

WORKERS' FIGHT

No. 25

April 7th-20th.

4p

Tory spring offensive cuts living standards

WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LET

THEM WIN

AS FROM THE BEGINNING OF April, the Counter-Inflation Act is law.

The Counter-Inflation Act will not, and is not intended to, stop prices going up. The new Value Added Tax has sent prices soaring. The removal of Selective Employment Tax and Purchase Tax was supposed to put some prices down..... but have you noticed prices falling?

The Counter-Inflation Act will not, and is not intended to, stop the rich collecting a bonus of £300 million a year from the Budget's abolition of surtax. It will not stop Sir Frank Figures chairman of the Tory Pay Board, from collecting £307 a week salary.

The Counter-Inflation Act is intended to stop £17-a week hospital workers getting more

than £2 a week increase.

Whether it will or not depends on us.

A year ago the Government attempted to impose a "7% norm" for wage increases. That time, they didn't fix their aims in an anti-strike law - they wanted room to manoeuvre, they weren't as hard-pressed as now.

The miners smashed that 7% norm. This year the miners have knuckled under, and it will be other sections who take the front line against the Tories

But the methods of the miners' strike are still the methods we need. Readiness to act. Massive, effective picketing. And solidarity from broad sections of the trade union movement.

FACING UP OR PHASING OUT?

An open letter to Hugh Scanlon

IT'S JUST OVER TWO YEARS since the 150 000 - strong TUC demonstration against the Industrial Relations Bill

The demonstration did not succeed in keeping the Bill off the Statute book. But it is certainly true that the campaign of propaganda and protest against the Bill did help to prepare workers to fight the Industrial Relations Act.

Your militant speech at the demonstration, arguing for total opposition to the Bill, and the two one-day protest strikes you led were an important part in that campaign. True, you did little, but your words.....

Yet now you seem to say that that campaign was wrong and pointless! You say that we should aim, not to scrap the Act, but just to modify it. You make two proposals:

1. That the Government should vet prosecutions under the Act;

2. That the register of unions should be abolished.

Suppose those two changes were made? What would be

the result?

Ordinary workers would still be in risk of fines and jailing for any but the most timid industrial action.

The Government and the big employers would not be much bothered. They didn't bring in the Act to defend Goad and Langston, or even Heaton's. They brought it in to defend the profits of the big monopolies. And the powers that loss of registration would deprive them of are mainly secondary, reserve powers, not yet required for urgent use.

Full-time union officials would breath much more easily. They would be freed of the risk of being penalised by 'nutty employers' or 'nutty scabs'. And they would have the security of legal status without having to register and thus anger the rank and file.

Where do you stand? According to your position as a full-time union official? Or with the ordinary rank and file workers who pay your salary?



Hospital workers - still fighting the Freeze

CHOICE

Is it the case that the labour movement has suffered such severe defeats since 1971 that we are forced to treat for peace with the Tories? NO! When the movement has confronted the Tories head-on - as over the Pentonville Five - we have registered clear victories. A General Strike can smash the Act.

True, we have seen setbacks recently - foremost (after your speech) the miners' decision not to strike alongside the hospital workers. But our strength is not broken. And from the employers' view, our setbacks are not sufficient to solve their economic difficulties

But if we don't go forward to decisive action, adequate to the task at hand, then we will suffer more setbacks. Isolated struggles will remain isolated, protest strikes will just be

protests.

Before your recent speech, your line always was "No co-operation with the Act". Fine. But not enough. If we try to ignore the Act, the Act will not ignore us. Either we knuckle under - or we take the risk of disturbing the comfortable, normal, official Trade Union routine, and we call the whole movement out on strike against the Act.

You have chosen not to fight back. And now you have chosen to knuckle under.

Meanwhile you say "If the government persists in its indifference to the sufferings of hospital workers and patients, then the entire movement will be forced to take action". Excellent. But the government does persist. Where's the action?

Perhaps you'll say: It would be impossible for you to get the

continued back page

National Steelworkers' conference 13 April see back page



Liaison Committee blocks way forward

LAST MONDAY'S MORNING STAR (APRIL 2) COMPLAINED BITTERLY in a front page editorial that the previous day's 'Observer' had "misrepresented" it. "This type of unscrupulous distortion is typical of the millionaire newspapers.....", wrote the virtuous Star. All part of the usual "Buy me, I'm better than a Fleet Street rag" self-promotion of the Star.

But the Star report in the same issue of the conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions is in the worst tradition of both Fleet Street and Stalinist misrepresentation.

At the opening of the conference, International Socialist delegates supported by Workers Fight, the International Marxist Group, and many delegates without party affiliation — attempted to change the procedure so as to allow resolutions and amendments from the floor. Otherwise there was just the official 'declaration', presented by the Communist Party group round Kevin Halpin and Jim Hiles, which apart from the tightly controlled conferences is the Liaison Committee.

The declaration called for a series of one day general strikes to smash the Act and the wage freeze, and, if the Tories still refuse to withdraw, for an unlimited general strike. There is no indication of how many one-day strikes would convince the CP of the need for an all-out working class offensive. Worst of all, the resolution did not tell the militants what they should do. It did not put forward a programme for the development of local Liaison Committees (Councils of Action, United Front Committees, Joint Action Committees — call them what you will) to prepare the strike it called for. Such words, without preparation, were seen by many delegates as cheap, demagogic, irresponsible, and in practice leaving the initiative with the Trade Union bureaucrats.

Halpin in the chair refused to accept the motion for resolutions and amendments, and, putting it to a vote, carried the day. He argued that the official declaration had *already* been accepted in 50 or 60 of the "largest factories in the country" which "we control" — and couldn't be changed. Presumably "we" meant the Communist Party faction.

Thus the conference — the most *representative* national rank and file gathering — simply didn't have the right to alter the wishy-washy declaration. It had to take what it was given.

After the dinner break, Roger Cox, an AUEW delegate, and other members of the International Socialists, tried to re-raise the issue of resolutions and amendments. Strong-arm stewards pounced on Cox and others, including John Broadbent, T&GWU convenor of GEC Peterborough, and, using considerable violence, threw them out of the hall! There were even cries of "you're just CIA agents, here to disrupt the meeting".

HOW THE 'STAR' REPORTED THE FIGHTING

The Morning Star reported these events as follows:

"Earlier on the Conference voted overwhelmingly against a thinly-disguised move to transform the Liaison Committee into an alternative to the official trade union movement. The proposal was part of an organised splitting tactic by the Trotskyists of the International Socialist variety, who were initially supported by a number of serious (*sic!*) delegations. It took the form of demanding that resolutions should be moved at the conference and voted on. But most delegates realised that a decision to have resolutions would strain relations (*WHOSE relations??*) with official trade union bodies where rules and constitutions do not allow them to commit themselves (!) in resolution form at unofficial Trade Union gatherings....."

The Star then claimed that IS representation was "primarily white collar and teachers" — echoing the most scandalous worker-splitting and backward demagogy of people like Jim Hiles, who ended the conference with the declaration — "If my kids are taught by people like you....."

This incident concerns the most urgent immediate problem for rank and file militants — how to create an effective, democratically controlled, rank-and-file leadership on a national scale, so that the blatant sabotage of the official trade union leaders does not lead to *more* defeats like the gasmen's defeat.

Recent events are an irrefutable *proof* that the leaders won't lead, or even prepare seriously for working class defensive action — and therefore that the rank and file *must* lead. Workers cannot *rely* on the Trade Union leaders for anything but ineptness, trickery, and betrayal.

THE NEED FOR A RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions could be a beginning of a national rank and file leadership *within* the unions. (Not "splitting" them, not "outside" them, as the lying Morning Star misrepresents the views of the IS, IMG, and WF delegates at the conference) It could radically transform, for the better, the present situation faced by the working class.

To do so it must cease to be just a "conference". — (at the moment, it is not even a genuine *conference*). — called by a non-elected committee responsible only to the leaders of the Communist Party. It would need to create local groups in the towns and regions and organised subsections in the various industries. In turn, this would make unavoidable the adoption of a democratic structure for the national Liaison Committee such as the stewards' committees in big plants and combines committees have to have.

Such a body, organising the militant rank-and-file, would then take on a life of its own, allowing free play to the militant drives of the working class. Its congresses would be democratic policy making bodies. On such vital issues as Trade Union democracy, 100% Trade Union membership, and so on, it would work out its own policies according to the

needs of the working class. It would measure the performance of the Trade Union leaders against those needs, as assessed democratically in conference by the organised militants. Its supporters within a given union would relate to the leaders according to their policy, the level of union democracy, and so on.

Obviously there would be competition between the various left wing political tendencies *within* such a body, each one attempting to win influence for its own policy. But that competition could take place within a free discussion, without bureaucracy, violence, or demagogy.

Such a national rank and file body would be as flexible and responsive to the needs and drives of the working class as the best stewards' committee is. Inevitably it would come into conflict with most union full-time officials. It would counterpose itself to them, its policies to theirs, and its candidates in elections to their candidates. It would focus and unify the rank-and-file struggles, at present often fragmented.

That's what frightens the CP leaders, who control the major left wing force in the Trade Unions.

WILL IT SPLIT THE UNIONS ?

But isn't the Morning Star right? Wouldn't such a rank and file movement *split and divide* the unions?

Well — when the rank and file, led by stewards, stewards' committees, or 'unofficial' committees, take direct 'unofficial' industrial action today, do they split the unions? When, in defiance of the union bureaucrats, workers strike 'unofficially', are they going 'outside the unions'?

Of course not — the great majority of direct action is of that 'unofficial' sort. Unofficial action is the coursing of the blood through the stiff arteries of the bureaucratized trade union organisation.

There has, of course, been a split *within* the unions for many decades now — between the rank and file and the paid full timers. The trade union officialdom has a standard of living, a life-style, an outlook, different from those of the rank and file. Its own wages are not geared to the bargaining process which determines the union members' wages. Lacking any independent historical interests of its own, the Trade Union bureaucracy has long been a distinct caste, always tending towards adaptation to the capitalists, counterposed, in almost every struggle, to the rank and file.

The difference is that the bureaucrats are organised, permanently, and on a national scale: the rank and file militants aren't, and that's the reason the union tops remain in the saddle.

At the Liaison Committee conference, Bob Wright, an AUEW full time executive member, attacked the revolutionary socialists for assisting "..... the Tory aim of dividing Trade Union leaders from shop floor representatives". He was followed up by Kevin Halpin, referring to Scanlon's offer of a deal with the Tories: "Whatever some individuals in the movement said about what might be done to compromise with the Tory government....."

Now neither of these men is stupid — *they are deliberately missing the point*. Tory policy is to use the existing gap between union officials and members to make the officials more efficient policemen in the unions and to hold the rank and file back. Those who aim to organise the rank and file must proceed from the fact that the Trade Union leaders won't lead the working class fight.

Halpin surely cannot believe that Hugh Scanlon, president of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, is just an "individual". He is the leading national officer of the second biggest union in the country. He speaks, in general, for the union leadership machine. If any union leader was going to disprove the general rule that the Trade Union tops won't stand firm for the interests of the working class, then it would be Scanlon. But, despite (probably) a sincere hatred for the Tories, he has been unable — *i.e. unwilling* — to organise a fight-back. Now he seems on the point of throwing in the towel.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MINORITY MOVEMENT

The description we have given of the movement we need to build is taken from experience. Such a body did exist, in Britain in the 1920s — the famous Minority Movement. Even when, at its height, this national rank and file movement had the organised support of a quarter of Britain's trade unionists, it did not lead to splits. It led to a vigorous struggle against the labour lieutenants of capital *within the unions*.

In fact, the Minority Movement was founded, organised, and led by the Communist Party of Great Britain itself. But then the CP was a revolutionary party, which knew that to fight the bosses you had to fight their 'labour lieutenants' *within the unions*.

Today the CP has dropped all that "Trotskyist" nonsense. Now it works with, in and through the union official machinery — and only there. Its "rank and file" activity is *focused* on the union machinery. It is linked with 'friendly' union leaders, and deliberately hamstrung lest it should get out of hand.

During the building workers' strike, the CP-led Builders' Charter failed to publish even a broadsheet to give a lead. Many Charter supporters criticised it bitterly on that score.

Builders' union leader George Smith won't even defend his own members, dragged into court in Shrewsbury for official picketing (see last WF). But the Morning Star gave him a platform during the strike. And they misrepresent those who want to organise the rank and file so that men like Smith can't scab on them and get away with it.

continued on page 11

As Black Militant Convicted For Newspaper Article: POLICE COVER UP FOR ORGANISED RACIST ARSON

AN IDENTIKIT PICTURE HAS appeared in the 'Evening Standard' of 'the South London Bomber', following the fire-bombing of four Asian-owned shops and the Black Panther Unity Centre (see last WF).

This person is supposed to have been seen riding on his scooter round South London on his trail of destruction. He somehow managed to do all the bombing on his own with flawless efficiency, yet was also so obvious in his activities that he was remembered by 'passers by' so well that an Identikit picture could be produced! Yet, even with this assistance, the police do not seem to have made an arrest.

Obviously they have far more important things to do with their time, such as the persecution of Black militant Tony Soares.

Tony Soares was arrested following an article in the Black community paper 'Grass Roots' giving recipes for a Molotov cocktail and a 'People's Hand Grenade'. The article, reprinted from the U.S. Black Panther magazine, urged readers to prepare for acts of armed self-defence against police and military repression of black people.

(It was published just two weeks after George Jackson was murdered by guards at San Quentin prison,

Even though Soares consistently denied that he had any connection with that particular issue of the paper, he was found guilty on March

21st at the Old Bailey on charges of attempting to incite people to make bombs and commit arson.

The chief prosecution judge, King Hamilton, before sentencing him, asked for medical reports, saying:



Tony Soares

"I want to make sure you are not mentally unbalanced. I am thinking about the draft of an article in your writing in which you say that if Enoch Powell had the power he would send all black people in this country to the gas chamber. The suggestion is so ridiculous. No sane person could believe it. I am therefore ordering a medical report"

During his four week ordeal, it became clear that Soares was not really being charged for the 'Grass Roots' article, but for all his private thoughts which he jotted down and a selection of all his literature which had been seized during police searches of his home.

It also became clear from facts that were raised about witnesses for the defence that there are extensive police dossiers being kept on people who have no criminal record, but are involved in left-wing politics

One witness was described as having lived in a commune in the 1960s. How did the prosecution have information about the address he was living at being a commune? Another witness was challenged about a letter which she had written to the 'Morning Star' over a year before. Who keeps track of letters to the Star, and why?

There can be no doubt that an example is being made of Soares to intimidate the black groups. These attacks on the black groups are all part of the growing class struggle, every bit as much as the attacks on the pickets, and the rest of the growing clamour for 'law and order'.

MARION KAVANAGH

SOCIAL SECURITY — THE FACTS ABOUT THE SCROUNGERS

IN THE LATEST COLOSSAL propaganda swindle, it is being put about that not only are workers' meagre wage rises responsible for rising prices, but also large amounts of the tax we pay goes on keeping 'scroungers and frauds' who supposedly make a handsome living off the SS.

The *Daily Telegraph*, favoured reading of bishops and retired brigadiers, had a field day when the report of the Fisher Committee on Abuse of Social Security Benefits came out with the conclusion that 'serious' sums of money had 'gone astray'.

What none of the 'hang 'em, flog 'em, and starve 'em' papers reported was:

First, some of the other sums that go astray;

Second, the actual breakdown of the Social Security 'abuses'. Their presentation might staunch the indignation of the most diligent employee, who never in his life missed a day through sickness, hangover, industrial neurosis, or plain self-indulgence;

Third, the outrageous SS abuse on the part of officials who don't pay out what they should to people who don't know their rights — the studied rudeness and perfected techniques of time-wasting that deter thousands from claiming what they've actually paid contributions for over long years;

And finally, the outright and self-confessed prejudice of the Fisher Committee, which determined, in its own words, to "counteract to the extent that we consider proper the bias or imbalance which we find in the evidence".

The evidence which they had to 'correct' came in fact entirely from Department of Health and Social Security officials themselves.

Among the facts which the evidence included were the following:

The total of "recoverable overpayments" in one year is around

£1 525 000. Of this, not all is due to fraud — some is overpaid through mistakes.

The frauds include 1.2% of pensioners going to the trouble of claiming supplementary benefits when they really have a bit of money stashed away. They also include 4.3% of pensioners daring not to declare that they were working and earning more than the permitted amount. (That they should have to work at all is a scandal).

Imagine a press campaign against "Pensioner Scroungers"! No, the gutter press knows better. Far more cunning to talk vaguely about "serious amounts" "going astray".

THE 'WORKSHY'

Then there are the 'workshy'. The most searching official study found that only 7% of people long unemployed were not seriously looking for a job. Of these, 60% were physically or mentally handicapped.

In another study it was found that 1.4% of those claiming sickness benefit were fraudulently overclaiming, for instance claiming for dependent wives who were really out working.

All these amounts go to making up that grand total of £1 525 000.

As well as the sick and the old, there are those who clock on and sign on at the same time. The official term for this heinous crime is "overlapping" — and that is a good description. Pretty well always this is a very short term business, where people, having accumulated debts and financial problems because of the pittance paid by the SS, fail to report immediately that they have got work.

They may even be naive enough to reckon up their contributions and believe that it's theirs by right anyway. They may even reflect that, since the bosses and their State take every opportunity they can to squeeze money out of them, they

should seize the chance of squeezing every penny they can from the State.

But the *Daily Express*, of course, knows better.

We'd like to see a full blown press campaign against the real scroungers in this society, the rulers of the society, those who live very well indeed off our unpaid labour — what they call profit.

As much is spent on one single tax exempt expense account dinner as is paid to a whole family to live on for a week on the SS. The corruption, fiddles and tax dodges of the rich, both as individuals and particularly as organised into companies, amount to thousands of millions.

THE SCROUNGERS

These are the people with full time accountants, well versed in every loophole and gap in the tax laws, who in any single year between them manage to avoid, in death duties, for example, £750 million.

In the same year as SS 'scroungers' got away with their £1 525 000, the amount of illegally evaded tax that was recovered was £11 759 057 — and that is the tip of a very large large iceberg.

In contrast to the pensioners' illegal takings, this amount was made up from sums averaging £1 000 per individual. In a further twist, of the £1 000 tax dodgers only 1.3% were prosecuted — DHSS prosecutions, however, though the sums involved are minimal, are at rate of 22.5% of those discovered.

And while on the subject of tax, it's hardly irrelevant to mention the laws themselves. By a flick of the Chancellor's budget, £300 million in surtax was given away, with an extra £6-odd a week going into the net take-home — or carry to the bank — income of thousands who will switch to a better brand of cigars and buy some more shares in Dist-

illers or Slater Walker South African Securities.

And contrary to what we're told to think, the bulk of our taxes do not go to the hard-pressed, wage-stopped, means-tested and sex-snooped, and poverty-trapped who are fighting to make ends meet.

Our taxes go largely on worthy causes like Concorde (over £1000 million so far); on 'defence' (£2738 million every year, about one-sixth of all tax), increasingly a preparation for strike-breaking and police repression; on the Royal Family; and on the whole apparatus of the bosses' State with its prisons, civil service, police, parliamentary buffoons, State visits, 'occasions', dinners, etc. Not to forget, of course, the 300 DHSS full time snoops, costing almost as much as the amount supposedly "wasted".

POISON

So what is all the fuss about?

It's nothing but one big propaganda exercise, a calculated element in the present attack on the working class. As the racist poison is meant to split the working class into black and white, English, Irish, West Indian and Asian, this vile brew sets out to make disunity between employed and unemployed, to strengthen the smug company men and scabs, and to make confused, insecure workers a prey to the extreme right wing Tories and the fascist National Front.

And it's part of the preparation for yet another clampdown on strikes to add to the Industrial Relations Act and the moves against picketing — the projected denial of Social Security to strikers and their families; not to "save the taxpayers' money", but to weaken the fighting strength of the working class and to boost employers' profits.

RACJEL LEVER

How racist bosses & union split workers

AN IMPORTANT CONFERENCE ON trade unions and racism is to take place on June 2nd at Digbeth Hall, Birmingham.

It has been called and organised by the Asian strike committee at Mansfield Hosiery Mills, Loughborough, whose 9-week strike last year against racial discrimination exposed the extent of racism within the trade union movement.

In that strike 400 Asian workers, with little previous trade union experience, had to contend with a trade union whose conception of fighting was to 'protect' the privileged position of its white members against the demands for equality of its Asian members.

The strikers, in fact, had to fight not only the management, but their fellow members — who at one point, in their haste to 'defend' themselves against the Asians' demands for equal job opportunity, actually negotiated with the management a productivity deal involving changes in the system of work, which they had resisted for the previous three years. They had so misdirected their sense of fear and insecurity that they fell straight into the management's divide and rule trap — and their union tacitly backed them up.

ROTTEN SEEDS

The rotten seeds had been laid back in 1969. White workers threatened a walk-out when two Asian barloaders were promoted to the higher grade knitting jobs. Instead of backing the Asians' rights, the Union negotiated an agreement which required their consultation before any new promotions. As part of the agreement, the two Asians were demoted. In the next three years a number of whites were given knitting jobs.

The agreement to consult the Union was shelved. But when an Asian who had worked at the mill for 10 years asked for a knitting job, he was told that the agreement with the union prevented it.

The Asian workers asked to see the agreement. After two months' delays, they were told by president P. Prendergast that they could not see it — it was 'confidential'. Meanwhile, other white workers were being recruited to the higher paid knitting jobs.

The Union showed its hand again during the strike last Autumn. First, though it had promised them its backing, it got them back to work with vague promises of negotiation. That, of course, isn't unusual. But they found that the promises were useless: while they had been out, 100 non-union white workers had been taken on, including 41 knitters. It was at this time that the prod. deal was negotiated: not only were the

white workers content to work alongside scabs, but they actually agreed to the deal in order to make the scabs' work more effective.

The Union had known all along about the scabs, whose continued presence meant that the promises of negotiations were a tissue of lies. The 400 strikers had to come out again, and this time trusted not to the Union, but to the solidarity of other workers and their own strength to win. And with the threat of the strike spreading to other Asian mill workers in the Midlands, the management conceded their demands for access to the knitting jobs.

LESSONS

The strike pointed to a number of things which other trade unionists would do well to note.

First, the old lesson — the only way to defend conditions against employers is by the unity of all workers. "The management took them for a ride", was the comment of one of the strike leaders, on the outcome for the white workers, whose racist stand brought them the attentions of the fascist National Front and a prod. deal that they had previously resisted.



Second, the blatant racism of some of the official trade union movement. Not only does it do nothing to actively aid foreign workers to become trade unionists (there are no foreign language recruiting leaflets or information brochures), but it has done nothing to fight racist prejudice among its members.

Finally, the strike has shown that the way to fight racism is not to patronise black workers. The Mansfield Hosiery workers, facing racial hostility, language problems, and a particularly hostile trade union bureaucracy, showed themselves capable of winning their struggle and now of broadening their own fight into a general campaign against racialism in the trade union movement. And in many other cases, Asian workers have fought in difficult conditions to unionise low-paid sweatshop jobs that had previously been abandoned by English workers as a bad job.

All trade unionists should support this conference and work to make it as representative as possible.

Argentina-after the elections

In the last issue of *Workers Fight*, we reported briefly on the results of the elections in Argentina.

The 4 April issue of the *Paris daily Le Monde* contains a report on the activity of the revolutionaries in Argentina since the election.

On 2 April the guerrillas of the ERP (Revolutionary People's Army) seized Admiral Francisco Aleman...

Unlike the other underground organisations (the Montoneros and the FAR, Peronists), which have practically ceased their activity, following the orders of ex-president Peron, the ERP, of Trotskyist inspiration, has never laid down its arms. True, it seems to be divided. One section of its militants have gone over to the idea of a post-electoral respite. But the others, partisans of direct action, remain faithful to their leader, Roberto Santucho.

..... The kidnapping of Admiral Aleman has provoked serious repercussions in the Army.... It doesn't look as if the decision of the armed forces to hand over the government to Campora (Peronist winning candidate in the elections) will be put in question.

But the armed forces do not want to give up the responsibility of the struggle against "subversion". While the elected president would like a broad amnesty, the military affirm that they will not tolerate any hasty measure in that domain.

By mounting an offensive that is going to provoke the armed forces, the ERP is placing Campora in a delicate situation

(*Le Monde*).

The 30 March issue of the French revolutionary paper *Rouge* confirms *Le Monde's* account of the Peronist guerrillas giving up the armed struggle. It discusses the attitude of the revolutionaries to the elections.

The majority of the other revolutionary groups (other than the Peronists), denouncing the manoeuvre of the dictatorship and the bourgeois character of Peronism, called for a boycott or a blank vote.

One important exception was the PST (Socialist Workers Party). This organisation came from a fusion between the *La Verdad* group, a sympathising organisation of the 4th International, and the PSA (Coral), a small centrist group which came out of the split-up of the Argentine Socialist Party. It was the only organisation of the Argentine far left to participate actively in the election campaign.

It made this campaign a platform for propaganda for the political independence of the working class in relation to the bourgeois Peronist leadership....

The use made by the PST of the election campaign — this has been the principal axis of the activity of its militants for more than a year — was not without ambiguities. The problem of political prisoners — one of the central problems today — was pushed into the background.

That is all the more serious since the PST campaign was not without impact on sections of the broad vanguard in Argentina, particularly in the advanced sections of the trade union movement. The success of its hundreds of meetings,

particularly the final meeting of the campaign in Buenos Aires, with (according to the bourgeois press) nearly 10 000 participants, shows its impact much more than the electoral results themselves (they got 0.78% of the votes).

THE PRT-ERP

Our comrades of the PRT-ERP, for their part, found themselves in a particularly difficult situation in relation to the elections. Since the Sallustro affair last spring, and independently of the electoral schedules and the "political opening" of the dictatorship, they have undergone repression without a let-up. Scores of comrades, for the most part cadres of the organisation, have fallen victim, joining in the prisons of the regime the two hundred or so already jailed.

Within the framework of its strategy of "revolutionary war", the PRT has had for two years a precise orientation: the unity of the armed organisations. The turn away from struggle of the Peronist armed organisations has left our comrades totally isolated in the military field.

Moreover, the prestige gained by the PRT-ERP as a result of its audacious actions hasn't been really capitalised politically. The diffuse sympathy of broad sections of the Argentine masses towards our comrades — to the extent that it wasn't organised and politicised — hasn't stood up to the electoralist and populist demagoguery of Peronism. So on top of the organisational isolation in the military field there has been a certain political isolation.

The impossibility for the PRT-ERP, as a banned organisation, to appear in the election campaign only added to the difficulties. Our comrades, however, have set up "base committees", legal and public structures, with the aim of carrying on a campaign for the freeing of political prisoners and for boycotting the elections.

They have denounced the bourgeois nature of Peronism and the manoeuvre carried out by the bourgeoisie through these elections; namely, "to isolate the fighters of the revolutionary war from the masses". Along with this, they continued to carry out certain armed actions.....

This orientation hasn't been without difficulties and internal crises. Thus a dissident group has been created, a split-off from the ERP, calling itself the ERP-22. While reaffirming the necessity of continuing the "revolutionary war", the ERP-22 has, in a spectacular way, called for a vote for the Peronists — and that in the name of the defence of the immediate interests of the workers. It goes without saying that such a position is totally foreign to revolutionary Marxism and that it represents a complete break with some of the fundamental ideas of Trotskyism...

(*Rouge*)

Clearly British socialists must stand in solidarity with the comrades in Argentina who are suffering severe repression. In a future issue of *Workers Fight* we will carry further reports and our comments on the problems of strategy facing socialists in Argentina.



"Bad mealie meal" — staple diet on Slater Walker estate at Boscombe near Pietermaritzburg

The farm manager dismissed the malnutrition sores as "fleabites" and said that he himself received plenty of milk. Any that was left over after he had fed the dogs was "given to the Bantu."

Starvation wages in S. Africa TIME FOR US TO ACT

DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL war in the 1860s, Lancashire cotton mill workers chose to see their own families go hungry rather than work the slave-picked cotton that came from the Southern Confederate states.

That shining example of international working class solidarity has been all but forgotten today. But it is precisely that kind of action — and at far less cost to us now — that is needed if the black South African workers are to lift themselves out of their abysmal slave labour conditions.

The facts that have been published in the last few weeks, initially in "The Guardian", reveal a scene of desperate poverty established and maintained through brutal repression.

It has been estimated that (on average) 54 black babies die every day from diseases caused by malnutrition. Many others suffer permanent brain damage. As John Lawrence wrote in "The Guardian", "If every day, 54 black babies were shot dead by white South Africans, there would be an outcry. Instead, these babies suffer malnutrition, disease, and eventually death, out of sight, out of mind".

Compared with an English — and white South African — infant mortality rate of about 20 per 1000, the African infant mortality rate is as high as 330 per 1000.

These figures are an index to the situation where white workers, whose Trade Unions are legal (and only concerned with maintaining the race differential) can earn up to 20 times the wages of black workers **doing the same job**.

Investors love South Africa. The profits are fabulous — second highest in the world. British companies are the biggest investors in South Africa, accounting for 58% of total foreign investment in 1970. This year nearly £2500 million is invested in the Apartheid state, bringing in profits of around £90 million.

British companies have subsidiaries there, whose wage rates are often actually **lower** than those of South African firms. Some workers are paid no more than £5-53 a week (including overtime and bonus)

Others get £2-3 a week plus housing and food for their families. This consists of bare huts with the

crudest facilities, and poor starchy 'mealie' — with scraps of meat twice a week.

The companies themselves place the value of this at 75p a week. "This is not magnificent", was the comment of one personnel manager, Air Commodore Morris of Illovo (a Tate&Lyle subsidiary) "but you have to remember these Bantu are mostly illiterate...."

FIGHT BACK

A comprehensive official study last year showed that 80% of the African employees of British companies were receiving wages below the Poverty Datum Line (PDL).

The PDL is an amount which, it has been calculated, a family of 5 can just survive on. It allows for a bare subsistence of food, clothing, and housing, but does not include medicine, education, savings, holidays, furniture, blankets, or even bus fares — nor the cost of burial for those dying of starvation and disease. And God help the family of more than five or with, say, elderly dependents.

Black trade unions are forbidden. Strikes are illegal — and breaking the laws of South Africa's Apartheid police regime brings terrible penalties. The workers who came out in the recent strike wave risked at the very least, loss of their jobs, and also jail without trial, beatings, and tear gas attacks; and, since 81 unarmed demonstrators were shot in the back at Sharpeville 13 years ago, sudden death is not excluded either.

But the black workers have begun to fight back. They put us to shame if we do not come forward with the necessary solidarity action.

'Liberal' papers such as the Guardian perform a useful service in detailing the facts. But their solution falls far short of what is needed, and amounts to little more than the hope that the exploiters will mend their ways as a result of 'public pressure'.

Yet the facts which they themselves report belie this hope. First, the report last year revealing that 80% of African workers in British firms were paid below (some far below) the PDL, was hushed up by mutual agreement of the firms involved. Yet now they claim that

they 'never knew' about the conditions and 'just can't wait to put the wages up'.

A typical response was that of Jim Slater of Slater Walker SA (profits £1.5 million last year) some of whose African workers earn the grand sum of 24p a day for themselves and their families: "Neither my colleagues nor I knew anything about conditions of South African employees....". A spokesman for Hoover's South African business said he "had only just learned that the company's rates of pay were so low".

They were all "looking into it" and "would be" putting up wages... Sometime. Meanwhile they sit tight and wait for the publicity floodlights to swing away... and have a good laugh while shares change hands from those with a liberal conscience to hard-headed businessmen who don't mix sentiment with their investment.

British trade unionists, however, know that it is struggle which decides, not sympathy and publicity on their own.

Our demands will not be for 'some improvement', nor for a minimum subsistence wage for African workers.

Our demands must be first of all for Trade Union rights for our South African brothers, so that whatever

level of wages our fight can force for them, they can fight to keep and improve them. And for complete parity of wages and conditions.

Such actions as that of the Swedish portworkers who last month blockaded a British ship to win European rates of pay for the 200 crew are far more effective than sport or consumer boycotts.

The TUC in 1964 officially decided to support a boycott of South African goods. Perhaps you don't know that? Not surprising — it's not had much effect. If the TUC wanted to do more than salve its conscience, it would organise the much more effective action of **blackening South African goods**.

British workers can take the initiative in such action, demanding complete parity of wages, conditions, and trade union rights for black South African workers. There are some of the big British companies whose South African subsidiaries are paying many workers below the Poverty Datum Line:

Associated Portland Cement, Tate & Lyle, Metal Box, Courtaulds, General Electric, Reed, Rowntree Mackintosh, Chloride Electrical, Associated British Foods, and British Leyland.

Strike action hitting these firms would rapidly change the business "concern" into action.

MAXINE

Nixon's new threat

A NEW THREAT FROM NIXON: as the last air lift of US troops from Vietnam took place, he warned the Vietnamese to "have no doubt as to the consequences if they fail to comply with the agreement". At a 15 March press conference he had issued a similar warning "based on my actions over the last four years".

The picture is clear: if the still-continuing ground war between the liberation forces and Thieu looks like toppling the regime, Nixon will once again set the B52 bombers on Vietnam, justifying himself on the grounds that the North Vietnamese have broken the agreements. The war is not over.

10000 or 20000 US 'civil advisors' remain in Vietnam. 100000 US soldiers, the 7th Fleet, and 800 US planes remain in South East Asia.

In Laos, the date fixed in the agreements for the formation of a coalition government — 23 March — came and went without any coalition being formed. In Cambodia, B52 bombing is estimated to be the heaviest ever, and is now striking at the suburbs of the capital, Phnom Penh. It is even possible that in the next few weeks the US could bomb the capital itself: the

puppet regime is in severe trouble with rebellions in the army and massive popular discontent against its police-state.

Together with Nixon's claims about North Vietnamese violations of the agreements have come sudden 'exposures' of Vietnamese ill-treatment of US prisoners of war — before 1969!

These attempts to build up to a new offensive (if Nixon needs it) are based on hypocrisy. Thieu has 200000 political prisoners, many of them kept in conditions of incredible filth and undernourishment. Those few who have got out have been paralysed and disabled as a result of their treatment.

Nixon is guilty of at least five violations: failure to dismantle US bases (article 6), disguising military personnel as civil personnel (art. 5), bombing of Cambodia (art. 20), delay in clearing mines from North Vietnamese ports (art. 2), bringing new military supplies into the South (art. 7).

If the Vietnamese have indeed broken the agreements, they deserve our full support. The US has no right to be in South East Asia in the first place. The agreements include concessions wrung out of the Vietnamese through massive bombing and defoliation campaigns; if the Vietnamese feel strong enough to take back those concessions, that's good. *Martin Thomas.*

Indochina Solidarity Campaign — DEMONSTRATION

5th May. Trafalgar Square 2pm.



Freedom for a group of Vietcong and North Vietnamese POWs.

1. ARMY FOR THE HOME FRONT

A FEW MONTHS AFTER THE election of the Tory government, Heath made a speech to the United Nations General Assembly, in which he stated "It may be in the 1970s, civil war, not war between nations, will be the main danger we face". After nearly two years of the Tories' provocative methods of class rule, after the near general strike situation created by the imprisoning of trade unionists, Heath's reference to civil war can be seen as more than a casually dropped remark.

Certainly its significance would not be lost on the top brass of the British army, for within the army's top ranks a new breed of politically minded officers has grown. Far removed from the Colonel Blimp caricature of a politically ignorant army officer, the new breed see themselves as having a political role which has previously been taboo.

That isn't to say that we're due for a military coup d'etat, but it is clear that the army is mapping out for itself a role in internal 'law and order' which has up to now been the sole responsibility of the civil authorities.

Nuclear weapons have meant that a large standing army is superfluous in any major war. Instead, for the past 25 years, the army has been concerned with suppressing nationalist and communist movements in Britain's former colonies. Kenya, Malaya, Cyprus and Aden have all been spheres of operations for 'counter-insurgency' and 'counter-subversion'. 25 years' involvement in this type of warfare has resulted in the emergence of a number of experts on what is technically called 'low intensity operations'.

These experts hold many high ranking posts in the army's command structure and now that the political independence of most of the former empire has robbed them of areas in which to practise their arts (except, of course, Ireland), they are looking towards the possibility of 'counter-subversion' in Britain.

KITSON

The leading light of this new breed of military politicians is Brigadier



Kitson, who was until recently in charge of British intelligence in Northern Ireland. As such he was responsible for the interrogation of IRA suspects and the methods of interrogation which included the 'hood torture'. It is also likely that as head of intelligence, he was responsible for the plan which led to the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry.

In 1969 he was given a year's paid leave of absence to research into 'subversion' and 'insurgency' and to produce recommendations for the restructuring of the civil and military security forces.

In his book 'Low Intensity Operations', Kitson defines subversion as involving the illegal use of 'political and economic pressure, strikes, protest marches, and propaganda, and can also include the use of small scale violence for the purpose of coercing recalcitrant members of the population into giving support.' Thus, Kitson describes as subversion the normal methods of class struggle open to workers. It doesn't take much imagination to see that in the last phrase quoted, Kitson is describing a picket line.

Take this together with the government's attempts to make some strikes illegal and the increasing police harassment of pickets, and it becomes clear that the British trade union struggle is a ripe area for 'counter-subversion'.

SPYING

Kitson lays great stress on 'counter-subversion' being both a military and civil business. Since there can be no division between purely military operations and civil rule, the soldier of the future has to be a political animal, giving advice to a diverse selection of government departments from the police to public works. If, say, political leaders are to be arrested by a military operation, then it is required that the army has good political intelligence (such as could be provided by the police Special Branch) in order to identify the leaders, and also the operation will have to be made politically acceptable to the population using the press, radio, and TV. The former of these functions, 'intelligence', and the latter, 'psychological operations', are stressed by Kitson as vitally important, and together with 'Populace and Resources control', they should come under a supreme 'counter-subversion' civil-military command.

Kitson is in favour of the unification of military and civil intelligence services, although he sees some difficulties here. The civil intelligence system (in this country, the Special Branch) rests on 'high grade' sources. That is, trained agents infiltrate political organisations and feed back information on the leaders, the strength, and the activities of the organisation.

For military purposes, however, 'low grade' sources are better. Under this system, a lot of untrained agents are recruited and they



Above: police wade into dockers' picket at Neap House Wharf last year. Below left: Brigadier Frank Kitson. Below: three members of a London Special Patrol Group; two of them shot and killed two Pakistani teenagers; Right: Sir John Donaldson, NIRC President.

give information about the area they live in or the place where they work, rather than being required to infiltrate.

Kitson sees difficulties about running the two systems together in the same organisations. He also stresses that intelligence isn't just a specialised task, but the job of every soldier — thus soldiers should be encouraged to keep an ear open when they go to the pub or dance hall. Journalists are also a good 'low grade' source, and many useful pieces of information can be obtained by giving a journalist preferential treatment in getting to the scene of the action.

N. IRELAND

On "psychological operations", Kitson remarks how Britain lags behind the rest of the world. However, if this was true when Kitson wrote the book, the past few years in Northern Ireland have surely done something to redress the balance. "Psychological operations" means roughly propaganda — in particular "planting" stories in the press and TV.

Thus, in Ireland, the Army Information Service provide stories for the press, and inevitably in any incident it is the version handed out by the army which finds its way into the press. It is very rarely that the press mentions the source of the story, with the result that when the story is blatantly untrue the Army revises the account of what has happened and two contradictory versions of the event appear in the press.

This has happened on more than one occasion. Besides this, army officers are now given TV appearance training before they go on service — bad performers are not allowed to appear in front of the camera. In this sphere, as well as that of intelligence, softening up journalists has its rewards.

Kitson also wants specialised army units to act as strike breakers.

Of several alternatives for army expansion he remarks that one of the least expensive is the keeping of "specialist individuals and units within the army to enable essential civil services to be maintained in the event of civilians being unable or unwilling to maintain them."

He then goes on to bemoan the fact that the army had a far greater capacity for strike breaking immediately after the war than it does now, and adds ominously "Even within the United Kingdom, a situation might arise in which the army was required to provide men for this purpose".

How much support does Kitson have for his new ideas? To what extent have they been put into practice already?

It is difficult to say with any certainty. As Kitson himself notes in relation to his proposal for military advisors on government committees "There is no danger of political repercussions to this course of action, because consultation can be carried out in strictest secrecy".

But it is unlikely that Kitson was given a year's paid leave and a place at Oxford just for the purposes of academic study. It is much more likely that some secret proposals were prepared for the Ministry of Defence and these would be a lot more specific than his book.

Moreover, Kitson is not isolated.



Ne
ne
A
P
T
b
a
p
f
l

Gene
Chie
forev
Kits
defe
Tele
high
impo
ed a
ity c
K
with
supe
ly in
train
ing v
wars
army
"est.
links
army
the p
A
wards
out w
Time
top b
Gene
the st
and, i
evid
sensu
army
wards
form
wid
ideas

ew laws,
ew-style
rmy and
olice -
he
osses
re
reparing
or a
ng war

ral Sir Michael Carver, the
f of Staff, provided a glowing
word to the book. Another
on fan is Brig. WFK Thompson,
nce correspondent of the 'Daily
graph', who praised the book
y and stressed its immediate
tance in Britain. He also add-
suggestion of his own - ident-
wards for all UK citizens.
tson also has his co-thinkers
n the police. A former chief
intendent has come down firm-
favour of joint police-army
ing for such activities as deal-
with mass pickets. He also
co-ordination between the
and special branch, since
ublishing police - military
would render unlikely the
duplicating the work of
police special branch".
ittle more of the trend to-
'political soldiering' crept
men Christopher Walker of the
s interviewed a collection of
ass. Here the Brigadiers and
als expressed their alarm at
ate of anarchy in the country
ccording to Walker, "The
nce points to a growing cons-
s among top ranks that the
will devote more attention to
countering subversion in one
r another. On this there is
read agreement with the
of Frank Kitson...." ■

Paul Itize



PICKETING

2. A BATTERY OF LAWS

IN RESPONSE TO THE GROWING success of pickets in a number of recent strikes, using new tactics on a mass scale, there has been an indignant howl from the right wing, calling for new laws and a 'tough line'. At the Tory party conference Home Secretary Robert Carr announced that he would be calling in Chief Constables to discuss the matter. The recent hard line circular to police is probably only one of the outcomes of this meeting.

Meanwhile the Confederation of British Industry is agitating against mass pickets, solidarity picketing, and flying pickets. They want laws to restrict the picketing of an employer to his own employees; and the restriction of the place of picketing to that employer's premises - which effectively means a massive restriction of blacking.

Such new laws would be a serious threat. They would constitute a grave set-back to the civil rights of the labour movement. Already the battery of laws against picketing is far greater than is generally known. That is because many are not enforced. But, make no mistake about it, they are there, and can be used to smash us down if we weaken.

The fact is, what's legal or not legal is generally determined by the relationship of forces.

If the police can get away with it, and if they are not treading carefully for fear of aggravating a tricky strike situation, they have got a whole armoury of criminal charges which it is in their 'discretion' to bring. There is also a wide choice of civil charges which employers can bring against pickets - if they dare - ranging from trespass and nuisance (e.g. shouting too loud) to defamation (libellous placards), to a variety of court actions under the Industrial Relations Act.

EVERY MAN A CRIMINAL

Many is the solid, law-abiding citizen who would be horrified to know just how many laws he broke on the picket line.

Certainly, picketing is legal. But, as defined by law, that means "obtaining information or peacefully communicating information". It is actually illegal to physically prevent access to work, even if this is done ever so peacefully. That is "obstruction of the highway".

Calling people scabs, making V-signs, etc. are "insulting behaviour". Then there is threatening behaviour. All that is before we even get around to assault, or such sinister crimes under the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875 like "persistently following" or "watching and besetting".

Picketing the home (or the immediate vicinity of the home) of a scab or employer is also illegal, however peacefully it is done.

If the police tell you to disperse, or tell the picket 'leader' to disperse the picket, and are not obeyed, then that's obstruction of the police. The police don't need to have any reason for telling you to disperse however law-abiding the pickets were, all the police need to say is

that they thought there might have been a "breach of the peace" had they not taken such action, which was then obstructed.

How many pickets constitute a "nuisance" or an "obstruction of the highway"? All those who the police decide are not necessary for the picket as defined by their law, i.e. for obtaining or communicating information. In a case in 1960 the police obtained a conviction for "obstructing the police" in a case where a third picket had tried to join two others on a gate. Presumably, when told to clear off, he had tried to insist on what he thought were the rights of pickets.

In that case, for the police and the Court three were too many. But if there had been 3000, no doubt there wouldn't have been a single charge laid.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT

Most of these laws have been 'in force', if not always enforced, since the 1906 Trades Disputes Act, though the discretionary powers of the police ("I thought there might be a breach of the peace, your Honour") were extended by the Police Act (1964). But with the Industrial Relations Act (1972), there is a really dramatic increase in the number of illegal acts that a moderately ordinary picket can commit.

First, it's got to be an "industrial" dispute. Any and all picketing is illegal if it's in furtherance of a strike, say, in support of tenants facing eviction as a consequence of fighting the Housing Finance Act; or a strike against the Freeze or the Industrial Relations Act (such as the one on May 1st).

Second, it is illegal for anyone (even a registered union) to picket the customers and/or suppliers of a firm in dispute (even if the dispute itself is not an "unfair" industrial practice, and even if the pickets are shouting "Come on out, Bill", and not "Rotten scabs, we'll have your guts for supper").

Then there is a whole battery of "unfair industrial practices", and picketing in connection with them can mean being hauled before the National Industrial Relations Court and fined and/or jailed, as were the Pentonville Five. But that is not all.

If the dispute is illegal under the Industrial Relations Act, then it is not *directly* in breach of criminal law. But it means that all the other, criminal charges, like obstruction of highway or police, breach of the peace, causing a nuisance, threatening and insulting behaviour, etc. can be brought against a picket - and the normal defence that such acts were committed in furtherance of legal picketing is simply swept



away.

This was established by Donaldson, Chairman of the National Industrial Relations Court, overruling Lord Denning, who had tried to rule that if the *method* of picketing is legal, then it is not rendered illegal by the nature of a dispute under the Industrial Relations Act.

So it is not just a question of prosecutions under the *Industrial Relations Act*, but also prosecutions under other laws made possible by the *Industrial Relations Act*.

The following are some of the situations in which picketing is now illegal under the Industrial Relations Act:

- For anyone except a registered Trade Union to induce a breach of contract, including a contract of employment: that is, practically any strike.

- Any action in support of an "unfair industrial practice", e.g. if workers take action to exclude a scab like Langston or Goad.

- Any industrial action to induce a breach of commercial contract by someone who is not a party to the dispute. (E.g. blacking of coke depots and power stations during the miners' strike; blacking of suppliers and customers of Fine Tubes, etc).

- Any industrial action while a recognition dispute is before the National Industrial Relations Court or Commission on Industrial Relations.

- Industrial action to induce an employer to disobey a NIRC recognition order. (Such as an order in favour of the Ancient Society of Spanner Forgers and against the AUEW).

For the ruling class, their Tory (and Labour) front men in Parliament, and their strong-arm boys in blue, the problem is how to enforce the laws they've got. An official publication put it this way: "Recent ministerial statements indicate that the Government feels that the present law *properly enforced* is adequate to cope with the situation" (our emphasis). Right now Maurice MacMillan is busy drawing up a code of illegal picketing in an attempt to turn their new paper laws into real ones.

(Of course, that's not to say that they may not decide to add laws, for instance on the lines of the CBI's recommendations, for use in another situation).

For the working class, the problem is how to clear this legal armoury off the statute books.

The way to do it is not to do as a Labour Research Department (Picketing, - Trade Unionists' Guide) advises:

"It is very important where there is a mass picket that everyone on it knows the rules about avoiding violence and not interfering with blacklegs, and is clear exactly what slogans he is to shout and shouts no others."

No. The class struggle isn't a game of cricket, and militant workers will not be herded around like so many sheep. These laws must be broken again and again (as they already have been) and new rights established in the struggle.

The government is on the offensive with new anti-picket police squads. We must prepare to meet this - and go on to make things so hot for them that they have to beat a retreat and tear up their own paper laws.

May Day will be a very small start. We need to extend such action into an all-out general strike if we are to get rid of the Industrial Relations Act. ■

Rachel Lever

A WORKERS' ARMY...

"The reformists systematically implant in the minds of the workers the notion that the sacredness of democracy is best guaranteed when the bourgeoisie is armed to the teeth and the workers are unarmed"

LEON TROTSKY

"They can only kill me, and there are thousands to come after". It is not often that a trade union leader says a thing like that, and less often still that he would mean it. But Jim Larkin, General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, said it, during the Dublin general lockout of 1913/14—

and he meant it, too.

"They" had already killed two workers, and were conducting a reign of terror against the workers of Dublin. "They" were the brutal Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police, mercenary bully-boys of the British Government 'loaned out' to the Dublin capitalists. These bloodsuckers had declared war on the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and had vowed to destroy it, refusing employment to any of its members.



Members of the Citizen Army.

Dublin 1913: how the workers met police violence

Dublin's workers of 1913 have some lessons for British workers faced with the battles of 1973. We already face specially trained and organised police anti-picket squads. All signs suggest that the government is at the least considering the creation of a strike-breaking force of police commandos to back up their anti-union laws with the necessary degree of physical force against pickets.

THE IT&GWU

THE IRISH ECONOMY AT THE turn of the century was a backward appendage of Britain's. The working class was unorganised and therefore savagely exploited.

The minimum working day was 12 hours, wages £1 to as low as 10s, 20000 families lived in one-room tenements. Of 5000 tenement blocks, 1500 were actually condemned. The death rate was higher than in disease-ridden Calcutta.

Into this situation Jim Larkin came. Sent by the Liverpool-based National Union of Dock Labourers to organise Belfast for that union, he eventually moved south, founding an Irish based independent union. He set out to organise Dublin's workers.

And in a small number of years wonders had, truly, been worked in Dublin. In those days, attempts at moving in organised groups of black-legs, usually imported from another area, were very common. They relied on working class disunity and the sheer physical force of the police, and, often, the army.

The Dublin 'unskilled', led by Larkin, soon found an answer to this sort of thing — rigorous solidarity, blacking, and sympathetic action

The motto of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union was "A blow against one is a blow against all" And they weren't empty or unheaded words. When craftsmen,

non-T&G, went on strike, the IT&GWU stepped in, recruited their non-unionised labourers, and put them on immediate strike pay (to which they weren't 'entitled') to prevent scabbing. Dublin dockers struck for the right of seamen to organise.

Slowly Dublin workers gained a view of themselves as a class, not a ramshackle collection of people doing different jobs. The wage rates were pushed up — 40% increase in a couple of years. James Connolly, who became an organiser for the IT&GWU in 1911, explained the work of the union like this:

".....it... found a class in whom seven centuries of social outlawry had added fresh degradations upon the burden it bore as the members of a nation suffering from the cumulative effects of seven centuries of national bondage, and out of this class, the degraded slaves of slaves more degraded still — for what degradation is more abysmal than that of those who prostitute their manhood on the altar of profit-mongering? — out of this class of slaves, the labourers of Dublin, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union has created an army of intelligent self-reliant men, abhorring the old arts of the toady, the lickspittle, and the crawler, and trusting alone to the disciplined use of their power to labour or to withdraw their labour to assert and maintain their right as men."

This was, frankly and openly, revolutionary trade unionism. When in 1911 James Connolly began work for the IT&GWU, he explained that he did so — "having in mind that its mission is not to make slavery tolerable but to overthrow it, and replace it by a free and independent workers' republic".

The hatred for Larkin and 'Larkinism' felt by the Irish bosses was on the same scale as the achievements of the IT&GWU — it was immense. They used the power of the state against the union when they could and as much as they

dared. In 1911 there was an attempt at a general lock-out in Wexford during which the police obligingly battered one man to death.

1913

IN 1913 THE DISPATCH WORKERS at the Irish Independent newspaper were given an ultimatum by Murphy, its proprietor — "Leave the union if you want your jobs" Work for Murphy was immediately declared 'black' by the union.

Murphy also owned the Dublin tramways: so on August 26th, 700 tramway workers stepped onto the street, leaving the trams wherever they happened to be at that moment.

The employers had organised a federation in 1911, and had been working towards a showdown. On September 3, 1913, 400 agreed to a lockout of their workers, and deposited sums of money as surety that they would never make peace until the union was smashed. Soon 25000 workers were affected.

The State moved to back up the bosses. The Royal Irish Constabulary was not like the British police force then, or — so far — now. Ireland was in fact a British colony, ruled often by brute force. The police was also an army of occupation. Its barracks, dotted round the country, were small occupation forts. It was an armed police force trained for systematic brutality and hardened to the use of force against the people.

As in the currently emerging practice with the anti-picket squads in Britain, constables were never allowed to police their native districts, lest any fellow feeling or sympathy should hold them back. In Dublin the RIC was composed of country recruits.

CITIZEN ARMY

"The locked-out worker who attempted to speak to a scab in order to persuade him or her not to betray the class they belonged to, was mercilessly set upon by uniformed bullies, and hauled off to prison, until the prison was full to overflowing with helpless members of our class. Women and young girls by the score; good, virtuous, beautiful Irish girls and women were

clubbed and insulted, and thrown into prison by policemen and magistrates, not one of whom were fit enough to clean the shoes of the least of these, our sisters".

At the end of August, the police set upon a workers' meeting:

"Our right of public meeting was ruthlessly suppressed in the streets of our city, the whole press of the country was shamelessly engaged in poisoning the minds of the people against us, every scoundrel who chose was armed to shoot and murder the workers who stood by their Union.

"Two men, James Nolan and John Byrne, were clubbed to death in the street" — and 400 were injured on this 'Bloody Sunday'.

To the economic blackmail of the bosses, trying to starve the workers of Dublin into submission, was now, clearly, to be added unrestrained use of police violence. But Dublin's workers had indeed, as Connolly put it, learned self-reliance in the great school of Larkin. They were not going to "crawl back into our slums, abase our hearts, bow our knees, and crawl once more to lick the hand that would smite us"

They organised a trade union militia to defend themselves. When the police had let it be known that they would smash the musical instruments of the band of the

Aungier St IT&GWU branch (which had dared to play a popular tune, "The Peeler and the Goat", which mocked the RIC), the branch decided it wasn't going to let them break their instruments.

Next time they paraded the band was flanked by lines of pickets swinging hurleys — clubs somewhat like hockey sticks used in the Irish national sport. After Bloody Sunday the idea caught on.

Here was a test for the union leadership. Were they going to continue to fight back, escalating the struggle, and the means of struggle, where necessary? Larkin had meant it when he said that they could do no more than kill him — and if they did, others would replace him.

In September 1913, the union formally organised its own militia, calling it "The Irish Citizen Army". It soon taught the police to respect the union's meetings and demonstrations. No longer faced with a rabble, the police were less anxious to break heads — because they weren't anxious to get their own heads broken.

The strike dragged on for many months of miserable starvation — which were also months of glorious heroism of the working class. The great spirit of the Dublin workers, protected physically by the Citizen Army, was as unwilling to be cowed by brute force (even though sanctified by 'law') as by the economic brute force of the Dublin employers' lock-out.

That spirit won incidental victories for the union. James Connolly, IT&GWU Belfast organiser, was recalled to Dublin when Larkin was arrested. Arrested and given three

months in jail, he refused to recognise the court — as a British court, it had no jurisdiction in Ireland, he said — and went on hunger strike. After eight days he was released.

In October, Larkin was jailed for seven months. A mass campaign against the government, especially in Britain, forced them to release him in 17 days. Mass picketing on the quays stopped the importation of scabs.

With stalemate in Dublin, only the power of the British working class could tip the balance. But the TUC refused to take strike

action in support of Dublin.

Isolated now in their war of attrition with the Irish capitalists, the Dublin workers stuck it out grimly. Eventually the strike ended in a sort of "draw". The union was not smashed; but its ability henceforth to use its full weight in sympathy action was markedly weakened.

1916

AND THE CITIZEN ARMY? IN those years the Orange Unionists in the North and the Home Rule capitalists in the South had their

own armed and uniformed militias, the Ulster Volunteers and the Irish Volunteers.

The Citizen Army, too, armed itself, and uniformed itself, and maintained after the strike ended. In 1916, under Connolly's leadership, it formed about one quarter of the handful of men and women who rose in 'Rebellion' against British rule in Ireland.

It did not thus cease to be a trade union militia. It acted from the conviction that it was in the interests of the working class of Ireland to overthrow British rule in Ireland. But that is another story.

& A BOSSES' ARMY

France's CRS

4 MARCH 1971 SAW A STRANGE sight in Paris — policemen demonstrating in the streets. They were complaining ... about the position which government policies put them in, where they were seen as just agents of the State and the bosses, and not "servants of society".

They certainly didn't favour leftist demonstrators or strikers — but they did object to being hated by the whole population, to having their children jeered and shunned in school as "cops' kids".

The demonstration didn't mean that the French police are becoming soft and favourable to the working class. Any street demonstration in Paris still risks violent assault by the police.

The CRS, France's special anti-strike, anti-'riot' police, still deserve the reputation of being the most brutal police thugs in Europe. They bludgeoned a number of workers to death as the 1968 general strike drew to a ragged end.

But — in 1970 a plan by the Minister of the Interior, Marcellin, to make the CRS even more powerful, even more a law unto itself, was killed on the drawing board by the police unions' threat that they would demonstrate against this in the streets.

What the unease of the police reflects is the fact that since 1968 students and workers have been prepared to fight back and even defeat the CRS. Being a paid thug for the bosses' State is very pleasant (for a certain type of mentality) — but not if you run the risk of being hit by a paving stone or a petrol bomb.

THE RISE OF THE CRS

How did the CRS reach the position where it was able to carry out such actions as killing eight Communist Party members on one demonstration in 1962? How did the 15000-strong CRS gain control over a 30-million strong working class and a ½-million strong Communist Party?

The story has some important lessons for us — there are plenty of signs that the British government may be thinking in terms of setting up its own CRS.

In 1944, at the Liberation, the only effective police or army in the country was the Resistance militias, largely working class and largely dominated by the Communist Party. They were the only force who could carry out arrests or impose order. The police force which had served the pro-Nazi Vichy regime was totally discredited.

But instead of going forward to smash the old police force and the old bosses' State completely, the Communist Party relied on 'reforming' the police to win 'advanced democracy'. Their strategy was the opposite of the strategy of fighting the police adopted by French revolutionaries in recent years.

Of course, the Resistance fighters would never have agreed to being disarmed if the old Vichy police had remained intact.

In early 1945, as the militias were disarmed, 7000 men were purged from the police. Some Resistance fighters joined the new police force. The police were unionised, and in Bordeaux the union was able to kick out a CRS commander who had been involved in corruption and black marketing.

For the while being, the bosses rode the punch. But in 1947, with a mass strike wave and the Communist Party out of the government, they started to transform the CRS into a hard weapon against the working class.

The fact that most of the CRS men in the big cities were recruited from poor rural areas, with no tradition of working class organisation, helped. (The same sort of thing, on a different level has been happening in Britain recently. Militants on major demonstrations have found that none of the police opposing them are local).

CRS AND STRIKES

But in November 1947 there was a general strike in Marseilles. Workers invaded the law courts, liberated five militants on trial, and occupied the Town Hall.

The police and the CRS just stood by. Indeed they seemed to be sympathetic to the workers. The new Minister of the Interior - Jules Moch, a member of the 'Socialist' Party - sent a 'strong man', Mossenet, down to Marseilles with full powers. Mossenet promptly disarmed and dissolved two companies of the CRS.

In Bordeaux, also, CRS companies were dissolved because of working class sympathies. In many cities, notably Paris the old Vichy police, purged in 1945, were brought back.

Troops were used to beat down the workers and thus 'firm up' the determination of the CRS and the police. In May 1948, there were factory occupations and a general strike at Clermont-Ferrand. The police union declared its solidarity with the strike. 1000 troops were sent in - thus inspired, the

CRS laid in to the strikers with such energy that their commander later wrote: 'I was myself shocked. ...by the conduct on the part of the personnel....'

And in some places the CRS was used to 'firm up' the ordinary police. On 21 May 1947, the prefect of Lyons announced that certain bread rationing cards would be invalid.

Several hundred housewives invaded the prefecture and carried the prefect to Radio Lyons, where they forced him to announce that all ration cards would be valid.

The police, probably as hungry for their bread as anyone else - just stood by.

Moch sent down another 'strong man', Bertaux. Before too long, 1000 demonstrators were massed outside the prefecture. Bertaux phoned the Departmental Director of police and asked him to disperse the crowd.

The Director agreed - but nothing

happened. Finally, Bertaux himself took command of the CRS and managed to get them to disperse the crowd.

The Director of police was replaced, and on the next major demonstration in Lyons the police charged the crowd.

The other force helping to 'firm up' the police was the unofficial armed bands of De Gaulle's RPF movement. These bands were 16000 strong at this time. On a demonstration in Grenoble (Sept 1948), they opened fire and killed one Communist.

The conclusive demonstration that Moch had formed the police into an effective anti-working class striking force was the coal strike starting in October 1948. 30000 police and troops were sent into the coal fields, and took by force 120 pits occupied by the miners. Two miners were shot dead. Workers were forced down the pits at gunpoint.

In recent years, the determination, the organisation, and the courage of the French revolutionaries has started to shake the morale of the police and of the CRS. If we can raise ourselves to the level of our French comrades, we can shake the morale of the British police before they can get a British version of the CRS firmly organised.

Martin Thomas.



Still clutching his big stick.

IWC CONFERENCE: From the foolish to the farcical

If you hold a conference in the middle of a wage freeze and an anti-union attack by the state, it had better relate to the situation. Otherwise it runs the risk of irrelevance.

Would that the organisers of the 9th Annual Conference of the Institute for Workers' Control had understood this. Hardly any of the speakers made so much as an attempt to spell out what place demands for workers' control should have in a programme for action for the working class in 1973.

Consequently, debates ranged from the foolish to the farcical. In one session where part of the debate was between John Hughes of Ruskin College's Trade Union Research Centre and Communist Party Industrial Organiser Bert Ramelson, Hughes attempted to outline a working class 'Industrial Relations Act' which would do to the ruling class what the present Act does to the working class.

To this Ramelson objected. 'Of course you can have laws like the Factory Acts and Safety regulations which are advantageous to the workers. But you can't have laws of an industrial relations type which would benefit the workers until there is socialism'.

Now it is true that a law remodelling the whole of industrial relations in favour of the working class - like the 1906 Trades Disputes Act - is ruled out in the present period of the decline of capitalism (Except, that is, possibly, in a situation of extreme political crisis where concessions are won which

will then very soon either be taken back or extended into a total working class seizure of power).

But implicitly Ramelson was rejecting or playing down any gains that can be made for the working class through legislation - like Eric Heffer's proposed law against the 'lump'. A spurious conversion to semi-revolutionary syndicalism!

The difference between Heffer's attempt and the 'guarantees' of union recognition in the boss-class's Industrial Relations Act is that the anti- 'lump' bill is the parliamentary edge of the broadsword of direct class action.

The I.R. Act's 'guarantees' on the other hand are the green-shield give-aways to encourage Trade Union bureaucrats to buy the whole lousy package on behalf of their members.

We fight against the whole package because we know that you cannot get the gift stamps if you do not buy the product. Still, to claim that union recognition as of right is worthless is to condemn thousands of important struggles (some led by Ramelson's more honourable predecessors) as a waste of time.

Ramelson's attitude reflected the 'aristocracy of the strong shop floor'

Many shop stewards in well organised plants - and most of the workers in the audience were of that type - often don't see the problems of the weak or unorganised shop. But if the strong shop can cock a snook at, for instance, legal

fixed minimum wage levels, the unorganised gangs of extra-sweated labour cannot.

The 'aristocratic' attitude amounts to elevating the straightforward industrial struggle as more or less sufficient in itself for the working class.

But failure to see the need to relate different facets of the class struggle went right through the conference. It is only that failure which allows the various up-in-the-air blue-prints for 'workers' control' produced by the IWC to see the light of day.

What the IWC conference should have been examining is how to integrate the struggle to win elements of workers' control within a programme of struggle against the capitalist state on all fronts. The failure by all but the Workers Fight speakers to even touch on this signalled the essential failure of the conference.

Andrew Hornung.

400 SUPPORT ABORTION ON DEMAND

ON SUNDAY 25th MARCH, 40 000 people marched through Manchester on an anti-abortion rally, organised by the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC).

A counter-demonstration, 400 strong, was held by Women's Liberation and their supporters. Their slogans were "Abortion on Demand" and "Abortion a Woman's Right to Choose". Far from 'respect for life', the real content of the anti-abortionists' campaign is to use mystical dogmas about the 'unborn child' to degrade the life of women.

SPUC was formed in 1967 to fight the Abortion Act introduced that year. The majority of its members are Roman Catholics. The motive of many of them is a quite sincere concern for human life. But their concern is used by right-wing bigots at the top of SPUC, with emotional clap-trap about 'medical muggers'.

The honorary secretary of SPUC is Elspeth Rhys-Williams, member of the ultra-right wing Monday Club. Supporters include Mrs Jill Knight, Tory and Monday Club MP for Edgware, and arch-mystic and senile unatic Malcolm Muggeridge.

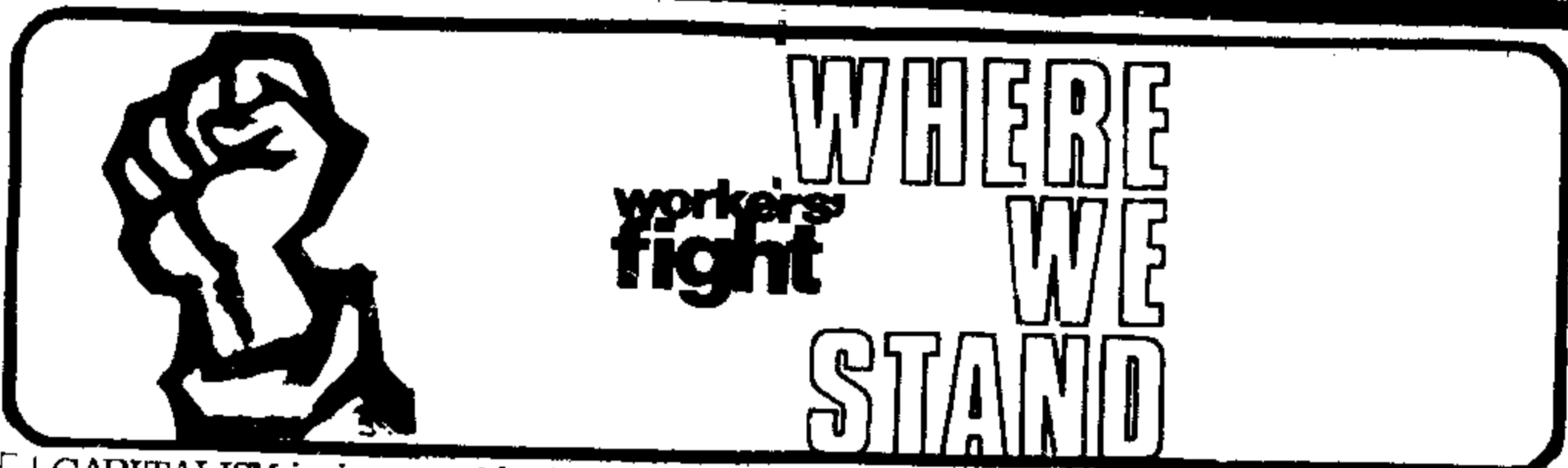
People like this obviously have no real concern for the lives of ordinary people, born or 'unborn'. What they want to do is keep women in the position of domestic slaves, bearers of children and housekeepers

John Cunningham



SPRING 1973
Permanent arms economy ■ luxemburg on general strike ■ s.l.'s philosophy ■ socialists and the labour party ■ irish republican programmes ■ trotskyism in palestine ■ the engineers' sit-ins ■ transitional societies □

New printing now out.
From 98 Gifford St, London N1



- CAPITALISM is inseparable from the exploitation by the bourgeoisie of the working class 'at home' and (since 'advanced' capitalism became imperialist) of the workers and peasants in the colonies and neo-colonies abroad.
- It is a vicious system geared to buttressing the strong against the weak, to serving the handful of capitalists against the millions of workers, and to keeping many millions in poverty so that a few may prosper. Capitalism exalts property and degrades life. It is at the root of the racialism which poisons and divides worker against worker. It is a system of massive waste and social disorganisation, at the same time as it forces the working class to fight every inch of the way to better or even maintain its wages and conditions.
- Having once been progressive, in that it at least developed, in the only way then possible the productive resources of mankind, it is now a totally reactionary force in history. Its expansion after World War 2 gave it merely the appearance of health: in reality the boom was like the flush on a sick man's face. Already economic expansion has given way to creeping stagnation.
- TODAY the ruling class can keep their system going only at the cost of large scale unemployment and attempts to cut the living standards of workers in the 'rich' parts of the world, of massive starvation and bloodshed in the 'poor' two thirds of the world, and of the ever-present threat of the destruction of humanity through nuclear war.
- THE ONLY WAY OUT is for the working class to take power and to bring the resources of the modern economy under a rational working class plan, in place of the present unplanned and blind private profit system. Having overthrown capitalism and established social ownership of the means of production, the working class will build towards a truly communist society, in which at last the principle will be "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."
- The working class has created political parties for this purpose - LABOUR PARTIES, COMMUNIST PARTIES, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES. But in country after country these parties have joined capitalist governments and managed capitalism. They have betrayed the socialist aspirations of their working class supporters, tied the labour movement to the bosses' state, interest and ideology, and destroyed the political independence of the working class.
- The task is therefore to build a socialist party which will stand firmly for the interests of the working class. WORKERS' FIGHT is a group of revolutionary socialists, aiming to build that party: a party which is democratically controlled by an active working class membership, which preserves its political independence and fights the ideological domination of the ruling class.
- The basis of our activity is the scientific theory of MARXISM, the only theory which gives a clear understanding of present day society and of the necessity of revolutionary change.
- Although they cannot organise the struggle for workers' power, THE TRADE UNIONS are indispensable for the defence of workers' interests. We fight for the independence of the unions from all state control, and within the unions for militant policies and for democracy. We see the trade union bureaucracy as a distinct stratum which acts as a broker between workers and bosses. Its life and work-situation is quite different from that of the working class. Lacking a direct, necessary allegiance to working class interests, or any fundamental historical interests of its own, its general tendency is to work with the bosses and their state against the working class.
- Only a mass national rank and file movement, linking up the different industries and guided by the ideas of revolutionary Marxism can, in this period, turn the trade unions into reliable instruments of working class interests, independent of the bosses' state.
- We fight against the INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, against any incomes policy under capitalism, and against any legal restrictions on trade unionism.
- We fight against UNEMPLOYMENT; for a national minimum wage; for work or full pay; against productivity bargaining.
- We fight to extend the power of workers to control the details of their own lives in industry

Editorial Board: Sean Matgamna (Editor); Andrew Hornung (Design);
Martin Thomas; Rachel Lever; Bas Hardy.
Business Manager: Tony Brockman

here and now. We stand for the fight for WORKERS' CONTROL with the understanding that it can be made a serious reality only in a workers' state. We are against any workers' 'participation' in managing their own exploitation under capitalism.

- We believe that the "PARLIAMENTARY ROAD TO SOCIALISM" is a crippling illusion. The capitalist class will not leave the stage peacefully; no ruling class ever has. Socialism can be built only by smashing the capitalist state machine (army, police, civil service) which is the ultimate defence of the bosses' power in society, and replacing it with a state based on democratic Workers' Councils.
- THE LABOUR PARTY is a capitalist party in its ideas, its policies, and in its record in government. At the same time, the bedrock organisations of the working class, the trade unions, support and finance the Labour Party. There is an 'open valve' connection between the Labour Party and the Unions, allowing the possibility of large scale active working class participation in the party.
- We relate to the Labour Party, therefore, not by simply denouncing it, but by attempting to advance the working class towards outgrowing and breaking through the particular stage in its own development - ideological, political and organisational - represented by Labourism.
- We fight for full and equal rights for WOMEN, for female emancipation from the male domination which has co-existed throughout history with class society and which has its roots in such society. We fight, in particular, for the emancipation of women of our own class, suffering a double and triple exploitation, who have been most accurately described as the "slaves of the slaves".
- We fight against RACIALISM and against immigration controls. We fight for the integration of immigrant workers into the labour movement and for a united front against capitalism, whilst supporting the right of black minorities in Britain to form defence leagues or independent political organisations.
- We give unconditional support to the struggles of oppressed peoples everywhere fighting against IMPERIALISM, and to their organisations leading the fight.
- British workers have - fundamentally - more in common with every single worker throughout the globe, irrespective of race, religion, or colour, than with the whole of the British ruling class. We see the fight for socialism as a world-wide struggle, necessitating the creation of a world revolutionary party, such as Leon Trotsky founded the Fourth International, in 1938, to become. We consider that the mainstream of Trotskyism surviving from the 1938 Fourth International is the United Secretariat of the Fourth International but that this organisation in some of its theories and much of its practice (for example that of the British section) represents a degenerate form of Trotskyism. We fight for the regeneration of the Fourth International.
- We stand for a political revolution of the working class against the bureaucracies of THE U.S.S.R. and the other countries called 'communist' which we consider to be degenerated and deformed workers' states. The social regime of the different bureaucracies has nothing in common with socialism, let alone with real communism. At the same time, we defend the nationalised economy in these countries against capitalism and imperialism, unconditionally: that is, irrespective of the selfish, usually anti-working-class and anti-revolutionary policies of the ruling bureaucrats, and against those policies.
- There are OTHER POLITICAL GROUPS which have generally similar aims, but methods differing from ours, or differing conceptions about what needs to be done here and now. We consider all these groups to be seriously - sometimes grossly - inadequate in theory and practice. We favour unity in action with these groups where possible, and a serious dialogue about our differences.

SUBSCRIBE TO WORKERS' FIGHT

ONE YEAR £1.50 HALF YEAR 75p

I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT
WORKERS' FIGHT name

address
send to WF 98 Gifford St London N1

Printed and Published by Workers' Fight
98, Gifford Street, London N. 1 (printed by voluntary labour)

N.U.S. dithers

SOME 30 STUDENT UNIONS HAVE been organising rent strikes in halls of residence this term. They are campaigning for an adequate increase in student grants.

In many places the strikers have been a minority of perhaps a couple of hundred, but the strikes have had some effect. Enough effect, at least, to provoke victimisations.

At Dundee University, 100 students are threatened with being taken to court. It is vital that those (the majority, and the great majority of the militants) who don't live

Steward Sacked

Joint Shop Stewards' Committee
Ruston Paxman Diesels Ltd
Newton-le-Willows,
Lancashire.

We are in the fifth week of OFFICIAL strike action to secure the reinstatement of a shop steward who was sacked following a brief conversation with a non-union Supervisor.

Television and newspapers have dubbed the strike as the "Four letter word" dispute; eight of our members who witnessed the incident have strenuously denied the management's version of events...

Everyone recognises that the alleged offence is becoming an irrelevance as management speak of 'Re-establishing authority at shop floor level'; our union organisation in this factory is strong and effective and is now clearly under attack.

..... We had a problem of heavy police assistance to those staff workers who disregarded our picket line, this has now been solved by our members SITTING IN 24 HOURS A DAY, in shifts; who also believe that as the shop stewards are ELECTED to the firing line — they must be defended vigorously when attacked.

Donations would be received with thanks by the Secretary or by J F Coffey, District Secretary AUEW AEU House, Frogall Lane, Warrington.

We will send speakers anywhere as invited.

G. Harrison, Secretary
431 Downall Green Rd, North Ashton,
near Wigan, Lancashire.

LONDON WORKERS' FIGHT MEETING

Arrested picket speaks

'DEFEND THE PICKETS' was the theme of the latest London Workers' Fight public meeting.

Andrew Hornung spoke first, outlining the case of the 24 North Wales building workers brought to trial for official picketing. The Shotton contractors' shop stewards' committee, representing the 24, has put out a new leaflet calling for delegations to a demonstration on 25 April, when the 24 come into court again.

The police are trying to pick off and isolate the 24 as an 'example'. That is why solidarity is especially important.

Andrew Hornung surveyed other

in halls of residence mobilise in response to attacks like this.

The recent Exeter conference of the National Union of Students reviewed the situation. And it was clear that the Communist Party-led Executive was looking towards a winding-down of the struggle. One motion from the Executive — not discussed, luckily for them — called on unions not to launch any rent strikes next term until and unless they get assurances of no victimisation; and to end rent strikes if a cut in hall fees is gained (even if there is no gain on grants).

Two motions passed by narrow majorities were opposed by the Executive. One said that any Government offer on the grants question must be decided on by a special conference of NUS, not just by the Exec. The second insisted that no settlement should be made on mandatory grants until discretionary grants are abolished.

In the smaller, and therefore weaker, colleges, many students are dependent on discretionary grants. That is, their grants are not fixed by law, but depend on the decision of the local authority. Their first concern is to secure a firm entitlement to a grant — and they fear that the NUS may 'dump' them if it gets an offer on the standard grant level.

There were several motions or amendments passed in opposition to the Executive. But the more politically explicit critical motions generally failed. Clearly there was a lot of dissatisfaction with the Exec but it wasn't all politically aware.

On the politically central issue of 'autonomy' — of the independence of the student unions from the State — the Exec carried the day. A motion to affirm that autonomy is not negotiable was lost by a 40-60 margin. And an amendment calling on the Exec to give full support to colleges fighting for autonomy was defeated.

The same trend was indicated in the Exec elections.

Two joke candidates managed to get in, and the 'outsider' Randall defeated the 'CP choice' Terry for President (the two could scarcely be told apart from their policies).

important developments in the police drive against picketing. Special armed police units are known to operate in major cities. On pickets and demonstrations, previously, it was — as a rule — this or that especially vicious individual cop who would go out of his way for a punch-up. Now the strong-arm tactics are obviously concerted and planned. On some demonstrations militants have found that NONE of the police opposing them are local.

The other speaker was Mark Palmer, NUPE branch secretary at St George's Hospital, who only a few days later was himself to be arrested on the picket line.

When the hospital workers had

A militant International Socialist candidate for President, Mike Hill, got an encouraging 136 votes.

A major priority for socialist students in coming weeks — and one correctly stressed by IMG Presidential candidate Corbyn — is to get a good student turn out to support the 1 May protests against Freeze.

Also on the agenda for May is a left students' conference on grants. Details from Andre Gros, Thames Polytechnic Union, Thomas Street, London SE18.

ROBIN CROSKERY

Warders attack Prisoners

LARGE NUMBERS OF IRISH MEN and women are still being interned in the north of Ireland (as are also many in the 26 Counties under similar repressive legislation). Some of these people have been held for nearly two years.

In Long Kesh, some 350 men and young lads are being held without trial. Conditions in the prison are severe. Groups of 80 to 90 men live in leaking huts, 70 ft by 30 ft. There are no facilities for exercise, occupational hobbies or libraries. The prisoners are subject to harassment by the prison guards.

Conditions in Armagh Jail, where Liz McKee, Theresa Holland, and other woman prisoners are being held, are similarly severe. Recently some of the girls tried to escape but were caught. As a result, male warders and military police beat them up and turned firehoses on them.

One 17 year old girl in the prison was attacked by a group of about eight screws, beaten, hauled down a flight of 15 steps and flung head first into a cell where she was left unconscious. Screws apparently hosed down all the prisoners about six or seven times.

It is up to us in Britain to step up pressure for the release of all internees and detainees. Messages of support for the internees and petitions for their release should be sent to Gerald Maguire, Bridge End P.O., Bridge End, Co. Donegal, Ireland. Messages of support should also be sent to Liz McKee and Theresa Holland, HM Prison Armagh Co. Armagh, Ireland. Protests should be sent to An Phoblacht, 44 Powell Sq., Dublin 1.

Chris Gray.

started their struggle, he said, they had been without any experience in picketing. As soon as they started turning lorries back, the police were accusing them of threatening violence.

With experience, their picketing had tightened up, and now St George was stopping everything but essential medical supplies. That, said Mark Palmer, was the only way for the hospital workers to win, even if it means that hospitals like St George's have to be shut down and the patients transferred to the guaranteed minority of non-striking hospitals.

The meeting closed, after discussion, with a collection for the Workers Fight Fighting Fund.

Next public meeting:
IRELAND: TWO NATIONS ?
Speaker: Sean Matgamna.
Sunday 15 April. 7.30 pm, Golden Lion pub, corner of Kings Cross Rd and Britannia Rd.

Copies of the Shotton building workers' leaflet can be got from WF at 98 Gifford St, London N1. Donations and messages of support to M R Williams, Ifford Centre, Ocean View, Carmel, Flintshire.

Docks — national fight needed

LONDON DOCKERS WERE LOCKED OUT THIS WEEK.

On Monday April 2nd, dockers in the enclosed docks came out. In the end men from Tilbury, West India, Royal, some riverside wharves, and the container depots in Barking and Chobham Farm were out solid.

The scene for this confrontation was set some weeks ago when London enclosed men accepted the employers' pay offer of £2.60 plus 4% on differentials. The men also voted to withdraw co-operation from the employers over Clause 12 of the Green Book agreement. This clause refers to mobility of labour (usually between ship and ship, ship to shore, and hatch to hatch), flexibility, and manning scales.

The agreement was signed in September 1970: it signalled the end of the battle against Devlin Phase II.

In opposition to Clause 12, the man voted to operate with fixed manning scales and only to carry out one job per shift. This was what the men in Shed 17, owned by the Port of London Authority, were locked out by the employers for.

Thus the London dockers stand alone against the Freeze. In all other ports, settlements within the Tory pay norm have been voted on and accepted.

There is feeling for a national fight, but no port outside London has taken on the job of organising or leading the fight.

The meeting of the National Port Shop Stewards Committee on Saturday April 7th must take up this job. Liverpool has called on Jones to lead a national strike to support hospital workers. And when Manchester dockers voted to accept a £2.48 offer, they also expressed willingness to come out on a national fight.

JONES — ALDINGTON

But behind the London fight is something more than — or at least different from — a wage fight. The London dockers have faced consistent, and, so far, successful, attacks by employers on manning levels. The Clause 12 was the weapon the employers have used most adroitly.

The PLA manning levels have fallen by a half over the last year, while the struggle last year to keep the South American and New Zealand meat trade increased the pressure. In a speech at the time, Vic Turner said "The pressure is on".

It certainly is, and it's more connected with the problem created by the Jones-Aldington severance and the employers' blackmail of "accept cuts or lose trade", than the Tory wage law.

As we discussed in WF no. 23, the employers' strategy is concerned with weakening the National Dock Labour Scheme — and ultimately breaking it — and increasing productivity in the larger ports. This — while the cowboy ports still work and exist outside the NDLS — gives registered dockers little choice but to close down those ports and force open 'the register'. A struggle for a 30 hour week could be the focus of such a campaign.

Certainly the London fight over wages is also a fight over flexibility and manning scales. Other dockers must recognise this and organise to support London against the employers, or the London dockers' militant organisation will be severely damaged.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY

LIAISON COMMITTEE from page 1

Thus the Communist Party and the Liaison Committee which it dominates sit in the road, blocking advance to the creation of a national rank and file movement.

For many years, the focus of the struggle was largely at workplace and local level. The local shop floor organisation of militant workers could bypass — more or less — the Trade Union tops' sluggishness. But now the situation is different. The struggle is on a society-wide level, with the government directly and forcefully involved.

To expand, link up, and go beyond the local rank and file organisation by building a national movement — that is our urgent task. If the Communist Party leaders stand in the way, then the movement must be built in spite of them.

Hospitals face 'bonus' threat

HOSPITAL WORKERS ARE STARING INTO A DOUBLE-BARRELLED gun which is loaded by the Tories and held by the union leaders.

In one barrel, the Pay Board settlement threatens to shoot dead the tide of militancy that has swept



Arrested hospital picket Don Steadman.

1000 march

ON THURSDAY APRIL 5th, OVER 1000 LONDON WORKERS FROM HOSPITALS AND OTHER SECTIONS of industry marched against the Tory pay laws and in support of the ancillary workers' pay struggle.

The meeting at the start of the march was pathetic. Leaders of unions who could organise really practical, active support for the hospital workers spoke..... and instead of action, there was just talk of solidarity.

Alan Fisher, leader of the National Union of Public Employees, gave the position of the leaderships of all the four unions involved in the hospitals struggle when he said he would take the case to the Pay Board, and push for a settlement to be granted within days, not months.

Then the march began, with the police in evidence everywhere, a reminder that so far five hospital workers have been arrested on the picket lines. The official aim of the march was to lobby Parliament. But militant hospital workers had planned a meeting to consider in detail the way forward.

Jack Sutton, a NUPE branch secretary from Manchester and a member of Workers' Fight, spoke. He stressed the need for the rank and file to build their own organisation within the union as an alternative to the bureaucratic official leadership. The need to build solidly based shop stewards' committees was discussed. Without such a structure, there is little hope of a strong left wing tendency within the union being built.

Nationally, the picture is brightened by the Sheffield workers coming out for a period, but overall the picture is one of decline in strike activity. The effectiveness of the work to rule tactic has been uneven.

Obviously the failure of the miners to enter the struggle alongside them has set the hospital workers back seriously. It is doubly urgent now for other sections of workers to give all support possible.

Stephen Corbishley

the hospitals in the last few months. In the other, however, is a more dangerous bullet.

The sweet promise, put forward by the union leaders, is for the bonus schemes to be used to raise a few extra pennies, maybe even pounds.

The bonus idea stems from a Prices and Incomes Board report six years ago. But many militant hospital workers have fought hard against for years. They argue that it is a case of productivity bargaining — meaning an excuse for lower basic rates, a pressure to increase workloads and split the workers, and a mandate for loss of jobs. Only 30 or 40 000 of the 220 000 hospital workers are either in such schemes or about to have them introduced.

There is a real possibility that bonus schemes will be rejected at this year's conferences of the National Union of Public Employees. But the union tops may try to write the bonuses into the strike settlement.

This sell-out must be resisted. No bonus schemes! The full flat-rate increase!

TOM RAMSEY

Shotton calls for unity in steel jobs fight

I WISH TO APPEAL TO ALL STEEL AREAS AND STEELWORKS, BOTH IN THE BSC AND PRIVATE SECTOR, TO SEND DELEGATES AND OBSERVERS TO THIS VERY IMPORTANT RANK AND FILE CONFERENCE IN THE CIVIC HALL, CONNAH'S QUAY ON FRIDAY APRIL 13th 1973 AT 1.30 pm TO 5.30 pm.

We feel that the necessity for this conference has been brought about by the attitude of the TUC, the SICC, and individual unions. In our opinion, the above-mentioned unions have sold us down the river.

This was made abundantly clear at the abortive meeting held in Sheffield on March 7th, 1973, where we were not allowed to move resolutions or make recommendations.

Both the BSC and the SICC promised full negotiations before the White Paper was implemented in any area. This has not happened, instead we have had BSC hatchet men visiting these areas, dictating their policy with the apparent blessing of the TUC and other bodies.

While not wishing to deprive any area of promised expansion we cannot allow Melchett, Finiston, and Co to decimate and destroy other areas in order to achieve their aims.

We at Shotton have made our decision to use any means at our disposal to keep steelmaking here. This, we feel, is the only answer for Shotton, as we are an isolated works, and steel finishing depends on keeping it an integrated steel-works.

Every area is entitled to its own policy, but the government and the BSC must be made to call a halt now to any further closures, and a fresh look must be taken at steel-making throughout the country, so that every area is treated fairly both in public and private sectors.

It has come to the notice of the men of Shotton while visiting other areas that some people were of the opinion that Shotton was only shouting when they were hurt. Surely this cannot be true. Look back to the national craftsmen's conferences which were held in Manchester in the '60s at which Shotton played a leading role.

This unofficial body met with a few successes when the green and red books were being discussed, but eventually failed through lack of support.

When this Rank and File national action committee is formed, we must ensure that it keeps its strength permanently. A National Action Committee such as this will ensure that never again could a basic industry such as ours be dealt such as ours be dealt such a blow by any government or any other body.

We hope, by now, that every area or steelworks have received their credential or observer cards. Over 32 steelworks, covering every area in the country, will definitely be represented.

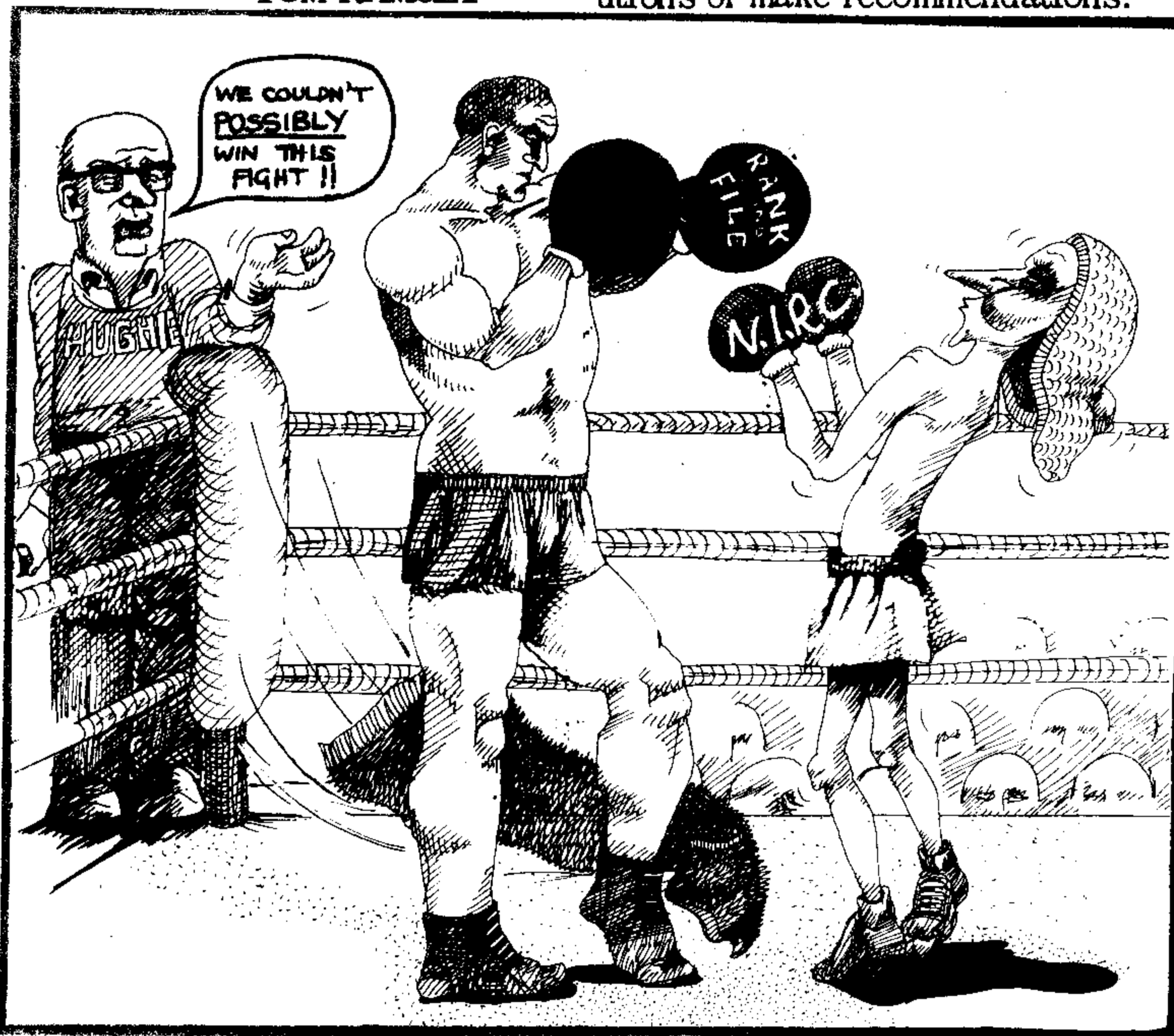
Credential cards are issued on the basis of two members per 2000 employees or part thereof, and one for every 2000 employees or part thereof above this figure. Observers will only be restricted by size of the hall, which holds approximately 500 seated. All enquires to:

K W Monti, 25 Chester Close, Shotton, Deeside, Flintshire, N. Wales

Looking forward to seeing you all at this conference. I would like to thank the *Workers Fight* and any other paper that has helped us.

Yours Fraternally,
L. McLoughlin
(chairman).

Clay Cross Council still defies the Housing Finance Act... DEMONSTRATION Saturday 14 April. Assemble Holmgate Est., Clay X, 1 pm.



SCANLON...from p.1

whole AUEW out with the hospital workers even if you tried. OK. But sufficient militants would have come out on your call to hurt the government.

GOVERNMENT

And how do you expect people to be ready to come out, when you tell them that the government has a "right to govern", and that "conciliation will work far better than..... abrasiveness and confrontation"?

You know that the present government — and the 1964-70 Labour government — operates under the orders of big business, with no respect for any promises made to working people. You know that the only 'right' it has to govern is the 'right' of might, the 'right' of exploiters to exploit.

You know — or, if you don't, rank and file militants do know — that incomes policy under capitalism is a con for keeping

down wages. You know that the only real working-class answer to Phase II is to say that the government has no right to cut our living standards, and to organise a militant trade unionists' United Front to support every section going ahead to improve its wages.

But it's more comfortable, when the rank and file call on you to act, to say: go ahead, organise action yourselves. Isn't it?

So you choose to knuckle under. If you have any self-respect as a representative of the members of your union, you will take back your statement and turn to a fight against the Tories.

The necessary tasks remain: a United Front against the Freeze, and a General Strike to Smash the Act. If you won't work for them, then the rank and file must organise itself to carry them out in spite of and — if need be — against you.