

CHARTIST

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FORCE AN ELECTION NOW!

RECALL TRADES UNION CONGRESS!

FROM THE RAILWAYMEN AND the dockers, the National Industrial Relations Court is now meeting its first real challenge. On the outcome of the struggle on these two fronts, the future of trade-unionism could depend. It is therefore in the interests of all workers that the railmen and dockers are not left to fight alone. This struggle could culminate in a General Strike. It is essential that the issues are well understood.

THE TUC MUST BE RE-CALLED. The General Council has reneged on the decisions of last year's Congress in its 'advice' to unions to pay fines and plead their case in the Industrial Relations Court.

This class-collaboration must stop. It is leaving our unions defenceless as the Government prepares to provoke an all-out conflict and to rule by decree under the Emergency Powers Act of 1920.

VIC FEATHER AND THE LABOUR leaders tell us "we must obey the law of the land". But the "law"—as the Industrial Relations Act blatantly shows—is no more than the means by which ruling class interests are enforced.

At this time of deepening world economic crisis capitalist interests in Britain have become incompatible with the continued existence of the trade unions. That is why the National Industrial Relations Court has come into being.

The jolt has even woken up the Labour 'Left' MPs' journal, **TRIBUNE**, to the realities. It rightly pointed out that a Corporate State is planned.

An essential feature of corporatism is that trade unions are transformed into instruments of the state. They are not free to organise industrial action, and their members are not allowed to decide who they want to represent them. That is very close to what is now being attempted in this country.

Sir John Donaldson, with his spine-chilling vision of "an orderly system of industrial relations," is attempting to introduce a totally alien concept into that relationship by demanding that disciplinary powers should be wielded in defence of policies determined by an outside body such as the NIRC. It will not work, and if the unions try to make it work then sooner or later they will end up like Franco's *syndicatos*.

The events of the past few days should have been a sharp lesson to those members of the TUC General Council who thought that the class war could be fought through solicitors. It is to be hoped that they have now learnt it.

TRIBUNE, MAY 19, 1972

But it is no good the **TRIBUNE** bureaucrats 'hoping' their fellow-bureaucrats will learn!

The **TRIBUNE**, which talks of 'non-co-operation' and 'learning lessons' but has nothing to say about forcing an election or preparing a General Strike, is, in the classic tradition of all centrists, evading the underlying issue of the hour, the question of **POWER**, which is being posed ever more imperiously by events.

In Britain the class-struggle has reached the point at which, unless the working class succeeds in con-

quering state power, its own organisations will be destroyed by the capitalist state. This lesson has already been rammed home for many thousands of the most militant workers. In this situation the crisis of leadership has become paramount. Unless a party can be formed which will lead the working class to power, the objective mighty assets of the British labour movement in this struggle—its organisational unity within the framework of the TUC and Labour Party, its confidence and militancy at shop-floor level etc.—will be of no avail. Without a leadership matching—in its strategy, its class-consciousness, its centralisation and its ruthlessness—the Government and state apparatus of the ruling class, all will be lost. Against a well-led army of only thousands, an army of millions will lose if it is badly led.

WITH THEIR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS Act, the Tories have thrown down a challenge which can and must be answered in kind.

It is not true that the TUC leaders are "compelled" to obey this class-law. Were it not for their own collaboration with the Tories, the Government and the Courts would have no power at all. Even at this late hour, were the TUC to use the force of the ten million trade unionists at its disposal it could co-ordinate resistance, make immediate preparations for a General Strike, threaten the very basis of ruling class power and force the Tory Cabinet to concede a General Election. Tory Employment Secretary Maurice Macmillan's panic response even to Vic Feather's mutterings on the TUC's need to "force an election" (he accused the TUC General Sec-



Don't Implement the Rent Bill! Labour—Take the Power!
Prepare for the General Strike!

Part of the Chartist contingent on the London Labour Party
May Day march, April 30.

retary of "wild talk") indicates just how fearful the Tories are of the trade union movement's real power—and just how dependent they are on the reformists' refusal to use it.

VIC FEATHER AND HIS REFORMIST agents must be swept aside. Their refusal to fight and their cringing pleas even now for 'concessions' have doomed them in the eyes of hundreds of thousands of workers. The Tories and their class will make "concessions" only when threatened with the loss of their power. That was the crucial lesson of the miners' strike. The Tories certainly won't "concede" an election now unless they have to—the local elections have shown just how much 'mandate' they have for their

present policies! Since the TUC leaders won't act—indeed are becoming police-agents for the Tories—they must be called to account at an emergency Trades Union Congress. Trade union branches throughout the country are demanding that. From these, and from the working-class rank-and-file of the Labour Party, a new leadership must be formed which will meet the needs of the hour to force an immediate General Election and prepare now for a revolutionary General Strike.

Victory to the Railwaymen!
Victory to the Dockers!
Prepare for the General Strike!
Labour—Take the Power!

POLITICS....AND 'THE LAW'

In their haste to get their way, the ruling class have all but abandoned even the pretence that "the law" stands above Government and classes. True, Sir John Donaldson, President of the National Industrial Relations Court, has repeated ad nauseum that his Court "is independent of the Government and in no way concerned with its policies." Quite so, m'lud.

But in that case, why is it—to take, for instance, the "cooling off" order—that Sir John's Court itself does not have to believe that a "cooling off" period "would be conducive to a settlement", but has merely to be satisfied that the Government in the person of the Minister of State for Employment believes it would? And further: the Court does not have to be satisfied itself that a strike or "irregular action short of a strike" is under way—merely that the Secretary of State is genuinely satisfied. And although it

does have to be convinced that the industrial action at stake "is likely to threaten the national economy", it appears that it can satisfy itself about that merely by seeking affidavits from officials of two other Government departments—the Department of the Environment and the Department of Trade and Industry. For this extraordinary Court the "national interest" is at stake if two Government departments say it is. Moreover the main condition to be fulfilled before a compulsory ballot can be imposed is the following. The Court must be satisfied that there are "reasons for doubting" whether the workers are willingly involved in industrial action.

The Minister does not have to give any reasons for his belief, he merely has to satisfy the Court that he believes there are.

In short, it seems that this Court's "independence of the Government" is of a most mysterious kind.

AN EMERGENCY LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE!

AN EMERGENCY LABOUR PARTY Conference is immediately needed to come to the aid of the trade union movement.

As more and more trade unionists demand the forcing of an election, it is vital that the Labour Party prepare its new election manifesto without delay and link this to the struggle to smash the Industrial Relations Act.

Labour's NEC gave moral support to the Transport and General Workers Union in its short-lived 'refusal' to pay the £55,000 fine.

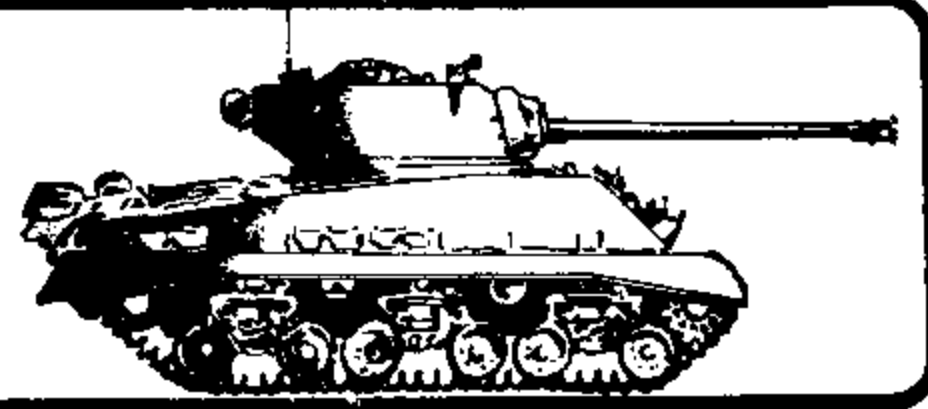
But unless the NEC—on behalf of the Party as a whole—is made to identify itself in full with the heroic defiance of the rank-and-file dockers, railmen and other 'law-breakers' in the trade union movement it will not even begin to force an election.

THE PASSAGE BELOW APPEARED in the May 1972 issue of "East-West Digest", Monday Club magazine (Editor: Geoffrey Stewart-Smith, M.P.). This magazine is sent, in its own words,

"to every Member of the House of Commons, irrespective of party, as both a contribution to national security and to the furtherance of human freedom in Communist countries."

WE REPRINT the extract for a simple reason. It helps illustrate that even if most "revolutionaries" in Britain belittle the importance of Armed Forces work, the ruling class certainly do not. The Monday Club is not some irrelevant "fringe" organization. Its members have close personal links with many of the top brass in the three services. And under Heath it is undoubtedly a powerful influence — if not the dominant one — in the thinking of the Government itself. Here is what it has to say:

Defence
on
Land



Incitement to disaffection in the army

Soldiers Trade Union Rights. Chartist Publications. 56 pp. 10 pence.
A DEMAND that the next Labour government should introduce trade unionism into H.M. Armed Forces is made by the publishers of the latest booklet put out by the Chartist movement. Those concerned with sedition and security take the publication seriously not because of its ostensible content but because of the underlying intent. It is felt that a unionised Army, of the kind being assiduously canvassed also in Sweden, is but a short step from a Workers' Militia, which would very soon disown the military role of resenting foreign military forces, supporting NATO and backing up the civil power in an anarchical situation. Stage Three would be the imposition of "Socialism" in Britain and co-operating with foreign military forces in maintaining it as now occurs in Czechoslovakia.

Under the guise of some superior form of democratic rights, the booklet is advocating Stage One in what could become a drive for a system of anti-democratic and tyrannical totalitarianism.

The material in the booklet is stated to have been compiled from a "mass of notes" by "our soldier friends." If any of these soldiers had regard to the fact that they were voluntarily recruited individuals on highly secure fixed term service contracts with an early retirement pension they did not (or were not allowed to) demonstrate the fact to the editor or editors.

The compilers seem to be most frustrated by the existence of the provision that while serving a soldier may not refuse to carry out a lawful command and that the laws of mutiny, treason and treachery exist. It is implied that this oppression is peculiar to other ranks whereas officers are equally or in practice more rigorously bound. Of course, treason and treachery are also civilian offences. The Chartist movement see that the most promising way of undermining this, to them, unpromising state of affairs is to wheedle some elementary "democratic" concessions from the next Labour Minister of Defence. From such a base of eminently reasonable concessions in any modern Army further "advances" could then be wrung.

Specific targets are discernible from the booklet ranging from rights as to length of hair (to which immense importance is attached), abolition of batmen (because "a soldier wants to be a soldier"), abolition of kit inspections, introduction of personal quarters with privacy and free from inspection, long prior notice of drafting on grounds of personal inconvenience, introduction of juries of fellow ranked personnel and the abolition of Courts Martial.

The book in a curious way serves to confirm that from the present day Army many of the excessive nonsenses of the past have been eliminated — otherwise they would assuredly have been paraded. Some of the examples quoted to underline the iniquity of life in the ranks would bring a smile to the face of ex-National Servicemen (for whom subsequent life has often been an anti-climax), a wry laugh from those who fought the totalitarian tyranny of National Socialism in 1939-45 and convulsions to pre-war regulars.

The timing of the booklet from the viewpoint of the oppressed soldier, who feels himself to be an instrument of reaction rather than one of civil order and peace, is poor since some 13,000 of them must know that the mentality behind this publication has similarities to that of the extreme left wing gunmen, who are busy murdering his comrades in Northern Ireland.

Defence
at
Sea



The silent submarine threat

BY VICE ADMIRAL FRED G. BENNETT, US NAVY, COMMANDER ANTISUBMARINE WARFARE FORCE
IN SPITE recent significant surface ship improvement

WHAT ARE we to make of all this? To start with, the reference to our working "under the guise" of democratic demands is stuff and nonsense. We have never "disguised" that we work for a social revolution — a transfer of power from the ruling class to our own class. True, the Transport and General Workers' Union initiated the modern movement for a soldiers' union on a non-political basis. True, the Soldiers' Trade Union Rights Movement was formed by a group of interested soldiers purely with their grievances in mind. But despite these facts, we Chartists have always been quite open about our own distinct political motives in giving support. Yes, we really are concerned for the future of the labour movement in Britain were the Army to remain entirely in the hands of its officer caste — linked as it is by a thousand threads to the Monarchy, the aristocracy and the Tory Party. The Monday Club cannot fool us by appealing to "democracy" as against "tyrannical totalitarianism", or by bandying about such words as "treachery", "treason" and "mutiny". The present Government is brutally preparing for a show-down with our trade unions. It is hoping to provoke a General Strike like that of 1926 — which left the working-class crushed, hopeless and an easy

prey to the crippling Trades Disputes Act of 1927 and later the mass unemployment of the Thirties. Above all, it is preparing to use the Armed Forces to ensure its wins — as it did in the years 1919-1926. It is interesting that in the very month that the East-West Digest attacks us for supporting the demand for soldiers' trade union rights, another section of the bourgeois press should be reminding its class of the valuable political uses of the Army. The Sunday Times Magazine of May 7, in its series "Unofficial History of the Twentieth Century", describes how in January 1919 the Cabinet

moved troops, machine-guns and even tanks into Glasgow. Winston Churchill regarded this as a merely tentative measure. He told the Cabinet: "By going gently at first we should get the support we wanted from the nation, and then troops could be used more effectively." By August 1919, Ministers had ordered a massive concentration of force in Liverpool. Three battalions, some 2600 troops, composed what the Morning Post called "the occupying military force". The battleship HMS Valiant and two destroyers were deployed in the Mersey, with steam up; tanks patrolled the streets.

ON APRIL 4, 1921, the magazine goes on, the Cabinet was still flaying out and the War Secretary, Worthington-Evans, said:

BRITAIN'S ARMED FORCES:

A THREAT TO THE

LABOUR MOVEMENT?

"We need 18 battalions to hold London. We had three battalions at Malta, two of which we could bring back home. There were four battalions in Silesia. They could be brought back to the Rhine at once." Lord Curzon, in charge of foreign policy, objected: to pull out from Silesia would bring "a possibly serious disaster". Chamberlain snapped back: "We are in front of a situation here which may require all our forces. I am all for holding the British coal-fields rather than the Silesian ones."

IF THERE is anyone who considers this subject merely comical he might remember that London's dockers did not think so when, one morning during the General Strike five years later, they found their dock gates and buildings guarded by a battalion of the Grenadier Guards and hundreds of Naval ratings — fully armed, many of them behind mounted Lewis guns at various strong points. It did not seem at all comical. Because it was through this brute intimidation that the Government broke the docks blockade. It allowed a vast army of middle-class scabs (stock-brokers, students etc.,) to unload food and drive it out in convoys (the first one escorted by twenty armoured cars manned by men of the Royal Tank Corps) to an emergency depot set up in Hyde Park. This was the first real victory of the Government in the General Strike.

THE SUNDAY Times in its next issue (May 14) brings the picture up to 1972. The Army, it writes, will shortly announce that the new Commandant of the School of Infantry at Warminster in Wiltshire is Brigadier Frank Kitson. The Brigadier will thereby become in effect the Army's number one military educator (the infantry is the largest single part of the Army, and every infantry officer expects to pass twice during his career through Warminster, which also trains senior N.C.O's). So the appointment is, the paper explains, "one of a number of signs of a basic change in the nature of the British Army."

FOR KITSON is the Army's premier expert on "counter-insurgency", whose ideas,

"taken to their logical conclusion, could end the Army's long-cultivated tradition of political non-involvement."

Let the Sunday Times speak for itself: "Briefly, Kitson's theories are addressed to the proposition—one endorsed by the Prime Minister, among others—that internal subversion and civil anarchy represent the dangers of the future, rather than orthodox international war. Quite apart from Ulster, Brigadier Kitson is not afraid to envisage the possibility that protest and unrest in mainland Britain might reach a point where "the Army would be required to restore the situation rapidly."

He is also interested in the idea that the Army might take part in the monitoring of people suspected as political subversives."

SO THERE we have it. The Army is moving up behind Heath in preparing itself for a "crack-down" on the labour movement. Let no shop-steward or trade-union official reading this deceive himself. By "subversives" he means above all not "student revolutionaries" but the militants of the trade union movement — even if their only intention is to exercise their rights and fulfill their trade-union duties in the way they have always done. Heath's new "Industrial Relations Act" and the Army's "new ideas" are two different aspects of one and the same thing.

It is not because of us revolutionaries, but because of the Tory Government, that a General Strike—i.e. a spontaneous 'uprising'—has now become inevitable. Each day brings us closer to it.

For us, preparation for it means doing everything in our power to reduce the duration and the victims of this inevitable explosion to a minimum. For the more decisive are the actions of the working class, the less bloodshed will there be.

Do we think that this requires, first of all, that we prepare arms, draft a plan of military actions, divide the country and each city into specific sections—in a word do everything which is now surely being done by Heath's Government and its military and police advisors in their expectation of "civil disorder?"

No, that is not how we trotskysts understand our role. To prepare for the General Strike means for us first and foremost to bring clarity into the minds of the advanced worker-militants and their followers, to explain to them that an open conflict is inevitable; that they face deprivation of all their basic rights; that they can preserve these only by force; that a

May 9 1926: Armoured cars escort food convoy along East India Dock Road towards Hyde Park

IN 1970, John Cousins of the Transport and General Workers' Union insisted that "the unionization of the services would make the possibility of a military coup d'etat more remote". He was right. Let us remember that even what inadequate democratic rights we have in Britain (for example, the principle of one man, one vote), were won for us in generations of struggle against the ruling class at every stage. Today it is clear that, once again, the real threat to our hard-won democratic freedoms comes not from the labour movement, and not from any possible "mutiny" by the ordinary soldiers who make up the mass of the Army — but from the property-owning class and the tiny clique of Army officers like Kitson whose loyalties are not to the people and not even to Parliament — but simply and solely to "the Crown". As was rightly stated in the introduction to the "Soldiers' Charter" a year ago:

The only guarantee for the labour movement against the sort of "blind obedience" of soldiers which leads to military coups and dictatorship is a powerful trade union movement in the Army. With soldiers' committees and the right to organize, the army ranks will be in a position to think for themselves.

IN THE FINAL analysis — doubtless only as an absolute last resort — they could refuse to be used by "the Crown" (remember that the Greek Colonels acted in the NAME of the Crown) in, for example, an attempted "coup" directed against the threat of a left-wing Labour Government.

THE MONDAY CLUB compares us with the IRA. This is to alienate the soldiers and suggest we are planning an armed uprising. Are we? The Chartist movement is trotskyst. And here we have no need for originality: we may fittingly answer in the way Leon Trotsky—the future founder of the Red Army—himself replied to a similar challenge from the tsarist Court.

mighty organisation and centralised revolutionary party of the whole working class is indispensable; that in a General Strike Power is in dispute and it is necessary to go to the end—to the full conquest of the state—in order to win; and that there is no other road.

WHAT DO WE THINK is necessary for the General Strike to be victorious? The sympathy of the troops! It is necessary first of all to attract the army to our side. To compel the soldiers to understand the shameful role that they are being and will be forced to play not only abroad and not only in Ireland—but against their own people and their own class in Britain itself. This is the task we set ourselves first and foremost.

Important as weapons and the military arts are, the main power does not lie in weapons as the struggle begins.

As Trotsky himself declared in his speech to the tsarist court:

"When the soldiers march into the streets to quell the crowds and come face to face with the crowds and become convinced that these crowds, this people will not leave the pavements until they gain what they must have, that they are ready to pile corpses upon corpses—when the soldiers see and are convinced that the people have come to struggle seriously, to the very end, then the hearts of the soldiers, as has happened in every revolution, must inevitably waver because the soldiers cannot fail to become dubious about the stability of the regime they are serving and cannot fail to believe in the victory of the people".

ORGANIZE THE SCHOOLS!

NOBODY WAS MORE SUPRISED when 3,000 striking school students assembled at Hyde Park on Wednesday, May 17 than the organisers of the demonstration, the Schools Action Union. What had happened was this. A strike by 150 third-formers at Rutherford Comprehensive set a snow-ball rolling. Although few of London's school students had ever heard of the SAU, thousands decided a strike was a good idea after being told about it through television and the press. After all, they too hated the petty discipline of school life and their uniforms. And so the 130 third-formers were joined by another 3,000 or so students who tried to assemble at Trafalgar Square (the organisers had failed to book it) on the appointed day.

We CHARTIST supporters at schools in the South London area supported the strike whole-heartedly—despite our criticisms of the SAU (which does not allow members of the Labour Party, LPYS, IS or IMG to join it, and which defends Stalin's acts and supports Mao and everything going on in China and which has always been small and disorganised).

We suggest that everyone at school should join the National Union of School Students, whose inaugural delegate Conference took place in London on May 20. But be warned: the NUSS is dominated by the Young Communist League, which means it is not very militant. We should join to politicise it, fighting for a strategy to link the demands of school students to the organisations of the working class in the struggle to bring down the Tory Government. We should compel it to organise strike action where necessary—although understanding that such action can only force limited demands, and then only if it is WELL ORGANISED (which the SAU strike was not). Labour Party and trade union members should support those who joined the school strike, and defend SAU members arrested by police. For in fact more and more rank-and-file trade unionists will be facing what we school students have faced: a barrage of attack from the Press, the Police and the Courts.

by Kevin Moore

(Norwood Young Socialist and ex-SAU member expelled for "trotskyist activities" and for supporting the Labour Party).

LAST MONTH'S general election in Italy almost doubled the fascist's parliamentary strength. The "Italian Social Movement" (MSI), led by former Mussolini henchman Giorgio Almirante, increased its share of the vote from 5.8% to 8.7% in the polling for the Chamber of deputies, and now has 56 members there instead of 30. In the Senate the fascists doubled their representation from 13 seats to 26, with 9.2% of the votes (compared with 6.7% in 1968).

Taken with the continued stalemate between the so-called "centre" parties, and the drop in the Communists' share of the vote (for the first time since the Second World War) this result is an ominous one for the Italian working class.

THE FASCISTS mean business. As long ago as 1969 the British "Guardian" and "Observer" newspapers (December 6 and 7) published a "strictly confidential" letter — from the Greek Government to their Ambassador in Rome — revealing links between the rich, highly-organized fascists and the Italian Army, as well as between both of these and the Colonels regime in Greece. Since then, secret NATO documents have been uncovered implicating MSI sympathisers in the officer corps in a plot to stage a Greek-style coup.

Already now the Fascists can rely on consistent support from some of the most powerful Italian industrialists, police chiefs and figures in the state and armed forces hierarchy. Most prominent perhaps has been the Commander of NATO's Mediterranean fleet, Admiral Gino Birindelli, who gave up his post in order to stand for the fascists in last month's election.

living (a 6.6% increase last year over the year before) and the prospect of more unemployment (already running at 1 million).

The employers have been looking with tear upon the nationwide strikes and struggles which, since 1969, have united the Catholic (CISL), centre (UIL) and Communist-Socialist (CGL) trade unions in a massive movement for wages, pensions, social services and work. They are thankful that they escaped the near-revolutionary situation of autumn 1969. And now, in preparation for a more decisive showdown, a growing minority of them — like their predecessors in the 1920's and their German counterparts in the 1930's — are putting their money on (or rather into the political funds of) the fascists. They believe that they alone have the means and the will to fight: to build up a force of equipped and trained strong-arm men to defend capitalist property-interests and shatter the organizations embodying working-class power.

In the face of this, the Communist Party leaders have behaved like reformists everywhere. Like the leaders of British labour faced with the Tory attacks on the unions, they have simply capitulated all along the line. Their members lead the biggest of the three trade union organizations — the CGIL. They are the second biggest party in Parliament, and the largest Communist Party of the Western world. The mass power at their disposal is potentially without limit.

Yet instead of using it and challenging for power on a clear anti-capitalist programme

ITALY: FASCIST DANGER LOOMS

by Jon Pickering

WHO SAYS the ruling class is not preparing for revolution?

Its press is becoming almost obsessed with the subject.

Here is just one recent example: a main feature article in the Evening Standard early last month. The author, Milton Shulman, points out to his class quite starkly (much more so than most 'revolutionary' papers have been doing) the implications of a General Strike:

White heat of revolution

EVENING STANDARD, TUESDAY, MAY 2, 1972

The Government may win battle after another, but a confrontation will make war uglier. The clear-cut policy of the TUC's non-operation will leave and defiance as the only remaining alternative ways of beating the Bill.

Successive cooling-off bids instead of dampening controversy may only raise the temperature of the conflict. How many long-off periods, then, before the white-heat of revolution?

This seems a far-fetched, mist prophecy for a soci-stepped in respect for the let me outline a scenario which a revolutionary situation might come about. The miners' strike taught militants in the union movement how easy it was to lyse the normal life of nation. Mass picketing of gas stations until fuel out brings Britain to a

standstill. A six or eight-week strike could do the trick. Any large group of workers — railwaymen, dockers, steelmen, miners next time round — could adopt these or similar tactics to make their power felt. The fact that such activities might be illegal under the Act is hardly likely to deter workers from adopting them if they neither respect nor fear the Act.

Confronted with the need to keep essential national services going, the Government would be obliged to use police to force their way through massed pickets or send in troops. In such a tense crisis, blood would probably be spilt. The use of troops or police would outrage the trade union movement and a General Strike would be declared. In such a situation, the Government could hardly call

for a mandate from the people to decide their will in the matter. A General Election during a General Strike is not a particularly practical proposition. And even if the Government did win an election provoked by a conflict with the unions, a large majority in the Commons would not reconcile a bitter working class to their lot under the law.

In a General Strike situation how could the Government run the country? It is not likely that the middle class could come to their help as in 1926. Nor is it likely that, if they did, the workers would stand by today and pacifically allow volunteers or strike-breakers to take on their jobs. A coalition government would be out of the question because the Labour Party would destroy itself by such a move. What, then, is left?

The Government would have to rule by decree under emergency powers. Parliament might, indeed, have to be suspended. Ultra Left-wing elements would whip up emotions and opposition among the workers. Large-scale arrests of dissident leaders would have to be made. Demonstrations would turn into riots. People would be killed and wounded. If all this sounds hair-raising and improbable just remember what might have happened in this country if the miners had refused to accept the Wilberforce findings and gone on blacking out the country for another four or five weeks. When commentators and politicians talk about the breakdown of law, the dangers of anarchy, the governments and unions being pushed over the brink, they are really predicting a General Strike with all its unknown consequences.

Throughout the election campaign, all the major parties have emphasised (with the fascists setting the pace) the question of defending "law and order" against alleged anarchist violence. For the fascists it was only a minor set-back when, earlier this year, a certain Angelo Angeli defected from one of their "action squadrons" and revealed how the MSI had bombed its own Milan headquarters—to throw the blame on its left-wing opponents. But this and other incidents have helped throw light on the fascists' methods—and in particular an outrage which has stood at the centre of Italian politics for two-and-a-half years. This was the placing of a suitcase-bomb in the Agricultural Bank in Milan on December 12, 1969. The bank — filled at the time with a crowd of peasants settling their affairs — blew up. 16 people died and 88 were wounded.

Shortly afterwards a noted fascist, Armando Calzolari, was murdered whilst walking his dog. A friend of his, although a fascist himself, accused fellow-fascists of the killing. He told a newspaper that at a recent internal meeting Calzolari has cried "you are all murderers!" It seems Calzolari was then silenced on security grounds.

But despite this and mountains of other evidence implicating the fascists in the Agricultural Bank outrage, the police and judges have been throwing the blame on "trotskyists, maoists and anarchists". They and the extreme right found an ideal scapegoat in the anarchist Pietro Valpreda.

The death of the left-wing publisher Feltrinelli — found blown up beside an electricity pylon on March 15 of this year — is evidently another detail in the fascists' elaboratè frame-up.

WITH ENEMIES like these, it is necessary for the working class to be absolutely ruthless. The Italian capitalists will clearly stop at nothing. The advance of the MSI at this time is not an accident. It is a symptom of the world crisis of capitalism — particularly since Nixon's measures of August 15 last year—with the levelling-off in international trade affecting the Italian economy in the shape of reduced profits, reduced productivity and a worsening balance of payments.

As these effects are felt, more and more sections of the employing class see that their survival rests on their ability to break the resistance of the unions: which have been fighting back both against the rising cost of

they have concentrated all their efforts on gaining admittance into a bourgeois government coalition. To make themselves look "respectable" they have dropped all pretence at socialism from their programme. Not only have they supported the Common Market and said they are against nationalization, (arguing instead for "more democratic" control of capitalism and "workers' participation" in industry). They are actually for remaining in NATO! Their strategy for "fighting fascism" is to try to gain middle-class votes — by presenting themselves as a better middle-class party than the others!

This is a recipe for disaster. If sections of the lower middle class and poor peasantry in the South are looking to the fascists—it is not because they support the monopolies, but, on the contrary, because they have lost hope in the present system and see no way out. Unless the Communist Party can show that it is serious in the struggle for power, it will not convince these people that the working class can offer them a solution. And unless the working class can find a revolutionary leadership enabling it to act decisively against the ruling class—and soon—it may face a terrible disaster in the not-too-distant future.

The Communist Party leaders in Italy are class-traitors who must be exposed and politically smashed. In seeking "respectability" and urging their supporters to "keep calm", obey "law and order" and "not be provoked" by the fascists, they are repeating exactly the despicable response of the Social Democrats to the same threat in the early 'twenties. After their ignominious departure from the political scene, Trotsky wrote:

"TO THE LAST hour, they restrained the workers with might and main from giving battle to Mussolini's bands. It availed them nothing. The Crown, along with the upper crust of the bourgeoisie, swung over to the side of fascism. Convinced at the last moment that fascism was not to be checked by obedience, the Social Democrats issued a call to the workers for a general strike. But their proclamation suffered a fiasco. The reformists had dampened the powder so long, in their fear lest it should explode, that when they finally and with a trembling hand applied a burning fuse to it, the powder did not catch."

NO TO TORY RENT RISES

MAKE THE LABOUR COUNCILLORS FIGHT!

1. The Struggle in Islington by Valerie Veness

IN THE LONDON Borough of Islington's Labour-controlled Council, the fight over the Housing Finance Bill is hotting up.

Islington Council—which consists of 65 Labour and 5 Tories—has one of the biggest housing problems in the Greater London Area. Labour gained control in May last year, after being almost annihilated in the local elections of 1968.

A SPLIT has now emerged in the controlling Labour group—over its decision to implement the Housing Finance Bill. The first vote in the group was taken in April, just before the meeting of all Labour Councillors in the G L C area organized by the London Labour Party. The vote was then: 28 for; 18 against. In spite of this sizeable minority against implementation and the absence of a number of councillors from the meeting, the deputy leader announced at the

all-London meeting that Islington intended to implement the Bill.

The 18 who voted against implementation formed themselves into an organized group and held meetings to decide which was the best way to get the decision reversed. They attended tenants' meetings and encouraged tenants to attend the official meetings called by the Council in order to get their support.

THEY MANAGED to force another vote in the Labour group. This time the vote was: for implementation, 34; against, 20. With two Councillors not present for the vote joining them, the 'rebel' group now emerged as 22 strong.

THEY CONTINUED organizing with the tenants, and called a big demonstration to be held at the next Council meeting. The rebel Councillors' attempts to raise the Bill at this meeting were continually ruled out of order by

the Mayor. The tenants in the public gallery became very annoyed at the Mayor's delaying tactics and the Council meeting finally broke up in uproar, with the majority group calling the rebels communist agitators, and with the Labour Mayor calling in the police to clear the gallery of his own Labour supporters.

SINCE THEN veiled threats have been made against the rebels that if they do not toe the line they will be expelled from the Labour group. But contingency plans are already being made against this. The rebel group

has now decided to push for a special Council Meeting on the Act so that they can show in public debate where they stand. They are backed up in this by the fact that all three Islington Constituency Labour Parties have come out against the Bill and are asking their Councillors not to implement it. For a Special Council Meeting to be called, a small number of Councillors must make a request to the Mayor. The Council is now having its yearly mayoral elections—and the new Lady Mayor-elect is one of the rebel group.

2. Stop the Retreat!

by Graham Bash

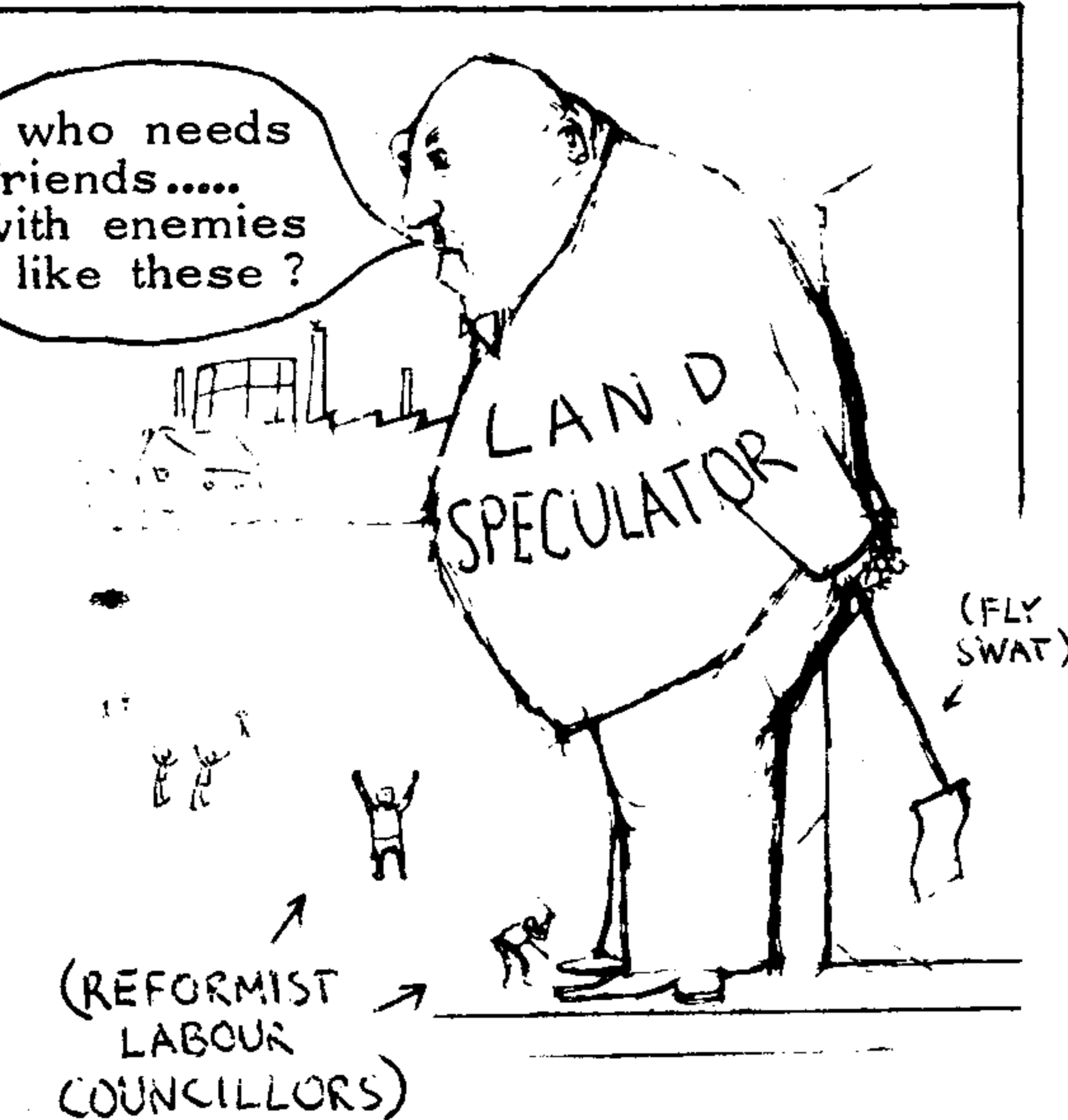
WITH LABOUR swept back into office in local government, with the municipal elections in England and Wales having brought 56 towns and cities back under Labour control — with huge gains in Birmingham, Teeside and Merseyside — the responsibilities on the Labour Councils are now enormous.

The Labour Councils have a choice — implement the Housing Finance Bill and remain the unpaid rent collectors for the Tory Government, or stand up and fight, refuse to implement, and use their position to mobilise massive resistance to the Tory plans. There is no middle course.

Outside London, resistance is growing. Liverpool, Sheffield and Birmingham are preparing to fight, and so is Glasgow. It is crucial that these Labour Councils be backed to the full against the Government.

But already in London, where Labour was swept to power last year, council after council has backed down. Here our leaders—so afraid are they of the Tory Government—have in defiance of the decisions of Labour's London Regional Conference abdicated responsibility and left the tenants to their fate. Here only a tiny handful of Labour Councils are still committed to defy the Bill—amongst them Camden. They made a tremendous move in the right direction placing a half-page advert in the Evening Standard, clearly stating in bold point, "Camden Council is convinced that the Government's 'fair rents' policy will lead to massive rent increases for both council and private tenants. So the council won't impose fair rents, and it won't put up council rents this year by £1 a week either".

As we go to press, Waltham Forest still seem to be taking a firm line. Indeed such has been the militancy



from this part of East London that the deputy leader of the Tory Group has said that to refuse implementation would be the first step towards setting up anti-Government barricades around Waltham Forest. "It will put us on the slippery slope towards becoming a no-go area to law and order" he warned, whilst the infamous leader of the Tory Group Tom Brandon, declared, "There are people masquerading as members of the Labour Party who are preaching revolution".

But although Camden and Waltham Forest are fighting, in the rest of London only Hackney and Greenwich are still with them. The Executive of the Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party have done absolutely nothing to see that the decisions of Regional Conference (see Chartist No. 13) were implemented.

Let us be clear. The only demand we put on Labour Councillors is that they represent our class interests, and not the Tories!! They must lead a political struggle against the Bill, standing four-square on a programme of nationalization of all building land, banks, insurance companies and the building industry, and linking up with the fight of the industrial wing of our movement to bring down this Tory Government. If they are not prepared to do that, then let them resign and make way for those who are.

RECALL T.U.C. SAYS WATERLOO RAILMAN

BRO. D. FULLICK (ASLEF), Secretary of the Local Negotiating Committee for the Footplate Staff at Waterloo, has played an important role in organizing railmen's resistance to the National Industrial Relations Court in South London. In this interview for the CHARTIST, he gives his views on some of the issues involved:

CHARTIST: How do you think the ballot will go?

BRO. FULLICK: There will be overwhelming support for the trade unions. Everyone knows this is a move to hit the unions.

Q: What is the mood of the men?

A: More militant than I've ever known since I've been on the rail ways, and that includes the 1955 strike. Especially on Southern Region, where you've got a lot of younger men. At Waterloo it is 100% for militant action. On the Sunday at the time of the first cooling-off period, both myself and my committee emphasised all we would have to go through if we continued our action. But it was unanimous to go on. The pressure came from the floor.

Q: How do you think the Industrial Relations Act can be fought?

A: Under the current set-up, where the TUC General Council have let the unions down, as shown with the Transport and General Workers' Union, the individual unions have little alternative. But

there should be an immediate recall of the TUC. The TUC leaders roared like lions when the Bill was formulated and squeaked like a mouse when it was first implemented. These are the guilty men, not the leaders of the individual unions.

Q: What do you see as the tasks of a re-called TUC?

A: To mould the trade union movement into a solid front with the aim of immediately defeating the Tory Government and replacing it with a Labour Government with firm commitments to abolish the Act in its entirety. The main function of the TUC is to look after the people who pay money into the organisation. After all, you don't get knighted for representing your men.

Q: What do you think of the possibilities of a General Strike?

A: We're heading rapidly that way for the first time in my lifetime. We should strive to avoid it but if it does come it will mean that the complete political structure will disappear. When we jump, we do so with a vengeance. It will mean the collapse of everything.

Rule 35 (5) ASLEF Rule Book (regarding Branches affiliating to outside bodies): "Affiliation with Labour Representation Committees, Soldiers' and Workmen's Councils", etc. must be paid for out of Branch political fund.

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