

CHARTIST

No. 13

4p

April 1972

T. U. C. —

PREPARE

FOR

GENERAL

STRIKE!



Pickets surround a coal lorry during the great miners' strike. The next major confrontation of this sort could develop into a General Strike. We have been warned—there is no time to lose. The Tories are preparing. The question is—are we?

LONDON LABOUR MOVES LEFT

by Kevin Knight, Delegate from Brent East C.L.P.

There was a sharp move to the left at this year's London Labour Party Conference. Delegates crowded into Camden Town Hall heard speech after speech denouncing the Rents Bill and calling on Labour Councillors to resist. Composite 2, deplored "the new proposals contained in the Tory "Fair Deal For Housing" which constitute a major attack on rents paid by tenants in both private and council housing", and urged, "the launching of a massive campaign against these proposals". It further urged all Councils in the region to make clear their considered intention to refuse to implement such proposals and to force the Government into using Housing Commissioners to collect the higher rents. It also called for the setting up of a fund, should the need arise, to support financially the councillors involved. An amendment to Composite 1 moved by the A.U.E.W. Enfield District Committee, called for "co-ordinated opposition of all Labour controlled London Borough Councils to secure a united refusal to implement the first and subsequent stages of rent increases".

Let the Tories do their own dirty work", declared a councillor from Hampstead. "This is the kind of law we have got to break", and the speaker from Greenwich Labour Party said that if the Labour Councillors were not

prepared to fight, they should resign and make way for those that were. This was backed up by the P.C.E.U. who said, "Any Labour Councillor who thinks he can get away with this, think again. We ask the Executive to call on Labour Councils to give a lead". The comrade from Lewisham Labour Party remembering the defeated struggle in Tower Hamlets against the GLC rent increases, declared, "This was because we were isolated. We need a united front. Then let them bring in the Housing Commissioner. We dare them. You, Mr. Chairman", he said pointing to an abashed Bob Mellish, "you must call together the leaders of the Labour Councils to plan our united action, I will not carry out Tory policy. If I wanted to do that, I'd join the Tory party".

This was the mood of conference - the burning anger of tenants and trades unionists finding its way through to the highest body of London Labour.

The Executive took fright. "If we recommend the amendment, to Composite 1, calling on the Labour Councillors to resist, we will be criminally liable!". So they didn't recommend it, to the boos of almost the whole of Conference. And when the vote came, despite this, there was almost unanimous support.

Whilst being careful not to get ecstatic about this, whilst recognising the need to fight for a clear-cut strategy to mobilise the whole of the Labour Movement to bring down this Tory Government and its industrial and financial backers, nonetheless, we must not fail to recognise the significance of this conference.

What it has clearly done is to strengthen the militant elements within the Councils fighting for a resolute resistance to the Bill. With the Tories in deep trouble in Ireland and facing the full might of the undefeated British Trade Union Movement, the opportunities are clearly there for Labour to mobilise behind it masses of tenants in an almighty struggle against this vicious attempt to further reduce living standards.

With all sections of the Labour Movement on the march, the tenants' struggle can link up with these in presenting the Tory Government with the full force of the united strength of the Labour Movement - a force capable of finishing off the Tories and those they represent for good, a force capable of taking over this country, nationalising the land, the banks, the insurance companies and the major monopolies and running them in the interests of all the working people.

ALDERSHOT

The bomb explosion at Aldershot was widely condemned - above all by the very same newspapers which, day after day, support the systematic terror and slaughter conducted by the Her Majesty's Army in Northern Ireland. As far as the Chartist is concerned, we're not going to allow the Aldershot tragedy to stop us from defending the right of Irish workers to defend themselves, arms in hand, against the occupying forces of this Army.

But while the Chartist's defence of the I.R.A. remains unchanged, our condemnation of its tactics must be clearly stated. By that explosion the official wing of the I.R.A. did nothing whatsoever to undermine the Tory Government's position either in England or Ireland.

In 1867, Richard Burke, the leader of the Fenians in Britain, was arrested and held in Clerkenwell prison. While he was awaiting trial, a wall of the prison was blown down by a bomb. His supporters, planning to rescue him, had calculated that he would be exercising near the wall at the time. In fact, the affair was a disastrous bungle. It killed twelve bystanders in the street and maimed a further 120. Worse for the Fenians it destroyed overnight a great part of the sympathy which they had until then received from the British working class. The difficulties which as a result beset Karl Marx - who through the First International had done much to organize working-class solidarity with the Fenians in England - are expressed clearly in the following letter he wrote to Engels after the event:

"Dear Fred,

The last exploit of the Fenians in Clerkenwell was a very stupid thing. The London masses, who have shown great sympathy for Ireland, will be made wild by it and driven into the arms of the government party. One cannot expect the London proletarians to allow themselves to be blown up in the honour of the Fenian emissaries. There is always a kind of fatality about such a secret, melodramatic sort of conspiracy."

CAR CRISIS

OMINOUS NEWS FROM THE motor industry. In the same week that Fords announced the intended 270 redundancies amongst tool-makers, the Financial Times reported that of a new issue of shares in British Leyland, worth £24

million, only £8 million worth had been sold, and underwriters at the Stock Exchange have had to purchase the other £16 million worth. British Leyland own virtually the entire British-owned car industry.

FAKE UNITY AT IRISH LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

by Graham Bash, (Chartist special correspondent at Wexford).

Hundreds of delegates packed into the rather modest hall in Wexford for what Party Leader, Brendan Corish rightly described as "the most important Conference of the Irish Labour Party for over half a century". On the surface perhaps, there was none of that frenzied activity typical of Labour Party Conference in this country - there was only one meeting to go to in the evening after the Conference session finished instead of the usual ten or so at Brighton or Blackpool, and the paper-sellers of the various political sects were comparatively few. But for all its unhurried, even amiable appearance on the outside, few of the delegates and visitors inside the hall could doubt the Party leader when he said, "I have no intention of attempting to create an air of alarm at this Conference, but if any delegate believes that he can participate in this Conference as if it were an ordinary Conference in ordinary times, then he is doing this Party a disservice and himself an injustice".

We should of course be careful not to think of the Irish Labour Party as merely an Irish edition of our own party over here. Its origins and its development have been different, it lacks the same mass base, and in terms of electoral support, it is the third biggest party,

smaller than the two bourgeois parties Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. But with the growth and the developing unity of the Irish T.U. Movement, the Irish Labour Party is in such a position that it could give a real lead to the whole struggle taking place in Ireland at this moment. And it is in this context that the words of Corish take on such a significance, and in view of what happened at Conference, a tragic significance.

The crucial question facing the Conference was the struggle in the North, and the debate took place in the shadows of Derry, of Aldershot, and of the arrests by the Lynch Government in the South of leading members of the Republican Movement. The debate took the form of a "clash" between Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien, a leading member of the Party and articulate spokesman for the interests of British Imperialism, and Sean Tracy, a right-winger claiming to speak for the Republican Movement.

Tracy in a left-sounding speech attacked those who were compromising on the national struggle, denigrating Republicanism and violating the traditions of those who fought for Irish freedom. Elements like O'Brien and Noel Browne are only giving solace to

the Northern regime. We must not be seen to do their dirty work, but must fulfil the dream of James Connolly, of republicanism and socialism."

In what was really a rather pathetic reply, O'Brien declared that, "We must not allow our Labour Movement to be used as a cover for the IRA. We must not allow the territory of the state to be used as a base for terrorism. The military approach only threatens our country with ruin, we must repudiate violence", declared the man who acted as spokesman for American imperialism in the Congo.

In reality, the debate was a farce. Tracy far from fighting for Labour to lead the Republican struggle, backed down and withdrew his resolution criticising the leadership in the interests of "party unity!"

But what kind of unity was this? It was the unity of betrayal, of standing aside from the national struggle, of giving in to the interests of British imperialism, which fears above all a development and growth of the Republican struggle. The Labour Party could and should have given a real lead to the heroic resistance of the Republican Movement, it should have taken this opportunity to have stood on a real class basis, to have drawn closer the links between the working-class

elements in the Republican Movement and organised Labour.

Instead we had the pitiful whining of the same Brendan Corish who had spoken of the great responsibilities facing Conference. This "leader" could come out with a declaration that in order to unite Ireland, the Government should enact a non-sectarian constitution, legislate non-sectarian laws and make the necessary economic preparations for unity.

As if British imperialism hold over Ireland can be broken by appealing to the Green Tory Government to draw up a paper constitution which is "moderate and non-sectarian". What these "Irish Harold Wilsons" don't understand and have no wish to understand is that unity of Ireland can only be achieved on the basis of a resolute and if necessary violent struggle against the British Army and the forces of its puppet states, North and South. To achieve this requires a fight for a united labour and working-class movement linking up with the Republican struggle, and seeing its goal as the smashing of the capitalist state, North and South, and the creation of a 32 County Workers' Republic. It is in this context that the Irish Labour Party Conference of 1971 must be judged.

PEACEABLY IF WE MAY, FORCIBLY IF WE MUST!

Despite their Wilberforce "surrender", Heath and his Cabinet will now stop at nothing to keep themselves in power. To utilize the favourable possibilities opened up by the victory of the miners, our movement must have a rock hard will, an iron determination to conquer, a bold and far sighted leadership. Our present "leaders", from Harold Wilson to Jimmy Reid, agree in words with this slogan of an immediate General Election - but in practice do nothing to obtain one.

Ted Heath will call no election until he feels he can win it. At present he is preparing for a General Strike. Before he has had time to finish preparing, he must be brought down. The way to do this - if only our "leaders" had eyes to see - is the way shown already by the miners. Instead of pleading with Heath and his Cabinet, they marked them out as enemies, closed one power station after another and "dared" Heath

to send in troops and provoke a General Strike. By their example, they swung to their side not only the entire working-class but sections of the middle class too. And finally, demonstrating the Tories' unpreparedness for a full-scale show-down with the entire trade union movement, they coerced them into giving crippling economic concessions. Had there been a revolutionary leadership which had itself prepared the ground long in advance, the miners could have held out even further, faced the introduction of troops, spear-headed an all-out General Strike and - with the rest of the working-class - overthrown this Tory government and the capitalist state there and then.

If only our "leaders" in the T.U.C. and Labour Party even now would learn from the miners! Then we might not have to put up any longer with this Government doubling our rents, holding our wages down while letting prices rise,

throwing millions of us on the dole and forcing us into still greater exploitation in the Common Market. For can anyone today doubt that as workers we have the power - if only it were mobilized - to throw out the Tories and their system right now?

On 10 February almost the whole labour-force in Birmingham downed tools in support of the miners. 20,000 engineers marched through the town to join several hundred N.U.M. pickets at the giant Salfley coke depot, swept aside the massive lines of police (who in fact took one look at the overwhelming army opposed to them and decided to call it a day!) and secured the closing and locking of the iron gates of the depot. This victorious Birmingham mini-"General Strike" was in itself only a tiny proportion of the flood of working-class solidarity mobilized by the miners throughout Britain. Yet, like so many other events during the strike, it revealed what strength is available to our move-

ment - if only it is used.

That is the kind of strength which should be mobilized now on a national basis. As workers let us make clear - if our movement's full power is not harnessed, leaders such as Vic Feather and Harold Wilson will be thrown out on their necks and replaced! They must demand an immediate General Election, and back up this demand with concrete preparations (of the kind outlined on page six) for a General Strike. A famous slogan of the revolutionary Chartists of the last century was "Peaceably if we may - forcibly if we must!" To this Tory government, which has no mandate at all for its present policies (e.g. depriving 1½ million of us of a job), we in the trades unions and Labour Party should say just that. Give us an election now and let us take power peacefully-or else!

AFTER THE WEMBLEY RALLY....

WHICH WAY FOR THE S.L.L.?

by Chris Knight.

March 12 saw the climax of the Socialist Labour League - Young Socialists' "Right to Work" marches in a mass rally in the spacious surroundings of the Empire Pool, Wembley. At least 5,000 young and adult workers gave a rapturous welcome to the 300 jobless who had marched from Southampton, Deal, Swansea, Liverpool and Glasgow. There were enormous cheers too for banners and contingents representing Kent and Scottish areas of the National Union of Mineworkers.

After lungs had been exhausted and the initial excitement had died down, the rally Chairman, Cliff Slaughter, opened the meeting. "Our march began during the miners' strike" he said, "and it ends here on the eve of an even bigger class-confrontation - the struggle over the Engineering Workers' claims". On the same note Alan Thornett (Deputy senior steward, Morris Motor) declared, "The miners' were described as an 'exception'. Well, the next exception in line is the engineering workers. Between them they have a power even mightier than that of the N.U.M.!" Labour MP for Southall Sid Bidwell, urged the members of "this inspiring rally", to involve themselves in the struggles against the right-wing within the Labour Party. Ending with the words "I offer you a hand of friendship and warm comradeship", his speech received very warm applause. Finally, S.L.L. Secretary Gerry Healy rose to speak. To enormous cheers he declared, "The miners' strike proved the Tory Government can be defeated... But this situation will not last. The Tories are conscious that their class is in real danger and will fight back like cornered rats". To win, the workers must have a revolutionary party based on the principles of Marxism. He promised that "In the coming period, we're going to build the most powerful revolutionary party this planet has seen".

What conclusions can be drawn from this rally? We Chartists were almost certainly not the only members of the audience to feel that - despite all the ringing declarations - something was decidedly lacking. To be blunt, what was lacking was seriousness - that dogged seriousness, reserve and impatience with ballyhoo which characterizes any real assembly of the labour movement. There was something arbitrary - even theoretical - about it all. Could not all the lines have been written quite differently - and yet with no less dramatic effect?

In actual fact, no-one seems to have noticed that a most sudden and quite unexplained change of "line" has been effected by the Socialist Labour League sine January of this year. Up until that time, the slogan of a General Strike was central to all the propaganda the League conducted. Since then, it has totally disappeared from the pages of the "Workers' Press". At the Wembley rally, in 2½ hours of speeches, the very word "General Strike" was not once so much as mentioned. It may seem only a minor point. But it is unexplained switches of this kind - apparently related in no way whatsoever to objective developments - which make the politics of the Socialist Labour League seem less than wholly real.

For a number of years now, the Socialist Labour League has been calling for General strikes with gay abandon on a wide variety of occasions and for an assortment of different purposes. Now, just at the very moment when - in the aftermath of the Miners' strike - a General Strike situation is rapidly developing, the League suddenly falls silent on the question. This is to go from one extreme - to another and possibly even more irresponsible one. Now an enormous burden of responsibility, in no way diminished by our small numerical size, falls onto the shoulders of us Chartists. We are left as the only tendency warning of the dangers of an unprepared General Strike, the only tendency putting forward the slogan "Prepare for the General Strike!", the only tendency carrying on practical agitation among servicemen and preparing the ground for the future great events. In fact we are the only tendency, it seems, with anything even remotely resembling a strategy for the conquest of state power.

We are living in the period before a revolution, when the British labour movement is taking giant strides forward and learning more with each month that passes than it formally learned in decades. It is a time in which the central decisions taken by the groupings and parties of the two main classes will fundamentally affect the whole course of history not only in Britain but throughout the world. In Britain, the revolutionary movement - which is now growing at a phenomenal rate in the form of the various sects and tendencies professing Marxism - has reached a stage at which its own decisions, for the first time in many decades, are beginning to matter for important sections of the working-class. And, corresponding

with this new situation, in which violently conflicting class-pressures are being brought to bear in a relentless and even painful manner upon every section of our movement, the various "Marxist" trends and tendencies are rapidly finding their own level and showing where they stand. An example is the apparent rightward evolution of the "Militant" group, which now no longer even claims to be urging a working-class seizure of power but contents itself with the call for "nationalization". But whereas "Militant" has established itself at least as part of the working-class movement, trends expressing only the instability of views held by the mass of radicalized students, ex-students, unorganized workers and rootless petit-bourgeois try to substitute noisy declarations for organization in the Labour movement. The I M G is a good example of these.

While some tendencies become "centrist" and others turn "ultra-left", it is extremely important that at least some of us remain to hold a steady course, retaining and deepening our roots in the mass organizations of the Labour movement without losing sight of our overriding responsibility as revolutionaries to prepare ourselves and our class-organizations for the actual conquest of power. Unless it is very careful and acts quickly, the Socialist Labour League in the decisive period ahead will find itself missing out on both counts - on the one hand, bypassed by developments within the trade unions and the Labour Party, and on the other unable even in its own press and meetings to unfold a bold and adequate plan for the working-class conquest of the state. The two are closely linked. To command confidence in a strategy for the conquest of power without forging at all levels the closest links with the rank-and-file organs of the Labour Party - is not possible. Winning power presupposes first of all winning over millions of loyal Labour supporters to the idea of taking the power. As long as we revolutionaries are in the minority, the demand "take the power!" can be addressed only to the leaders of those organizations which are in a position to take state power - namely the mighty organizations of the TUC and Labour Party. The Socialist Labour League's lack of roots in the Labour Party and its equivocation regarding the General Strike go hand in hand. It is impossible to call for a General Strike if one is unable to answer the question "How do we win it? How do we use the opportunity to conquer power?" And to answer that question means answering another: "How do we ensure

that the leadership of the strike is taken out of the hands of the reformist in time?" In a General Strike situation, the reformists would inevitably pay lip-service to the strikers' aims in order to retain control of the movement and to sell out once the opportunity arose. If they thought it necessary, they would convene an emergency Labour Party Conference. At any rate, the mass meetings and assemblies of the working class would not be those sponsored by the revolutionary tendencies. The real organs of working-class power would be headed largely by Labour Party members, and comprised of rank-and-file Labour Party and trade union organizations. To prevent a sell-out, only one course of action could be adopted by the revolutionary party - and this would presuppose a previous period of consolidation within the Labour Party itself. It would be necessary to say to the reformist leaders: break with the Government and employers, call on us to occupy our factories, issue an appeal to troops, use this opportunity to implement Clause 4 of the Labour Party Constitution, take the power into your own hands! Assuming this really turned out to be a revolutionary situation, assuming the ruling class was thoroughly paralysed and the mass of workers themselves desired to take the power, then our demands would rapidly find an echo. It would then be possible to say to the Labour Party leaders, in their own organizations and meetings and with the voice of the whole rank-and-file: take the power - or we'll take it for you! Their refusal to act would then make it possible for us to take their place, to declare that "We are the Labour Party, not you!", to prove our point by organizing invincible demonstrations and conferences in the name of the Labour Party (regardless of whether the PLP "disowned" us or not) and, relying on the class-instincts of the troops to refuse to move against our Party and the people, to establish ourselves as a more powerful force than the state itself - and hence begin acting as the government. This, of course, is the way in which the Bolsheviks defeated the Menshevik and "Socialist-Revolutionary" leaders of the Soviets in the period leading up to the Russian Revolution.

The Young Socialist and Socialist Labour League comrades, at the Empire Pool rally sang, in the chorus to their march-song, "take the power, we know how!". It was a good song - but if these comrades really do know how to take the power, they should keep it less of a secret.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT USED AGAINST STRIKERS

by Phil Elliot.

An interesting story. Last month Ideal Casements (Reading) Ltd, and its three subsidiary companies, withdrew recognition from the T.G.-W.U. The shop stewards threatened a strike by 600 workers to enforce recognition. The company then applied to the National Industrial Relations Court for an order forbidding the shop stewards from calling a strike. The court granted the order.

firm of any size or any sense wants to touch the Industrial Relations Act or any part of it".

It is about time our leaders woke up. The Tory class are using the Act. Jack Jones, General Secretary of the T.G.W.U., should call a strike at Ideal Casements and its subsidiaries, not leave three of his shop stewards and 600 T.G.-W.U. members out on a limb. And from the T.U.C. we want more

in fighting it. The role of the T.U.C. must be to co-ordinate resistance by the whole trade union movement. If our leaders won't act - then let them step down and make way for those who will!

A major blow to the Tories and a victory for T.U.C. policy! That is how we must see the recent decisions by leaders of the General and Municipal Workers and the National and Local Government Officers' Association

Tories' "Register of Trade Unions".

There are now no major unions complying with Tory policy. To clinch this victory, the T.U.C. Finance and General Purposes

Committee should now suspend from affiliation any union foolish enough to register, leaving it to the next Trades Union Congress to expel it altogether. The Bridlington Agreement (which prevents the "poaching" of members of one union by another), must be thrown out and T.U.C.-affiliated unions allowed to recruit members from any "rebel" unions.

COALITION ONE STEP NEARER?

by Paul Moore.

Roy Jenkins' recent speech, blown up by the papers as a challenge to Wilson, is indicative of deep developments inside the Labour Party leadership. There is no doubt that the right-wingers who kept the Tory government in office on October 28th when the vote on the Common Market was taken, have been encouraged by the lack of action against them. When Jenkins was re-elected to the deputy leadership of the Party, instead of a massive outcry, almost everyone advised moderation. "No witchhunts" was the cry from the soggy left, while the MILITANT group advanced an equally evasive argument, saying that the removal of Jenkins was irrelevant, since there was no real difference between Jenkins and Wilson, and anyway it was necessary to fight against ideas and not leaders.

Both arguments have had the same result — no real fight against the right wingers who crossed the class line and

made a temporary coalition with Heath. In fact Jenkins has been given the go-ahead to show more of his true colours, with language reminiscent of Ramsay MacDonald.

The politics of coalition are extremely dangerous. They can leave the Labour Party with no alternative policies to the Tories whatsoever, and lay the ground for a Tory election victory. They also show the possibilities of a right wing split-off at a later date, betraying the battles being fought at this very moment against unemployment, the Industrial Relations Act, and the occupation of Ireland.

The only way to make absolutely sure that the Jenkinsites do not sell out in the future is to fight to expel them NOW from the Labour Party. By allowing these traitors to do as they like, the Parliamentary Labour Party is inviting disaster on the whole of the Labour movement.

"IT IS NECESSARY TO WAGE A STRUGGLE AGAINST ideas and not leaders!" But this happens to be the classic argument of the "Left" Mensheviks against Lenin during the war. There is a Ger man proverb that covers this case: there is no washing the sheep-skin without getting the wool wet. Ideas do not hang suspended in mid-air; living people are the bearers of ideas, people who unite in organizations and select their leaders. It is impossible to fight against bourgeois ideas without fighting against those leaders who defend these ideas within the proletariat....' LEON TROTSKY, 1935-36.

"NOW A PROGRAMME IS NEEDED NOT TO EASE THE conscience but to guide revolutionary action. What is a programme worth if it remains a dead letter? The Belgian Workers' Party, for example, adopted the pompous plan of De Man with all its "nationalizations". But what sense was there in it when the party did not lift its little finger to realize it?... Socialism can advance the most scientific programme but its value will be equal to zero if the vanguard of the proletariat does not unfold a bold struggle to capture the state. The social crisis in its political expression is the crisis of power."

LEON TROTSKY, *Whither France?*

THE FUTURE OF THE LPYS

SINCE LAST YEAR'S CONFERENCE at Skegness, an unprecedented series of events has rocked the labour movement: the U C S fight, the Common Market vote, the struggle in Ireland, the Housing Bill and the mighty miners' strike to name only a few.

In this situation, can we say that our LPYS leadership has measured up to the job? Certainly over the year there have been big steps forward, particularly the national rally against unemployment in November. But compared with the possibilities they have not been enough. The present situation offers us the opportunity to go out to the working-class youth and build a mass revolutionary YS.

Clearly the weakness of the YS is political. What was the lead given by our National Committee on the main issues of the day?

● On the COMMON MARKET, they consistently campaigned

against the fight to expel from the Labour Party the Jenkinsites who kept the Tories in office.

● During the MINERS' STRIKE, leading members stated that to talk of a General Strike was "Utopian", "abstract" and "not the issue"—while the conflict itself al-

most precipitated such a situation under their noses!

● On the RENTS BILL, instead of leading the fight to force Labour Councillors into defying the Government, Y.S. Regional Committee members in London talked vaguely about the need for socialism and thus were eclipsed by "soggy lefts" at the London Labour Party Conference.

● On IRELAND the leadership calls for "workers' unity" but either ignores the IRA or even implies that they are to be lumped together with the reactionary UVF. It is time for them, while maintaining principled criticism of the IRA, to come out in clear defence of them in their struggle against the British Army.

On issue after issue, in fact, the Y S leadership says that the answer is a "socialist programme". But the leaders of the Labour Party have a programme—one of class-collaboration—which they are carrying out now by ~~allowing~~ allowing the Tories in office. Yes, we need a socialist programme, but unless it is part of a real fight against the Tories, and unless we show in practice how to implement the programme we adopt, it will become a miserable excuse for abstaining from the struggle and doing nothing.

Glyn Beagley.

BACKGROUND TO THE RAILWAY DISPUTE

by Rick Tisdell.

FOLLOWING ON THE miners come the railwaymen. Leaders of the three Railway Unions (NUR, ASLEF, & TSSA) have rejected a Rail Board offer of 10% (to the unions' claim of 16%).

The fact that even this first offer breaks the Government 8% 'norm' shows just how weak the Tories are feeling after the miners' victory.

As was the case with the miners, wages are not the only factor which has led to growing militancy amongst the railway workers. Continuing redundancies, especially the threatened closure of several engineering workshops owned by British Rail, have led

many into saying that not one more man must go out of the industry. It is specifically because of redundancies that the normally non-militant white collar Transport Salaried Staffs Association (TSSA) seems at present prepared to fight for the 16%.

The dissatisfaction within the union made itself felt most recently during the miners' strike—when many train drivers (the majority of whom belong to ASLEF) went further than their leaders in support of the miners. While ASLEF's Executive Committee urged normal coal trains to be worked (excepting only 'additional' trains and those facing picket-lines) in many areas this

was not done, the rank-and-file carrying out blacking themselves. Men at goods depots like Norwood and Hither Green in SE London wrote to their E.C. informing them of their refusal to work coal or oil trains for the duration of the miners' strike. In other parts of the country ASLEF and NUR Branch secretaries kept the NUM pickets informed of any coal being moved on the railways so that the NUM could put up picket lines in time.

Another sign of tension in ASLEF was the recent dispute on the South-Western Division of the Southern Region—when train drivers

against the advice of their E C took industrial action because they were losing the bonus paid for working trains which have to travel 125 miles or more (engineering work on the line was causing the cancellation of long mileage turns). Over one thousand drivers reverted to double-manning of trains (mostly single-manned since the Manning Agreement of 1965).

The Executive Committee of ASLEF is bound by the decision of the 1971 Annual Assembly of Delegates that the wage increase now being negotiated is not to be part of a productivity deal. From the Southern Region, ASLEF branches on two of its

three divisions have warned that if, by April 10, the E C has not brought about either a satisfactory settlement or industrial action, then they will strike on their own. This mood has begun to spread to the Eastern Region.

Now is the best time for the three railway unions to take industrial action. The electricity power stations are still low on coal reserves as a result of the miners' strike.

A strike now would bite very quickly and force the Government and the British Railways Board to concede the full 16% in a relatively short time. Any delay will mean that any industrial action will take longer to bite and will increase the length of the strike.

T.U.C. PREPARE FOR THE GENERAL STRIKE!

LABOUR, TAKE THE POWER!

MOBILIZE THE WORKING-CLASS. Mount an immediate national campaign for a £23 national minimum wage; equal pay for women; a freeze on rents and prices; a crash house-building programme; repeal of the Industrial Relations Act; repudiation of all E.E.C. agreements and the breaking off of further negotiations with European capitalists; an immediate General Election.

These demands to be pressed with the full weight of the T.U.C. and Labour Party and backed up by one-day 'general strikes' aimed at forcing concessions where possible and rallying support for the indefinite General Strike.

CAMPAIGN ON A SOCIALIST PROGRAMME. Make clear that the next Labour Government, whatever the manner by which it comes to power will gain the means to implement the above demands by nationalizing all major industries without compensation and under workers' control.

DEMOCRATIZE THE LABOUR MOVEMENT. Away with bureaucracy: ALL officials subject to immediate right of recall. No official to receive more than a skilled workers' wage.

BEFORE ANY INDEFINITE STRIKE IS CALLED:

1.

CONVENE IN ALL LOCALITIES joint meetings of Trades Councils and Labour Party G.M.C.s to discuss the aims of the strike. An emergency joint Conference of the Labour Party and T.U.C. to be held on the eve of the strike itself.

2.

Draw up plans for alternative machinery for distribution of food and maintenance of essential services under the direction of the labour movement.

3.

Prepare leaflets for distribution by

pickets to troops. Secure official backing now for the Servicemen's Trade Union Rights Movement.

IN THE EVENT OF A GENERAL STRIKE SITUATION ARISING:

No return to work in exchange for the offer of elections—any elections must be held **DURING THE STRIKE, AND UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT.**

Establish workers' defence units based on the trade unions for the purpose of maintaining order in place of the official police, who are under the exclusive control of the ruling class.

All policy to be based on the clear understanding that not reform but power is in dispute. Victory will require:

Extension of strike to include (a) the occupation of factories and (b)—as soon as conditions permit—a full return to work under the control of the labour movement.

Working class take over of communications: give full backing and protection to trade unionists in (a) refusing to allow the dissemination of ruling-class propaganda and (b) making the mass media available to all sections of the working class for the free expression of views.

THE T.U.C. AND LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCES, MEETING IN PERMANENT SESSION, TO ASSUME—AS CONDITIONS PERMIT—THE FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT, AND ENSURE THAT THE OLD RULING BODIES AND THEIR SYMBOLS—THE STOCK EXCHANGE HOUSE OF LORDS, CROWN, LAW COURTS, CIVIL SERVICE ARMY AND POLICE HIERARCHIES ETC.—ARE EFFECTIVELY SUPPRESSED AND THEIR BUILDINGS TAKEN OVER.

If our leaders will not act—let them make way for those who will!