LABOUR SPECULATORS

Two particularly notorious examples of their integration into the higher echelons of British capitalism stand out. There was the occasion when the Labour-controlled Seaton Valley Urban Council aided London and Tyneside Properties in making 1000 per cent profits on houses from which miners had been evicted by the simple expedient of paying 'improvement grants' worth more than three times what the houses had cost to the company.

The second example is, of course, to be seen in the fact that Poulson found the Labour councils of the North East particularly amenable to boosting his flow of contracts.

In Blyth itself, Poulson built the city centre and some of the 'gifts' which this single contract elicited will no doubt emerge in the present trials of Andrew Cunningham and Dan Smith.

But, in spite of the political dominance of the Labour Party in the area, it is the general growth of working class militancy, especially among the miners, which has provided the conditions for a real threat to this corrupt and reactionary leadership.

About the same time as two leading Labour figures, Cunningham and Smith, were arrested on corruption and conspiracy charges, the Blyth Labour party tried to smother all attempts to force Transport House to set up an inquiry into the activities of the NE party by refusing to readopt their MP Eddie Milne, who had represented the constituency for 13 years and was demanding such an enquiry.

'SAFE' CANDIDATE

Instead, the Blyth Labour Party adopted a London-based Prentice-ite, Ivor Richard QC. He was just the kind of MP that the local establishment wanted. He had neither the political motivation nor physical proximity to disturb the well-lined nest that they had built up for themselves.

Politically, Richard is of the same ilk as the other North East MPs, such as Hughes, who signed the motion against McGahey, and Bagier and Garret (who use their parliamentary status to do PR work for the Greek colonels).

The result of this was a complete

split in the Blyth Labour party, which has more than local significance. The main working class forces in the area—the NUM lodge at Bates pit and the local UCATT branch—gave their full support to Milne when he decided to stand as an Independent Labour candidate.

MILNE MISSES OUT

Milne himself is a recent recruit to the Tribune group of MPs. His commitment to their parliamentarianism probably explains his failure to grasp the opportunity he had to wage an exemplary anti-Tory campaign.

For example, he made no attempt to actively link his campaign to the building of solidarity with the miners. He did not even deal with the question of corruption in a political way by pointing out its dangers for the labour movement, by campaigning for open meetings of all council sessions and committees, or by putting forward the idea of a worker's enquiry to investigate party corruption.

Nevertheless, 2,000 miners joined Milne's victory parade through Blyth when the election result was announced—22,918 votes for Milne and 16,778 for Richard.

CRACK TO ABYSS

The crack in the Labour Party's dominance of working class politics in the North East that has appeared in Blyth could be widened into a gaping abyss as mass struggles develop under the Labour Government.

But certain sections of the left have already proved themselves incapable of producing the strategy



A victorious Eddie Milne

that this would require. The Militant current, for example, carried their slavish commitment to the Labour Party machine to its logical extreme by supporting Richard and his corrupt sponsors.

Failure to provide an alternative political leadership to the rotten decaying leadership of the Labour Party in the North East has already had disastrous consequences for the working class—by allowing conditions of confusion to develop which provide very fertile ground for the populist tactics of the Liberals, who obtained large votes in what used to be solid Labour seats. In Blyth, for example, the Liberals picked up 10,214 votes—1,500 more than the Tory candidate,

NF challenged in Midlands

The National Front, which picked up 6,000 votes in the two West Bromwich constituencies and 5,500 in the three Wolverhampton constituencies, is no doubt looking forward to consolidating its base in this area. But initial steps have been taken to build up a campaign to drive the Front off the West Midlands streets.

In Birmingham, two meetings have been held between representatives of the International Marxist Group, the International Socialists, the Indian Workers' Association, and individual trade unionists to establish an on-going anti-fascist committee in the area. It is hoped to organise a conference shortly and gain support for the committee within the principal organisations of the local labour movement. Committees have also been formed in Wolverhampton and Dudley.

Labour pledge on Chile demanded

The Chile Solidarity Campaign is demanding that the new Labour administration break with previous Government policy on Chile.

In particular, it is demanding that diplomatic relations with the junta be broken off, that all aid be stopped, and that asylum be freely granted to all Chilean refugees. All these demands were endorsed by the Labour NEC while in Opposition.

The new campaign will be launched with a picket on Downing St at 5.30pm on Friday, 15 March.

REST IN PEACE WITH LABOUR

Trade union leaders are delighted this week with the final resignation of Heath and the return of Wilson to Number Ten. This is the moment they have relished throughout the last four years of Tory rule.

The trade union leaders have promised that Labour will do many good things for the working class. If the Industrial Relations Act and Housing Finance Act are repealed; if pensions are raised to £10 and £16 a week for single and married people; if certain essential foods are subsidised; then indeed these will be big steps forward for the workers' movement.

But many Labour and trade union leaders have made it clear that the package of Labour proposals which look so promising are designed only to create the 'climate' in which 'co-operation' between unions and Government can be achieved to restrain wages.

SCANLON'S 'MISUNDERSTANDINGS'

Hugh Scanlon, President of the AUEW—a union whose members have opposed all incomes policy under either Labour or Tories—put it this way:

'These measures, far-reaching and broad as they are, will allow the trade unions, on a voluntary basis and under free collective bargaining, to recognise in their wage claims the contribution to living standards

that these measures will make as and when they are introduced.

'This is the pledge we have given and will abide by, but to call this an agreed incomes policy with all that name conjures up in the minds of working people would create misunderstandings which should be avoided.'

But whether a formal incomes policy is agreed, or whether 'voluntary' wage restraint is achieved by nods, shoves and winks, the principles involved are laid down clearly in Scanlon's statement.

TIT-FOR-TAT

What Scanlon is saying is that repeal of the Industrial Relations and Housing Finance Acts, increases in pensions, and price controls, are not things which workers should simply be given. They are not rights. They are things which the workers' movement must buy.

Each time the Labour Government makes a move, the TUC will 'recognise' this as a 'contribution', and make a 'contribution' of its own. In other words, when Labour repeal a Tory law, or exercise control over the price of an item in the shops, the unions will turn the screw a little harder on their own members' claims.

Although the precise form of this 'understanding', this 'social contract', remains to be agreed, its meaning is perfectly clear. The working class is not to be compensated for the attacks made on it in

the past. Rather, it is going to be forced by the trade union leaders to cut down its future demands simply in order to bring the previous attacks to a halt.

What is required, however, is the exact opposite of this two-sided 'bargain'. The working class movement needs to be compensated for the attacks made on it in the past and needs improvements in its standard of living in the immediate future.

UNCONDITIONAL REPEAL

If a Labour Government were really acting in the interests of the workers, it would unconditionally repeal these Acts, increase pensions, and control prices. In addition, it would bring about radical improvements in the standard of living by, for example, introducing a national minimum wage, and by granting in full all wage claims halted by Phase 3. Rather than asking the unions to make sacrifices it would force the capitalists to accept these burdens.

Of course, all of this would require a real struggle between labour and capital. The trade union leaders should prepare this struggle and demand that a Labour Government improve the conditions for struggle by, for example, repealing picketing laws and releasing the convicted Shrewsbury workers.

But to the TUC, the coming of a Labour Government is not a signal for a massive struggle to achieve permanent gains for the working class. It is rather a Government under which 'industrial peace' can be achieved.

As Jack Jones put it: 'Industrial peace and not confrontation is Labour's policy.' The years of 'strife and bitterness' under the Tories were brought about in his view, not because of an inevitable clash between classes, but because of the 'mistake' the Tories made in introducing the law into 'industrial relations'.

No worker enjoys struggle for

struggle's sake. But if it is an illusion to think there is to be prosperity for workers under Labour, it would be an even greater illusion to think there will be 'peace'. Worse, it would be a fatal error for the workers' movement not to prepare for industrial confrontation.

This should be clear from the crisis in the economy, the burdens of which the capitalists will try to push on to the working class. It should be clear even if we consider the single question of rising prices, the issue around which the Labour Government believes that action will induce the unions to moderate wage claims.

Labour proposes to deal with this by means of subsidies, essentially on imported food stuffs. They have so far failed to say which items they intend to subsidise or by how much, and they ignore non-food items. But if this policy is pursued by Labour, with its traditional respect for the private property rights of those involved in big commercial transactions, then enormous sums of money would be required.

MONEY FROM WHERE?

The Government could borrow from the International Monetary Fund. But this would only aggravate the balance of payments deficit, leading to devaluation of the pound and therefore further price inflation. The need to fight for wage increases hardly 'disappears'.

The Government could raise taxation from the workers; under these circumstances, but further wage increases would again be necessary. Finally, the Government could take the money from profits. But this would only lead to the capitalists attacking the workers in the factories by trying to increase productivity and decrease their labour force.

Daunted by this logic, the Government could take little effective action to control prices. In that case, a mas-

sive struggle to increase wages, pensions and social-security benefits would be needed—a struggle which will meet with the ferocious resistance of the capitalists deprived of the backing of State pay laws.

So whichever of these reformist paths is chosen, 'industrial peace' is certainly not what the workers' movement must prepare itself for. Yet to the trade union leaders, industrial 'peace' rather than 'confrontation' is a greater good than the living standards of their members. Even if this means disarming the workers' movement in the face of an inevitable struggle.

If there is any industrial peace under Labour it will not be because the workers' movement has no further need to struggle. On the contrary, the need for struggle is greater than ever before. It will be because the trade union leaders are preventing it from taking place by bureaucratic repression.

It will be because in the name of sugary promises and 'big concessions' from the Labour Government, the trade union leaders are acting as a replacement for the Industrial Relations Act, the Pay Laws and the forces of the State in holding back the struggle of the rank and file.

The bureaucrats have been hypnotising the workers' movement for years with the prospect of a golden era under Labour. No worker should be taken in by this stuff. No worker should fall asleep and let the bureaucrats tie the trade unions to the capitalist State.

NO INCOMES POLICY

There must be no form of incomes policy under capitalism irrespective of which Government is in power. The position adopted by many unions under the Tories—'No talks on incomes policy'—are just as valid today under Labour.

DAVE BAILEY

'Oxford, Essex, Kent unite - one struggle, one fight!'

Students in Oxford last Monday continued their fight against the brutal treatment handed out by police and university hired thugs during the course of their campaign for a central students union.

Militant action was taken by a demonstration of between 800 and 1,000, involving contingents of students from all over the country, among them 80 students fresh from the victorious anti-victimisation struggle at Kent University.

The demonstration swept right-wingers off the street after they had attempted to disrupt both a rally and the demonstration itself. Militants went on to briefly occupy the lobby of the university finance office. Students and police, from a force of two hundred mobilised by the Thames Valley constabulary, battled for half an hour outside the university building and finally succeeded in pushing the police through the doors they were attempting to guard.

INDEPENDENT

A spokesman for the Central Students' Union Campaign, which had organised the demonstration, said that the reason why students had come from as far afield as Manchester and Swansea was that students elsewhere understood and sympathised with the demand for a central students' union.

'We see it as part of a national struggle against repression, in defence of the right of students to organise themselves independently of the university'. One of the main slogans on the demonstration was 'Oxford, Essex, Kent, Unite—One Struggle, One Fight!'

An IMG militant from Kent spoke at the rally on behalf of the students who took on their university authorities over the victim-



After sweeping right wingers off the streets, militants moved on to university finance office

isation of a student. He emphasised that Oxford was not a special case in the degree of violence used by the university against those who were fighting for the basic rights of students.

Far from Oxford lagging behind other more 'progressive' institutions, the university authorities at Oxford, Kent and Essex were showing the way for other administrations attempting to clamp down on student struggles.

The demonstration cheered an Oxford speaker who said that the militancy of the demonstration had shown the university that they were not cowed or intimidated by the violence used by the university

against students fighting for a demand that was supported by thousands of Oxford students.

BATTLEGROUND

If the authorities are prepared to turn Oxford into a battleground we must meet them and defeat them on their own ground. It was extremely important that the campaign had not been forced on to the defensive, simply calling for the release of the victimised students.

The big support for the demonstration was in spite of the conduct of the Executive of the National Union of Students, who at a recent meeting did not discuss this national demonstration, even though an

item on Oxford was on the agenda.

This lack of leadership is a crucial weakness for students at many colleges who are presently stepping up direct action in defence of their living standards and in support of the NUS claim on grants. In the last week, occupations were started at Brunel University, Newcastle and Thames Poly among others, during the NUS 'Week of Action'.

In order to maintain the high level of mobilisation and keep intact the fighting spirit of students necessary to win concessions from the minority Labour Government, it is absolutely vital that all attempts of the college authorities

to victimise and physically attack students are met with a national response from all over the country.

NO ALLIANCE

The dominant political force on the NUS Executive, the Communist Party, believes that the cutbacks in education expenditure imposed under the Tories provide the possibility of creating an alliance between students and these authorities on the basis of a common fight against the cutbacks. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Faced with a choice of either fighting back against the State or implementing the cutbacks in their colleges, the authorities do what they are paid for and aim to resist any attempt by students to fight against further erosions of their standard of living.

Most importantly, the college authorities are attempting to finish off the job started by the Tories in breaking up the fighting organisation of students on whatever issue arises, most importantly student support to workers' struggles. This offensive must be stopped in its tracks now!

Essex conference on victimisation

Essex University students are holding a conference on Saturday 16 March where the experience of various struggles against victimisation will be discussed and a plan of action drawn up to meet the needs of the present struggles—including those at Oxford and Essex—and those likely to emerge in the future.

The conference has succeeded in obtaining the backing of the NUS Executive. Details from the Conference Organiser, Students Union, Essex University (tel. 0206-44144).

SIX KEY QUESTIONS FACING

This has been a week of working class victories. Three stand out. First, it is clear that the miners have won their strike. Second, the councillors at Clay Cross have won a resounding victory. Third, and most famous, the Tory Government has fallen.

All these represent great strides forward for the working class and a weakening of the position of the employing class. But it would be wrong and very dangerous to be complacent. A battle may have been won, but the war is still very much with us. The employing class, their State and the reformist Labour leaders have many more tricks up their sleeve yet.

FIRST CRISIS

The first crisis will come on the economic front. A recent report from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development shows what the continuation of capitalism in Britain will mean. It predicts up to 12½% inflation and a balance of payments deficit of over £3,000 million for 1974. These estimates, particularly of inflation, are if anything too low. It is also known that unemployment will reach 1-1½ million next winter. The attacks on the working class which the employers will demand in such a crisis will be increased by the need to negotiate international loans to cover the balance of payments deficit.

Of course, these crises could be overcome by expropriating the capitalist class and introducing a planned economy, but Labour has not the slightest intention of doing

this. Indeed, they have hardly even mentioned the word 'socialism' during their campaign. Although the strength and pressure of the workers' movement will undoubtedly force a few concessions from the Labour leaders in the short term—repeal of the Industrial Relations and Housing Finance Acts for example—fundamentally Labour will carry on the same pro-capitalist economic policies as the Tories.

But if the Labour government is bound to carry through pro-capitalist policies, nevertheless the struggles of the last months show that the working class is in a strong position to resist these attacks. The ruling class was unable to use repression to break the miners' strike because of the massive working class response—even a general strike—that such an attack would have provoked. It was precisely because he could not use such repression that Heath was forced to call the election.

UNDEFEATED

No section of the working class which has gone into struggle, with the minor exception of the ambulance men, has been defeated in the struggle. The firemen, the power engineers and the miners have all won victories, and the ASLEP men have not been defeated. Of course, sections of the working class failed to go into struggle; but this represented a crisis of political perspective, not a clear-cut defeat. The working class can recover from such a situation in a few months, particularly in a situation where the class as a whole has won a famous victory over the employing class. Such a situation is totally different to the situation where the workers have

suffered a clear defeat. The UPW, for example, has not recovered three years after its defeat; nor have the London busmen after theirs.

Even those sections of the working class which did not launch a struggle against Phase 3 would have responded massively to attacks on the miners. Neither did the three day week, although it did have a cautionary effect, succeed in demoralising the working class. In short, the organisational strength of the working class is totally intact and the workers' movement will be in a position to put up very fierce resistance against coming capitalist attacks. While there will probably be some temporary down-turn on the wages struggle, as the trade union leaders wheel and deal with the Labour Government, the perspective remains one of very big struggles both by the working class and other oppressed layers of the population.

KEY QUESTIONS

In this situation it is vital that the left understands clearly what are the key questions to concentrate its forces on. There are six points which above all stand out as the ones on which the fight back must be started.

1. Inflation

With inflation running at around 15% it is vital to launch a struggle to defend the incomes and standard of living of the working class. Already, despite the fall of the Tory Government, the employers continue with their plans to cut workers' living standards. The latest attack comes in engineering where as Bill Simpson, secretary of the Foundry section of the AUEW, has pointed out 'the workers in engineering have been

offered about one per cent'. This would mean a fall in the real income of workers.

Already some union leaders are talking of selling out on wage claims. Jack Jones said on Tuesday it was necessary to 'stop wage claims going over the top'. What he means is accepting an incomes policy. Under capitalism this would only be used to attack the working class. All workers should follow the lead of the last AUEW and ASTMS conferences and refuse to accept an incomes policy from any Government. This means all wage demands should be forced through for the full claim, and all wage claims already settled under Phase 3 should be reopened and new demands submitted. In particular the miners' claim must be met in full, and the engineers must not settle for a penny less than their full claim.

But simply putting up wages is not enough. The gains must be protected. Under Phase 3 there was a 7% threshold agreement. This meant that wages went up automatically for every 1% increase in the cost of living above 7%. This was totally inadequate. Every penny of wages must be protected against inflation. With a 7% threshold the income of a worker can fall by anything up to 8% without him receiving a penny more. What is needed is full compensation for every penny increase in prices. This means a sliding scale of wages or a 'nil norm' threshold. In other words, automatic cost of living increases for every increase in the price index. Workers in Belgium have already won a similar demand. The trade unions must demand the full implementation of such a policy here. Such a sliding scale must also apply to all state benefits and a minimum wage must

be introduced. In order to get a decent wage for norm, *equal pay now* must be fought for.

On the prices front, the Labour Party has proposed statutory controls and some subsidies. These policies are completely inadequate. Food subsidies will come out of higher taxation—most of which will fall on the working class. The machinery of the civil service cannot police prices properly.

Three decisive measures are necessary here. First, the trade unions must start industrial action against price increases. The workers at Allied Suppliers in Glasgow have already shown the way here by their industrial action against increases in the price of lentils. Second, there must be a freeze on prices, policed by the trade unions and organisations of working class consumers, not by the civil service. In Nottingham, for example, such organisation has already started with the picketing of Marks and Spencers. Third, the monopolies (starting with the food monopolies) must be nationalised.

2. Unemployment.

Unemployment this year is going to rise to 1-1½ million. It is vital that the working class breaks this attack. Again the nationalisation of all major industry and the introduction of a planned economy is the only real solution. However, until that can be achieved the working class has to fight to prevent capitalism transferring the burden of its crisis on to the workers. This means in particular fighting for:

• **Work or full pay.** All lay off threats should be met with the demand of 'work-sharing with no loss of pay'.



Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)

The first indication that workers would have only their own struggles to rely on despite a Labour victory came when Heath refused to resign and instead tried to set up a coalition with the Liberals. What did Labour do? — sit back and gaze in awe at the marvels of the Constitution. It was left to the small revolutionary groups to start mobilising to prevent the success of any manoeuvre designed to prevent the formation of a Labour Government.

VOTES AGAIN

The national press and TV focused on only one of the elections that took place last week: the general election. But socialists should not forget the other election—both for its own importance and because it helps to put the Labour Party leadership's campaign in perspective. The other election was at Clay Cross.

In the general election, Wilson fought for the 'national interest' and won less than 50% of the seats. In Clay Cross, the Labour councillors fought for working class interests and won more than 90% of the seats, polling the highest ever Labour vote in one of the wards.

WILSON'S FEET

The Labour leadership have tried to excuse their miserable showing in the election by complaining that they have been slandered as soft on extremists and wreckers, and by bemoaning the undeniably vicious anti-Labour campaign in the Tory press. At least they cannot be accused of giving support and assistance to the councillors at Clay Cross.

Lord Denning denounced the Clay Cross councillors as common criminals. The courts slapped penal fines on them. The Whitehall bureaucracy moved their agents into the town to throw the elected councillors out of office and organise new elections. And to cap it off, Edward Short went to the trouble of tramping out to the White City to declare on the BBC that the Labour leadership was in no way backing the 'law breaking' councillors at Clay Cross.

But the fact remains: 90% to Labour at Clay Cross; 45% to Labour in Westminster. If we are to accept

the logic of the reformist politicians in Transport House, we must imagine the working people of Clay Cross to be a bunch of thieves and con men—for how else could they vote for councillors with the worst TV image in British politics?

The answer is simple: Wilson spent three years refusing to support or launch a single mass struggle against the Tories, followed by three weeks campaigning to get working people to unite with the employers, the landlords and the Lord Denning in One Nation. That was a campaign for the Liberals and Tories. After all, if you want to unite workers and bosses, why vote Labour, when the Labour Party is based on unions whose job is to struggle against the bosses?

The Clay Cross councillors had the courage to act on a simple truth: the conflict between the interests of working people and those of the capitalists. They refused to raise rents whatever was thrown against them; they refused to freeze the wages of council workers whatever the pay laws said; they refused to make the people of the town suffer from electricity cuts because the Tory Government wanted to confront the miners. Little wonder that such leaders were backed by the working class of Clay Cross.

And little wonder that working class voters are less than enthusiastic for Wilson, with his feet of clay.

COMMUNIST PARTY

Whichever way you look at it, 32,741 votes for 44 candidates is a disaster for the Communist Party. More than that, it is a decline in the CP vote since 1970 in spite of the tremendous working class struggles in which some members of the CP

THE WORKERS MOVEMENT

* All redundancies to be met with occupations. The demand should be advanced that the Labour Government nationalise without compensation any firm declaring redundancies, and guarantee work for the full labour force.

* The unemployed to be organised by the unions. The demand of full pay for the unemployed must be put forward.

3. Housing and education

The social services are at present in chaos due to the economic system of capitalism. On housing, all land owned by companies and all major building firms should be nationalised without compensation. A crash housing programme must be launched immediately.

This is a long term solution, but housing is desperately needed in the short term. It is well known that hundreds of thousands of houses are just sitting empty. Working class organisations, squatters and tenants associations should take these over at once, and demand that the Government and local councils take these properties over without compensation. The Housing Finance Act must be repealed; but rents must also be reduced to their level before the Act, as a first step to the provision of free housing for all.

On education the full student demands on grants must be met, and rapid increases in teachers' pay awarded. To attract teachers to London, where prices are very high, the full union demand on London allowances must be met.

4. Ireland

Ireland is at present the most open case of British imperialist oppression. It is a scandal that Labour has maintained a bipartisan policy with the Tories on this. All British troops



must be withdrawn from Ireland, self determination granted, and all Irish political prisoners must be released.

5. Repression

Throughout the last years even the bourgeois democratic rights of the working class have been undermined. There are dozens of steps which must be taken on this front. But four stand out. First, the six men imprisoned at Shrewsbury must be released immediately, immediate pardons must be granted to all those convicted and the 1875 Conspiracy Act under which they have been prosecuted must be repealed. Secondly, the Price sisters and all Irish political prisoners must be released. Third, the High Court

decision preventing the former Clay Cross Councillors from holding office must be overturned and the surcharges levied against them for unpaid rents lifted. Fourth, the Industrial Relations Act must be immediately repealed and all funds seized by the National Industrial Relations Court must be repaid to the unions in full, with interest.

6. Racism

By far the biggest threat to the forging of working class unity, for the coming struggles is that of racism. The Labour party continually capitulates to racism. Instead of immediately rebuffing and rejecting Enoch Powell's call for a Labour vote, for example,

Wilson and company silently accepted it. This not merely goes against all the needs of the working class for unity, but it even threatens the electoral prospects of Labour. The insidious poison of racism can split the solidarity of the organisations of the working class in a way no other issue could. By supporting the immigration laws and carrying on no campaign against Powell and the other racists Labour gives credibility to the view that it is immigration, rather than capitalism, which is responsible for the problems which affect the working class. A big campaign must be launched immediately to break up the attempts of the racists and fascists to organise, and also to force

repeal of the Immigration Act, the Pakistan Act and the Aliens Act.

CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE

The most important thing in the coming months is to smash the argument that now there is a Labour government in, things must be left to them - 'we must not rock the boat'. Labour will proceed, despite some initial concessions, to a series of vicious attacks on the working class. In the election the International Marxist Group raised the slogan 'Vote Labour but rely only on your own struggles'. The working class voted Labour to get rid of the Tories. They succeeded. Now it is precisely only their own struggles they will be able to rely on.

ST THE STREAM OLIVER MacDONALD examines some aspects of the election campaign and voting figures which are of significance for socialists

have played a big role. How can this be explained?

Of course, the electoral system in this country does not favour minority parties, but this does not explain the failure of the CP to substantially increase its number of votes. The last three years have seen substantial growth in the active socialist forces in the working class movement. The CP must have been standing in the main centres of its strength, and yet its vote was lower than its total membership. A party that fields candidates in forty four constituencies and cannot do better than that against the Labour Party is in trouble. Moreover, the Blyth result showed that candidates of the left can beat the official Labour candidates where the choice is a clear cut and striking one.

The CP leadership has put their bad results down to the capitalist witch-hunt, and refusal to provide the CP with publicity on the mass media. But we need only note the fact that the CP has always suffered these disabilities, and indeed has suffered much less from them than, for example, the Republican movement in the north of Ireland. Yet the latter can get considerably higher votes than the CP got even in Jimmy Reid's constituency.

Most damaging of all, is the fact that the Communist Party results were little better, and in some cases worse than those of the small revolutionary groups like the IMG and the WRP. This is a really critical problem for the Party leadership. Only five CP candidates polled more than 1,000 votes, yet the WRP candidate in Wallend polled 1,108 votes and the WRP candidate in Pontefract polled 991 votes.

We can compare the revolutionaries' votes and those of the CP in one of the strong centres of the Communist Party - Sheffield. In the Brightside constituency in that city, the full resources of the party were put behind one of its national leaders, Vi Gill. She got 513 votes. Yet the IMG candidate, Tariq Ali, with much more limited resources preventing the IMG from systematic canvassing, got within 90 votes of that figure. If we remember that the IS group was refusing to vote for the revolutionary candidates, we begin to see the scope of the decline of the CP's influence in relation to the revolutionary left.

Here we have one of the main clues to the CP's debacle: why vote for a CP candidate rather than Labour when the CP says little that is different from the words of the Labour left? Was it not true, for example, that CP local councillors in Scotland actually voted against fighting the Housing Finance Act to a finish, in marked contrast to Clay Cross.

This is only part of the answer. The other hard fact that the Communist Party leadership cannot answer, is its refusal to admit that the bureaucratic dictatorship in the USSR is an anti-socialist regime which has nothing in common with communism; and that the USSR itself is not at all a working class democracy or a Socialist society. At meeting after meeting in the election campaign, class conscious workers asked the question: do you think the USSR is socialist? The Communist Party cannot give an honest answer. It cannot break from 45 years of Stalinism and repression of workers' democracy in the USSR. As more and more workers turn to socialism and marxism they demand an explanation of these facts. Only

the revolutionary marxists could give it.

FLOATING WITH THE STREAM

After an initial silence, the International Socialists' paper *Socialist Worker* eventually took up the question of whether to vote for the revolutionary candidates in the election. On 23 February, a carefully worded statement from the Editor explained that while IS was not opposed in principle to putting up revolutionary candidates, it was opposed to putting them up in this particular election.

Unfortunately, the statement did not clearly distinguish between two quite different problems: first, whether IS should itself put up candidates, second, whether IS members should vote for the Labour Party, against the candidates of the revolutionary left. It was the second problem that was preoccupying socialist militants, including many members of the IS, while the *Socialist Worker* statement addressed itself to the first question.

But a careful reading of the statement provides an answer to the IS view on how to vote. The editor declares: 'For revolutionaries to stand candidates in such an election is simply a diversion from the main issues and constitutes a tactical blunder.' In other words there is something special about this election which makes it wrong to stand against the Labour party. More than that, a revolutionary candidate would be a diversion - he or she would divert people from the main issues - in this particular election, but not in others. This is the only fair rendering one can make of the extraordinary IS state-

ment.

The mystery therefore is this: what is so special about this election that makes candidates putting forward full-blooded socialist policies, a diversionary force, distracting people from the main issues?

If we look around us there is one outstanding feature of this election which makes it peculiar in comparison with others in the last 25 years: the fact that the capitalist system is in an unparalleled crisis. This crisis, and its catastrophic consequences for working people is the main issue for the working class in this election. Because of this crisis situation a reformist, class collaborationist Labour leadership is going to be unable to resolve the immediate needs of the mass of people in this country if it is elected. It is scarcely capable of getting rid of the Tory govern-

ment, after three years of unrelenting attacks on the working class.

Just about the only thing that is not peculiar about this election has been the miserable attempts by the Labour left to persuade militants to subordinate every struggle and issue to vote catching for the Labour Party.

A revolutionary organisation is in a sad state when it considers that the more critical the state of the capitalist system, and the more acute class struggle, the more diversionary is the presence of revolutionary candidates in an election. Such moods are understandable among social democratic workers. They are inexcusable amongst people who claim to be revolutionary socialist leaders.

The IS statement was far more serious than a 'tactical blunder'.

One of the high points of the IMG election campaign in Glasgow was the meeting addressed by veteran revolutionary Harry McShane (right)



'The Soviet was and remained the organised expression of the class will of the proletariat'

PART ONE of a two-part review of Trotsky's great classic, 1905 (Penguin, 75p) by CARL GARDNER

In January, 1905, the young working class of Russia flexed its muscles for the first time. A mass demonstration to the Tsar's palace in St Petersburg, demanding the right to strike and the 8-hour day, was brutally attacked by the army in the infamous 'Bloody Sunday' massacre.

Yet by the end of the year that same working class had progressed from a naive demonstration for basic trade union rights to the highest form of workers' organisation seen since the Paris Commune, 34 years before—the St Petersburg Soviet. Tsardom tottered, and from that time, though temporarily victorious, waited only for the final push which came in 1917 with the October Revolution.

The young Leon Trotsky was a leading figure in the Soviet and evoked the experience and lessons of those fifty memorably tumultuous days in this book, which he wrote two years later in exile. He points out the single most important lesson of 1905: that the struggle for very basic demands, if organised through organs of workers' power, can grow over into a struggle for State power; indeed, that it must begin to do so if it is not to be hamstrung by its own effectiveness.

STRIKE

The butchery of Bloody Sunday triggered off a wave of uncoordinated strikes and widespread discussion and reorganisation of the inexperienced Russian working class during the spring and summer. The days of intimidation were numbered. In early October a wave of strikes started in the printing industry in St. Petersburg and rapidly spread to other industries across the country, particularly the railway and telegraph services.

In St Petersburg, the workers in several industries set up a General Council to coordinate their struggles. This was to rapidly grow into the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, which embraced the masses of the whole city and served as the model of organisation for other towns and cities in Russia. From October, the strike spread across the country, adopting the demands for an 8-hour day, civil liberties, amnesty for all political prisoners and the recall of the Constituent Assembly (Parliament) with universal franchise.

In the next few weeks, even though the strike was suspended for some time, the St Petersburg Soviet grew in size and influence, as the working class organ of struggle in the city. It consisted of an assembly which was permanently in session—deciding the course of the strike, the demands to be adopted, the tactics of the workers in struggle and the overall organ-

isation and functioning of the working-class community. When a factory went on strike it was immediately entitled to elect a representative (Deputy) to sit in the Soviet to decide working class policy. As Trotsky says:

'The representative body of the proletariat assumed the role of the first embryonic organ of revolutionary power. With the Soviet we have the first appearance of democratic power in modern Russian history. The Soviet is the organised power of the mass itself over its separate parts. It constitutes authentic democracy, without a lower and an upper chamber, without a professional bureaucracy, but with the voters' right to recall their deputies at any moment. Through its members—deputies directly elected by the workers—the Soviet exercises direct leadership over all social manifestations of the proletariat as a whole and of its individual groups, organises its actions and provides them with a slogan and a banner.'

The representation of the workers in struggle was based primarily on the factories, because they were the main links which bound the working class together with a common interest—a working class which in any other terms was very inadequately organised. The strike committees, and what workers' organisations that there were, looked to the Soviet for leadership.

ORGAN OF STRUGGLE

One delegate to the Soviet was elected for roughly every 500 workers, though smaller factories often had one deputy for less. At the height of its influence, the Soviet had 562 deputies, representing 147 factories and plants, including workers from 16 unions.

Political parties alone could never have done the job of the Soviet. The creation of a non-party organ was essential to give representation to the broadest masses, even those who would never think of joining a party.

However such parties had freedom of debate in the Soviet, through their members who sat as deputies.

Revolutionary situations are the soil in which real revolutionaries bloom and thrive—the acid-test of their claims to lead the class is their response to such situations. Workers will readily follow the correct political line if it can be shown to work in practice. But first one must have those organs of proletarian democracy where workers' policy can be thrashed out, and secondly, those organs must be able to execute the policies decided on. This is the role of the Soviet.

Review

Bourgeois parliaments, so praised by capitalist politicians as the pinnacle of democracy, are not even pale, fleeting shadows of such organs of direct workers' democracy. In Trotsky's words:

'The Soviet's task was not to transform itself into a parody of parliament, not to organise equal representation of the interests of different social groups, but to give unity to the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat...the Soviet could not transform itself into a club for political polemics and mutual indoctrination. It had to be and remained an organ of struggle.'

FUNDAMENTAL TASK

From the beginning the mass general strike confronted the workers with a whole number of problems. The Soviet, by broadening its responsibilities, undertook to tackle these severe problems and carry the strike forward. It was born, and grew, out of the actual needs of the workers, thrown up by the course of events in the day-to-day class struggle. For example, the workers here, as in all situations of mass upsurge, were faced with the

might of a strong, centralised, and sophisticated capitalist State machine. Trotsky clearly outlines the tasks which this posed to the workers' movement:

'The telegraph and the railways are, without any question, powerful weapons in the hands of the modern centralised State. But they are double-edged weapons...As soon as the rails and wires refuse to serve, the government apparatus is fragmented into parts without any means of transport or communication between them.'

Advantage to the workers. However:

'The class which, by simultaneous cessation of work, paralyses the production apparatus and with it the centralised apparatus of power, isolating parts of the country from one another and sowing general confusion, must itself be sufficiently organised not to become the first victim of the anarchy it has created. The more completely the strike renders the State organisation obsolete, the more the organisation of the strike itself is obliged to assume state functions.'

The main problem still exists:

'The power still has to be snatched from the hands of the old rulers and handed over to the revolution. That is the fundamental task. A general strike only creates the necessary preconditions; it is quite inadequate for achieving the task itself.'

To meet the needs of the workers in the midst of the strike, the Soviet was forced to take over the functions of the State which it had so thoroughly disrupted, if it was not to perish at its own hand. The strike threatened to starve itself, to cut off all its communication with other centres of struggle, and render itself defenceless in the absence of bourgeois 'law and order'. At the same time as the Soviet took on the task of solving these basic problems, it was nurturing the elements of workers' State power and rendering the old State power redundant.



Petersburg workers setting up a makeshift barricade in 1905. As Trotsky pointed out: 'The power still has to be snatched from the hands of the old rulers and handed over to the revolution. That is the fundamental task. A general strike only creates the necessary preconditions; it is quite inadequate for achieving the task itself.'

LETTERS



Dear Sir,

I have had my attention drawn to an article by Oliver Macdonald in your issue of 22 Feb. (p.6 'The Revolutionary Left and the Elections'). Your correspondent alleges that G. Healy, National Secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Party made the following statement 'in this election we are fielding only a hand-

ful of candidates. But Capitalism is finished—gone for good, and soon millions of workers will turn to our policies. In a year or two, at the next election, the Workers Revolutionary Party will be fielding 500 candidates. Then we will introduce legislation which will be supported by the working class and the middle class, and we will nip in the bud any military conspiracies.'

I call upon you to withdraw this distortion of the Trotskyist position which is well known—nowhere does the ruling class hand over its power without a struggle—the more crisis ridden it becomes the harder it fights—it becomes a mortal struggle. To suggest that the Trotskyist movement so soon after the events of Allendeism in Chile advocates a

'peaceful road to socialism' (via 500 MPs in Parliament) is a gross slander which must be dealt with. Polemical articles based on fact—criticisms of policy and programme is one thing but lying distortion is something else. Please remedy this unprincipled attack on the W.R.P and its leadership.

Fraternally, Tom Hillier, AUEW Shop Steward CAV(Acton)

EDITOR'S REPLY:

We do not have a tape of Gerry Healy's speech at the press conference, but the substance of his remarks are confirmed by both the *Red Weekly* reporters present.

Moreover, statements of a similar kind were made on other occasions during the campaign. Vanessa Redgrave explained a number of times that the WRP hoped to field 500 candidates in future elections, and in a statement on the radio she declared that the WRP 'would introduce a bill into parliament' in order to carry through the nationalisation of the leading companies under workers control, without compensation.

But *Red Weekly* did not say that Gerry Healy advocated a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism. We simply said that Gerry Healy claimed that the way forward was to build up the WRP so that it could win a future election and pass legislation that would be 'supported by the working class and the middle class'.

This statement does not necessarily involve the parliamentary road. It leaves the question open, just as the WRP's argument that Heath had 'no mandate' for

anti-working class measures did not necessarily mean that Parliamentary elections are the only source of political authority; it simply left the question open. In the same way, the WRP's declaration that its aim is to get the Labour leadership to adopt a socialist programme does not necessarily imply that it is possible to win the Labour leadership to a socialist programme: it just leaves the question open.

The fact that the author of this letter himself interpreted Gerry Healy's remarks as a capitulation to Parliamentarism underlines the dangers which such lack of clarity involves. It is this failure of the WRP to raise the most important issues in a clear-cut way that we were criticising.

We, of course, agree with the Trotskyist position on elections, and put it into practice in our election campaign. Any reproaches on that count would be better directed to the WRP.

WHAT'S ON

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&p, 10% off on orders for more than 10 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.

BENGALI FRIENDS in Europe and elsewhere, for Bengali books and Larai (Fourth International paper), contact: Bengali, Mullvaden, Box 3274, 10365 Stockholm, Sweden.

LONDON RED FORUM: Every Tuesday at 8pm in the General Picton pub, Caledonian Road, N.1. (5 mins Kings X tube). This week (5 March): 'The struggle in Ireland'.

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 8pm in the Lion Hotel, Clumber Street.

CHILE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN: National Action Conference, Saturday 23 March, 11 am at Digbeth Hall, Birmingham. Credentials from: Chile Solidarity Campaign, Co-operative Centre, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG.

FREE IRELAND FORUMS: Fridays at 8pm in General Picton pub, Caledonian Road (Kings X tube). Friday 8 March: 'Ireland after the elections—what now?', speaker Gerry Lawless.

ASIAN WORKERS IN STRUGGLE: Five pages of interviews with Asian workers involved in the shop floor struggle make essential reading for all socialists. In this month's 'Race Today'. Single copies 15p, annual subscription £2 from 184 King's Cross Road, London WC1.

'IMPERIALISM IN LATIN AMERICA': Ernesto Laclau speaks at Latin American Front meeting, Thursday 14 March at 7pm in the Architectural Association, Planning Lecture Hall.

BIRMINGHAM: A 'Men against Sexism' group is being formed to study the role of sexual oppression in capitalist society, and to fight its manifestations in daily life and politics. Telephone 021-427 7433 or 021-454 7787 for details.

WORKERS FIGHT public meeting: 'After the elections', speaker Clive Banks, Sunday 10 March at 8pm in Golden Lion, King's Cross Road, N.1.

MINERS—SHREWSBURY BENEFIT: Monday 11 March at 7.30pm, Henry Cow plus Alex Glasgow and the Combine, 50p at Theatre Royal, Stratford, E.15. Organised by London Student Organisation Miners Support Committee.

'WOMEN AND THE TORY OFFENSIVE': 25-page pamphlet analysing the Tory offensive against women workers and women in the home, and taking up the immediate struggle. Price 15p inc. postage—10p for orders of six or more—from: IMG Women's Commission, 97 Caledonian Road, London N.1.

'UKRAINE: UNREST AND REPRESSION'—pamphlet produced by the Committee to Defend Ukrainian Prisoners, price 15p plus p&p from: 83 Gregory Crescent, Eltham, London S.E.9.

LIBERATION FORCES HOLD IN LAOS

One of the last major points in the Laotian ceasefire accords signed in February 1973 was resolved a few weeks ago, when representatives of the Pathet Lao insurgents and the pro-imperialist Souvanna Phouma regime agreed to the establishment of a joint police force in the two major cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang.

Laos has long been a focus of the struggle in Indochina because of its key strategic position, bordering Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, China, and Burma. Over the past 20 years, the US has consistently used every means available to maintain a toehold there.

These means have included attempted sabotage of the Geneva Convention by Dulles in 1954; intensive bombing of the areas controlled by the Pathet Lao; the forced removal of over half the population to 'refugee' camps; the instigation of coups and counter-coups; and the transformation of large areas of the country into an electronic battlefield, so that the once-lush Plain of Jars and Bolovens plateau are now arid deserts.

CEASEFIRE

In forcing the withdrawal of nearly 300,000 Thai mercenaries and an end to all US bombings, the ceasefire thus removed a massive obstacle from the path of the liberation forces. It also left the Pathet Lao in sole control of three-quarters of the country and over half the population. Furthermore, it guaranteed the release of all civilian prisoners and the right of the 'refugees' to return freely to their homelands (in liberated areas, mainly).

The importance of the ceasefire was that it firmly fixed the balance of forces in Laos in favour of the Pathet Lao. It also marked a change in emphasis, with a period of political activity and consolidation replacing the previous dominance of the military struggle. This is summed up in two major items of the accords.

COALITION

The first deals with the formation of a 'national' government, for which agreement was reached in September. The

political wing of the Pathet Lao, the Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLH), will hold half of the posts in this government.

Together with this it was agreed to hold national elections for the Assembly. The NLH will also have the right to carry out open political agitation without any hindrance from the present regime.

The importance of these clauses is self-evident. The problem lies in the programmatic position of the NLH, which envisages the Laotian revolution as proceeding in a series of stages—the stage of anti-imperialist struggle now being formally over,

Nevertheless, the formation of a coalition is important for two reasons. Firstly, it reduces the possibility of a renewed US intervention by removing any possible pretext for it. Secondly, it crystallises the weaknesses and emphasises the divisions amongst the Laotian right.

In contrast to Vietnam, there is no credible 'Third Force' in Laos. And, as would be expected, the right-wing—the old ruling clique—are divided amongst themselves. The factions fall into two main groups, neither of which has any mass base.

BUREAUCRATS

The first is largely composed of bureaucrats around Souvanna Phouma, and likes to call itself 'neutralist'—an image difficult to sustain since between the ceasefire and July it ordered several hundred air strikes against Pathet Lao zones. This group has accepted the coalition agreement, not because of any sudden love for the Pathet Lao, but largely because its instinct for survival leads it to prefer this arrangement to the possible alternative of a complete Pathet Lao take-over.

The other main group is even further to the right, consisting of militarists and bourgeois elements who have grown fat on the aid which has flowed in during the crisis, and who are therefore more threatened by a period of stability. It was this group on whom General Thang Ma relied for support when he launched his abortive coup some months ago. But they made no move, since the US had made it clear that it would give no backing to a right-wing adventure which could lead to a re-escalation of the fighting during the present domestic crisis in the States.

It was this split in the Laotian right which allowed Souvanna Phouma to accept the ceasefire in the first place. This in turn has accelerated the decay of the old regime. The second major item of the accords concerns the neutralisation of Vientiane and the royal capital Luang Prabang, with each side stationing an equal number of troops and police in the two cities. It was this which



Refugee holds up US fragmentation bomb of type which blinded and maimed him

with a 'national' (classless) government now necessary to precede a series of peaceful reforms which will finally usher in socialism.

The falsity of this line has already been demonstrated—in the realities of the liberated zones, where expropriation of the landowners and collectivisation of the land has been necessary to consolidate the revolutionary base; in the history of the war, where workers and peasants united under the NLH have faced the feudal remnants, nascent bourgeoisie and pro-imperialist bureaucrats in open class confrontation; and in the continued links between the Souvanna Phouma regime and the US.

was put into effect last month, when the Pathet Lao moved 1,000 police and 1,200 troops into Vientiane, and 1,100 into Luang Prabang.

This arrangement has two main functions. It ensures the protection of NLH ministers (in 1962 one was assassinated and the other imprisoned), and it prevents either of the cities, still nominally held by the reactionaries, from being used as a counter-revolutionary base. It further avoids the need for the Pathet Lao to take them by force, and symbolises the dual power situation which exists throughout Laos.

It can also, of course, be expected that the presence of so many armed and hardened Pathet Lao cadre in the cities will have a beneficial effect in shifting the allegiance of the troops and urban masses towards support

of the Government of Laos. They have also kept their army intact—in contrast to 1962, when it was disarmed more or less voluntarily.

Thus they are in a much stronger position than ever before. A further point is that the implementation of the accords is taking place very slowly. This is not at all because of any manoeuvrings by Souvanna Phouma; but on the contrary because the leadership of the NLH are this time exercising great caution, making sure each step is first consolidated before moving on to the next one.

While there are thus many reasons for optimism over the future of Laos, it should nevertheless be remembered that the US is still a factor for as long as it continues to hold the purse-strings.



Between 1964 and 1972 about two and a half million bombs were dropped by American planes over Laos—almost one ton for every Lao citizen. From 1971 B-52 bombers like the one above were used on villages in the Plain of Jars to make this formerly fertile region completely uninhabitable.

of the Neo Lao Hak Xat.

LESSONS LEARNT

It seems certain that the Pathet Lao have learnt a number of lessons from the two previous agreements on Laos—in 1954 and 1962—which were both sabotaged by the CIA, resulting in grave setbacks for the liberation forces. This time, they have kept their liberated zones wholly intact, as well as insisting on the dismantling of the Vientiane administration and its non-recognition

This year it is scheduled to pump no less than \$300 million of military aid and \$48 million of economic aid into the pockets of Souvanna Phouma and his cronies.

The fate of Laos is still therefore closely bound up with the fate of the whole Indochinese revolution, and its further progress is integral to that of Vietnam and Cambodia. That is a point which must never be forgotten by the world-wide solidarity movement.

David Johnson

Luxembourg: Union leaders try to kick out militants

Last October saw the first-ever general strike in Luxembourg. Although it lasted only 24 hours, the fact that the leaders of the LAV trade union federation were forced to call it at all showed the extent of the pressure being put on them by the militancy of the rank-and-file.

For the union bureaucrats, however, this action had one purpose only: to reassert their control over events. The first example of this manoeuvre came when they used the new prestige they had won in this way to force through acceptance of a low wage offer in the steel industry.

Now, however, things have been taken a stage further. A full-scale campaign has been launched by the bureaucrats to exclude revolutionary militants from trade union membership. A major target of this attack are the comrades of the Fourth International, grouped in the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League).

To combat this move, a defence committee of rank-and-file trade unionists has been set up. Extracts from its initial statement appear below. We also print below a short interview with our comrade Jules Housse, who explains how the bureaucrats have already been forced to retreat on some fronts.

Statement by defence committee

The attempt to exclude revolutionary trade unionists must be understood in the context of a rise in workers' struggles in Luxembourg, that came to a head in the 9 October, 1973, general strike and demonstration of 30,000 workers. More and more workers are breaking with the tradition of class collaboration practised by their union leaders, and are beginning to organise independently for their struggle.

This comes in the wake of exemplary workers' struggles throughout

Europe, increased rationalisation in the iron and steel industry, worsening working conditions, and an inflation that has been eating up the working masses' buying power.

Thus, in spring 1973, the Arbed/Beval rolling mill production workers began to regulate the rate of production, thus bringing a halt to the hellish pace. Without the support of the LAV leaders, they organised themselves in rank-and-file assemblies and democratically decided what actions to take...

The proposal to exclude members and sympathisers of revolutionary groups is thus aimed at all militant workers: it is a catch-all formula that particularly affects immigrants (30 per cent of the working population).

The only valid basis for excluding a member from LAV would of course be if he harmed the trade union by betraying the interests of the workers to the advantage of the bosses. So our leaders are careful not to draw out such lines of reasoning.

They are fully aware that the revolutionists in the LAV are among the best trade union militants, often signing up the most new members. It was the revolutionists in the LAV who mobilised in full strength for the 9 October demonstration, and were among the first to take up the call on that occasion to mount strike pickets, while all the reactionaries baited the workers' movement.

The consequences of excluding revolutionists from the LAV are obvious: without trade union protection, these militants will be left to the mercies of the bosses and threatened with losing their jobs. What the LAV leaders don't understand is that capitalist repression of one tendency of the workers' movement is in reality an attack against the entire movement...

But the members of the LAV's executive committee are in danger of underestimating the rank and file's reaction. Many LAV militants—socialists, Communists, and independent—presently agree with cer-

tain revolutionary positions, without, however, accepting a complete revolutionary line.

They are in favour of reviving the internal life of the trade union so as to make it more effective in confronting the bosses; of stimulating the functioning of rank-and-file organisations by building company-level sections; and of allowing all tendencies to express themselves freely so that a better struggle can be waged for a single national trade union.....

Interview with Jules Housse of the LCR

How were these exclusionary moves put into effect, and what was the response?

At the national conference of the LAV, the leadership proposed a motion which would have made membership of a revolutionary organisation incompatible with membership of the LAV. They even anticipated the exclusion of sympathisers of the revolutionary left.

Delegates belonging to the Communist Party were, however, in two minds about this move—afraid that one thing might lead to another, so that this ruling might one day be applied to their own party. So the final motion only provided for a watch to be kept on the activity of the revolutionaries, with exclusions to be carried out on an individual basis.

But the motion still contained the disgraceful statement that the LCR and the KBL (Maoists) are anti-trade union organisations.

We immediately responded by setting up along with other militants a committee to defend freedom of expression in the

All the militants have agreed to respect trade union discipline and democratic decision-making in this struggle against excluding revolutionists, which is a struggle for workers' democracy in the trade unions. Given the unfortunate lack of democratic discussion inside the union we must today call on all dedicated workers and trade unionists in Luxembourg and in Europe to protest energetically against the union leaders' manoeuvres to divide the workers' movement.

trade unions. Protest petitions have already been signed by a large number of people—even including some prominent members of the Socialist Party.

As yet there have been no exclusions, but we have no illusions on this score. However, we feel certain that if any militants are thrown out, we will be able to mobilise many workers who have so far not reacted to this situation because of the vague wording of the national conference motion.

What can workers in the rest of Europe do?

The sending of protests from other European countries to the LAV (LAV, 65 Boulevard Kennedy, Esch/Alzette, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg) and to the defence committee (BP Militant 1182, Luxembourg City) is very important for us and for the morale of the militant workers.

Even protests coming from small trade union branches would help us a lot. The trade union leaders are terrified of getting a bad name internationally.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY RALLY

On Saturday, men and women from as far away as Scotland will be demonstrating in London to mark the anniversary of International Womens Day. What could be more appropriate under the present circumstances?

As Alexandra Kollontai, Minister of Social Welfare in the first Bolshevik government, wrote: "The working women understood that it wasn't enough to break up the stalls at the market or threaten the odd merchant: they understood that such action doesn't bring down the cost of living. You have to change the basis of the government... It was decided to have a Women's Day in every country as a form of struggle. This day was to be a day of international solidarity in the fight for common objectives and a day for reviewing the organised strength of working women under the banner of socialism".

It is only through the organisation of the working class, including housewives, women's liberation groups, trade unions that prices will be curbed, through actions such as strikes, blacking and boycotts.

Other issues of particular concern to women, such as the



Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS

International Women's Day provides chance to discuss campaigns like that against SPUC (photo shows last November's demonstration in London)

jailing of the Price Sisters, the growth of anti-abortion groups like SPUC, the slow progress made in the struggle for equal pay, will be discussed at a meeting to be held in Hyde Park, organised by socialist women who want to re-construct the socialist tradition of International

Women's Day.
 Leave Charing Cross Embankment at 1.30.
 Hyde Park meeting of socialists upon arrival.
 Meeting at Central Hall Westminster, organised by National Assembly of Women and Womens Co-op Guild, 4 p.m.

Grants campaign explodes

With the fall of the Tory Government, the student movement has exploded. The NUS 'Week of Action', called to back up the long-standing campaign to raise students' grants, started with a huge anti-victimisation march in Oxford and finished with several colleges and universities occupied. Some of these struggles have been startlingly successful. Others contain indications of the sort of struggles which will be launched under Labour, and not just by the student movement.

Brunei

At Brunel University, Uxbridge, an occupation began on Tuesday in the Vice-Chancellor's office with the demand that the administration provide suitable accommodation for nursery facilities as from September 1974. It ended just 24 hours later, when the Vice-Chancellor agreed to allocate £10,750 for a creche building.

Negotiations for a creche for the children of students and academic staff had been going on for the past five years, and the Women's Action Group took direct action earlier this year. But the facilities set up with the help of the Students' Union were inadequate, and the creche committee decided that further direct action was needed.

One of the main concerns of the occupiers is that the creche should be provided as a basic right and shouldn't be classed as an amenity which can only be provided at the expense of other amenities.

The massive cutback in educational expenditure and the declining value of the grant have already ensured that less people have the opportunity for higher education. The non-provision of facilities for looking after the children of students, domestic and academic staff discriminates against all those with children, but more so against women who are the ones who find themselves with the responsibility for looking after children.

Enfield

The administration block at Enfield College, part of Middlesex Polytechnic, was occupied last Tuesday evening, in support of the grants campaign. Police attempts to remove students from the Director's office - on charges of breaking and entering - were resisted by a mass picket. The Director agreed to ask the police to leave after about two hours.

The Director's office was previously occupied last term - and turned into a creche.

Newcastle

Students at Newcastle University have placed themselves in the forefront of the fight for better housing - a fight

that is in the interests of students and working people alike.

As part of the national NUS grants campaign some 100 students have taken over a recently-built office building that has been sitting empty for the past two years. It is just one of 20 such buildings in Newcastle.

More students and homeless people are joining the occupation daily. The Newcastle Trades Council and the Boldon Colliery NUM are supporting the action, and the Trades Council has agreed to sponsor a public meeting on the housing problem which will take place in the building on Saturday.

The radical social workers group, Case-Con, has also agreed to hold part of its conference on 'Homelessness' in the building on Saturday.

The occupiers have issued an 'Open Letter to the Labour Government'. It calls for the nationalisation of building land and an immediate crash housing programme. The letter goes on to urge workers and all those affected by the housing crisis to take over property directly through occupations and squats, even if this goes against the wishes of the Labour Government.

The occupiers are also demanding that the new Labour-controlled Tyne-side local authority uses its powers under the 1948 housing legislation to requisition empty property and provide some immediate relief for the housing problem, that it defend squatters' rights, and backs the actions of those who adopt direct action to meet their housing needs.

Messages of support and financial assistance are required by the occupation, and should be sent to:

Occupation Committee,
 Newcastle University Students
 Union, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Kent

Kent education committee is very upset about recent events at Kent University. The successful struggle for re-instatement of Joe Cotter, a member of the CP victimised on spurious academic grounds, has led to a threatened withdrawal of the university's annual £45,000 grant from the county council.

The council's evident concern is over the capitulation of the university administration, and the enforced resignation of

the reactionary Professor Chilver as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. 'Cotter In: Chilver Out' were the demands of the occupation.

Alistair Lawton, chairman of the education authority, said he had heard that a notice had gone up on the students' notice board to the effect that any student who felt he was not getting the marks he should be getting should contact the president of the Students' Union - IMG member John McGeown.

Lawton commented: 'This is striking at the very roots of academic life. If they are going to be as disruptive as this and if the university authorities are not going to be able to cope with it, then one is reluctant to pour £45,000 a year into the university until it shows it can cope and operate under normal standards.'

Leicester

One of the largest occupations in the history of the British student movement began at Leicester University on Tuesday after a mass meeting of the student union.

Close to 1,000 students slept in the Fielding Johnson administration building overnight, and refused admission to university staff the following morning. The occupiers subsequently agreed to allow five wages clerks into the building in order to ensure that university employees suffered no hardship as a result of the occupation.

The occupation was touched off when students discovered that residence hall fees are to go up by £50 next year.

London

On Friday, 8 March, the London Student Organisation - the London Area NUS - is holding a picket at the Department of Education at 1pm., followed by a march and rally at the LSE Old Theatre at 3pm, at which NUS executive candidates will discuss the way forward for student struggles in defence of their living standards. John McGeown, the IMG presidential candidate, will be taking part.

As one student put it at the planning meeting: 'The message that must go out to the new Labour administration is that the fight for a higher grant will continue until all our demands are met.'

Details of joint army-police manoeuvres in Hull, involving a swoop on an empty house in an otherwise occupied street at lunchtime on Sunday 24 February, were revealed in last week's issue of *Socialist Worker*. Now a similar incident in Reading has been brought to our attention, reported in the local *Evening Post* on Saturday 23 February under the heading, 'Midnight Raid Denied By Police'.

The *Evening Post* story ran as follows:

'Reading police today clamped down on a mystery swoop they made on a house in the town.

'Early today, officers swooped on a house in Southampton Street. A motorist, Mr Nigel Wise of Abingdon Drive, Caversham Park Village, said: "There was a large police lorry usually used to transit offenders, three police Rover cars, and four unmarked Ford transit vans parked in Southampton Street. I saw several men who looked like detectives, two police dogs with handlers, and an Army officer.

"It looked like a pretty high-powered operation. The house they were concentrating their interest on was just before the traffic lights at the junction of Crown Street and Pell Street. With the fact that there was an Army man on the site, I thought it might have been a bomb call."

A spokesman for Reading police denied there had been a raid on a house in the area, or that anybody would be appearing in court. He would not comment further.'

This and the Hull incident follow on logically from the Heathrow manoeuvres, as part of the preparations for possible joint army-police intervention in future civil/industrial disputes. Workers' organisations must take this seriously. Every such incident should be noted, in preparation for a campaign which can expose the full extent of these developments and lay the basis for the working class to respond through the establishment of its own defence organisations.

Journalists attack political censorship

Journalists in the North-East have exposed a case of press censorship involving Tariq Ali.

Tariq recently spoke at a public meeting in South Shields on the confrontation between the miners and the Government. He drew an audience of 40—a reasonable attendance for a Saturday afternoon, particularly as the local branch of the National Union of Mineworkers decided to boycott the meeting. In his address, Tariq mentioned the bias of the capitalist press, and his words proved to be prophetic.

A reporter covered the meeting for the *Shields Gazette*, the local evening paper. For the Monday edition he wrote a piece of about ten column inches—fair coverage for the story.

But *Gazette* editor James Sinton was shown the story, and he decided that it should be slashed to three paragraphs. This did not come to light until the shortened 'report' appeared in the paper.

Shields branch of the National Union of Journalists took prompt action. At a branch meeting, members unanimously carried a motion condemning the handling of the story as a violation of press

freedom, and insisting that news should not be suppressed for purely political considerations.

Sinton was furious when he received the branch's letter of protest. His reply said, among other things, that he thought the story was given adequate space, and that he would not allow the *Shields Gazette* to be used as a platform for either revolutionaries or racists. The *Shields Gazette* has since devoted considerably more than three paragraphs to the election campaign of the National Front candidate for South Shields.

The NUJ branch meets again this week, and will be deciding what further action to take.

The Shields journalists have struck an important blow against anti-socialist bias in the press. Socialist journalists everywhere must fight and expose similar cases of bias, particularly in editorials. They could do worse than follow the example of a group of NUJ members on the *Newcastle Journal*, who have dissociated themselves in the *Journal's* letter page from a series of miners-bashing editorials in the paper.

FUND DRIVE

Well, the election campaign has come to an end with a resounding defeat for the Tories. For us, it has been a resounding success—by running three candidates, we have been able to put forward a revolutionary policy for the crisis to a vastly increased audience, exposing the sham of Parliamentary democracy and stressing the need for workers' self-organisation in the struggles ahead.

However, this campaign cost us money. Not just the lost deposits — £450 — but such items as printing expenses, speakers' fares, telephone bills, stationery, and a hundred and one other things. We are grateful to our many readers who have already given freely to help us cover our costs. But we still have quite a way to go. So, if you haven't sent in a contribution already — or if you feel you could manage a little more — why not send it in now? The address is: 97 CALEDONIAN ROAD, LONDON N.1.

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