

The
STRIKE SPECIAL

Red Mole

Strike Special No.1 25 July 1972 Price 2p.

**AGAINST
THE ACT!**

AGAINST

THE

GOVERNMENT!



Following the great miners' strike, the dockers' challenge to the I.R. Act is the second working class offensive against the main policies of the Government. It comes at a time when the Heath leadership has never been weaker: with it back against the wall in Ireland, facing a monetary crisis over the pound, its economic policy in disarray, and confronted by deep social discontent over unemployment, rising prices and sharp rent increases. One of the pickets outside Pentonville put the situation in a nutshell: this is the time for the working class to 'throw the punch'.

The most immediate task of the moment is to **FREE THE FIVE!** This is a task for mass action by the working class which must be combined with preparations to **RESIST FURTHER ARREST!**

Already the strike movement has spread far beyond the docks, extending hour by hour to wider sections of workers. We must **GENERALISE THE STRIKE**, till it embraces the whole working class.

The movement launched by the dockers is not a passive withdrawal of labour for a wage claim, but a political struggle against the I.R. Act and the Government. Therefore, the old industrial tradition of leaving the factory and going home must be replaced by the new tactic of **MASS OCCUPATIONS OF FACTORIES AS BASES FOR EXTENDING THE STRUGGLE.**

From such bases the miners' tactic of **MASS PICKETTING OF OTHER FACTORIES STILL WORKING** must be organised, as well as all the other necessary activities for spreading the movement.

From the start this struggle is being led against the opposition or passivity of the official trade union leaderships, and while the fight must go on to win every

must remain in the hands of the rank and file organisations the successful conclusion. Therefore **MASS MEETINGS MUST BE CALLED TO ELECT STRIKE COMMITTEES** to lead every group of striking workers.

As the struggle develops new tactics and methods of struggle will be thrown up by the initiative of the masses and these must be quickly reflected and generalised by the strike committees. Therefore these bodies must be subject to immediate recall and re-election.

Bodies like trades councils, because they are based purely on delegates from trade union branches, are too narrow for the task of uniting the representatives of the great mass of workers in factories and housing estates. Therefore, as in 1926, **COUNCILS OF ACTION MUST BE FORMED** to draw together all the forces of the working class in every locality. As the local leadership of the strike the councils of action must include delegates of strike committees, Tenant Associations and all other rank and file organisations of the working class in the locality.

The state will not stand idle in the face of a massive working class challenge to capitalist authority and, as in the miners strike and all other great class battles, violence will be attempted against strikers, pickets and militants. As in 1926, to deter and resist such violence, **WORKERS' DEFENCE GROUPS MUST BE FORMED BY STRIKE COMMITTEES AND COUNCILS OF ACTION.** Not one more worker must fall into the hands of the police, the courts and the jails of the capitalist state.

While the decisive force in the struggle will be that of the organised working class, we must immediately create **SUPPORT COMMITTEES** embracing all those ready

THE AIMS OF THE STRUGGLE: While the dockers and against the Defence of the 5 Docks and against the Industrial Relations Act, millions of working class people will desire to go beyond these limited objectives and fight to **BRING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT.** They want an end to unemployment, rising prices and the daily exploitation they suffer under capitalism. And as the mass strike becomes general the whole power of the capitalist class over the society will be called into question. The Labour Party and TUC leaders will strain every ounce of energy to divert the struggle back within 'the rule of law and Parliamentary channels'. They will follow Prentice in saying that the law may be bad "but it is the law and nobody can be above it". Parliament may be bad, the Labour traitors will say, but nobody can be above it.

Parliament is nothing but a fraud, giving the workers the chance to choose which servants of the ruling class will oppress them. We do not call for Parliament to solve the social crisis shaking British society. We fight for **A NATIONAL CONGRESS OF FACTORY AND WORK-PLACE DELEGATES** - a truly democratic body directly reflecting the will of the whole working population of this country. Only such a body can discuss and find a way of solving the problems of the working class in their interests. This is the basic objective which must be fought for in strike committees, Councils of Action, Trade Unions and other working class organisations as the struggle develops.

WHAT LEADERSHIP FOR THE STRUGGLE?

The Labour leaders stand against the struggle of the dockers. All their actions over the last months have been directed towards avoiding an open fight against

the Act and the Government. As the movement spreads these people will change their tune and try to recapture the lead in order to be able to stab in the back more effectively at an opportune moment.

Many militants are looking to the so-called trade union and Labour Party 'lefts', the LCDTU and the Communist Party to give an alternative lead in the struggle. But will they seek to unite the working class on the basis of a fight against the main force of the ruling class - the state, Parliament and the other agencies of fraud and repression? And are they prepared to make *this* the line that divides those acting in the interests of the working class from those who will lead the class to defeat? So far these 'left-wingers' have done nothing to organise such a fight, draw such dividing lines. We do not believe they can change their outlook overnight. But the test will come in practice when the measures we have proposed are fought for. We call for an **EMERGENCY CONFERENCE OF THE LIAISON COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENCE OF TRADES UNIONS** to thrash out the objectives and methods of struggle to be adopted by militants and to be fought for up and down the country.

At the same time it is vitally necessary that all the organisations of the revolutionary left be drawn together in united action to provide a revolutionary alternative in the absence of a revolutionary party for the British working class. The IMG has therefore put out a call for **AN IMMEDIATE CONFERENCE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL ORGANISATIONS ON THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT TO WORK OUT JOINT ACTION IN THE STRUGGLE.**

FOR A LABOUR GOVERNMENT? YES - BUT WHAT THEN?

The Labour leaders outdo the revolutionary left in the adjectives with which they attack the Tories. To listen to the Labour Party leaders you would sometimes think that Heath was the greatest enemy of the working class since Hitler. Barbara Castle says the government is 'barbaric'. Heffer said it is carrying out a 'war' against the working class. If this is the case then no effort must be spared to get this government removed from office.

But what is the reality? There have already been four huge political strikes against the Industrial Relations Act. The Labour leaders did not support one of them. Now five dockers have been arrested. Thousands of men are out in sympathy. If this government is 'barbaric' every Labour leader should waste no time in calling for the extending of the strike, and for no retreat until the Heath government is out of office. Instead, at best, a strange silence exists. Where are the great appeals for action from the Labour Party or from the TUC and the trade union leaderships? Some Labour leaders even go further and actively attack the arrested dockers and the strikers.

However, despite the actions of its leaders we are actually for a Labour government, even led by Wilson and company replacing the Tories. Not because we think Wilson is any better than Heath. The problems of the working class can only be solved by a government of the working class, a state of the working class, and an economy controlled by the working class. Any actions that need to be taken must have their chief aim to explain this. The Labour Party defends capitalism, but it is not a simple capitalist party like the Tories. Millions of workers see it as the party of their class. Revolutionaries must always fight with such a party against an openly capitalist one. But a Labour government is by no means the end of the question. The immediate aim must be to get the present government out of office and every Labour party supporter and trade unionist must ask himself the question "After this, what next?"

A Labour Government's dilemma
Would a Labour government get rid of the Industrial Relations Act and release the dockers? The answer to this is probably 'yes' if it was put in office directly out of a struggle for these objectives. What would be the result? How would Labour then be forced to act? What problems would it face? To understand that we have to understand why the Industrial Relations Act and its Labour counterpart - In Place of Strife - were introduced in the first place. Once that is decided then we can see where the real power lies.

Firstly the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act would not by any means be the end of the story. Simply repealing the Act is not going to solve the problems of unemployment or housing or prices.

As long as industry remains in the hands of private employers then production is for profit. If profit is not maintained then neither is production. If production is not maintained and increased then there are no goods and resources to get rid of unemployment, cut prices, help the pensioners, improve the wages of the employed and so on. International monetary crisis and balance of payments crisis rapidly lead the government into vicious attacks on the working class. This is the iron law that has gripped every Labour government.

You do not have to be a revolutionary to understand that. Labour minister Sir Stafford Cripps, in a moment of unusual realism, said that "the idea that the wielders of economic power will co-operate with a Labour government is quite fantastic" By this of course he meant that the owners of industry will never co-operate with a Labour government which attacks the system of production for profit. They were very happy for a long time to co-operate with the last Wilson government which went out of its way to attack the

The way in which things work is only too obvious. In 1964 the Labour government's announcement that it intended to give an increase to pensioners led to £800million being sent out of the country in three weeks. Similarly any sign that the working class may be getting sufficiently militant to threaten profits sends the employers and the economy into crisis. For example, immediately following the government's back down on the arrest of the three dockers at Chobham Farm, shares fell on the stock exchange and the value of the pound began to fall on the foreign exchange. This led to the recent 'floating' of the pound. Even now, when the docks, lorry drivers, miners and other workers are striking in support of the imprisoned men, shares have fallen on the stock exchange and the value of the pound has fallen still further. To fight with the Labour Party against the Tories even to the point of being correct. But a Labour government which came to power after the Tories had been thrown out would be a Labour government faced with a complete economic crisis. If the working class could force a government out of office, what individual employer could feel safe? What employer could rely on their profits being maintained? Right from the beginning the Labour government would be faced with a capitalist economy in crisis. To get the economic power to raise wages, get rid of unemployment, build decent houses for all, hold back prices and so on it is necessary to nationalise under workers control at once all major companies in industry, all transport, all land, all banks.

Where is real power?
If economic power lies in the hands of private employers, then you wouldn't think that there would be too much trouble in getting it out of their hands. For example, 81% of shares in all companies are owned by 1% of the population. If, to aid the vast majority of the population this 1% were deprived of their control of industry why should there be any problem? The working class has no interest in taking away the money people have invested in owning their own shops, or small one-man businesses or in depriving people of their savings in the banks. On the contrary, people's savings would be protected against inflation. People doing skilled trades in one-man businesses would be protected against the competition of vast monopolies. Why couldn't a government simply pass one single law depriving the 1% of the population who own 81% of private industry of their ownership and then set about planning an economy to produce not for profit but for the benefit of all? The answer is simple. Power lies in the hands of that 1%.

According to the belief of Labour politicians real power lies with Parliament. Wilson once expressed it when he said "Whatever people say, at an election, the old establishment only has one vote at the end of the day. So has the engineer and miner in my constituency. That is what is decisive". In fact the view that power lies in Parliament must be about the most unrealistic belief ever held. What can 630 men sitting in an old building in Westminster possibly do as the source of power. In fact for these men to influence anything at all they have to rely on machinery of the state. There are vast ministries helping to run the economy. There are armies of economic 'experts' to plan production. There are a host of courts and lawyers to enforce the law. So also there is the police. Finally, as the situation in the North of Ireland shows, only too clearly, there is the Army. Without all these Parliament is helpless and it is therefore in the hands of this machine, and not of the 630 M.P.s, that real power lies.

This army of people, who control communications, have in their possession all the information necessary to run the state, and who possess all the armed forces of the state, are supposed to be neutral and not involved in politics. In real life of course the situation is completely different. Anyone who has

security office will know just how 'neutral' are the people there. Anyone engaged in a serious strike will know just how 'neutral' the police are. The army is the worst of the lot. The officers, recruited from well off sections of the population, used to ordering people around, given special privileges and rights, are by far the most reactionary section of the population. In France in 1968, the generals openly said they wanted to bring tanks into Paris to crush the general strike of that year. In Britain the chief of infantry training, Brigadier Kitson, has written a book which says that all the resources of the Army must be placed at the disposal of the police and state to investigate trade unionists, left wing organisations, break strikes, etc. He recommends 'displays of force' and even 'limited massacres' like when 13 people were shot in Derry, as the way to deal with the situation. Of course at the moment his ideas are not likely to be put into practice but it is easy to imagine just how 'neutral' this type of man, who occupies one of the leading positions in the Army, is likely to be. This whole machine of civil servants, 'experts', army men, local government officials, the police, the courts and so on would immediately sabotage any attempt to take economic power out of the hands of the owners of private industry. Even if that were not successful they would decide, as they have done in Greece and Spain and a hundred other countries, to overthrow any real socialist government.

A government really determined to act in the interests of the working class can't afford to base itself on the machinery of the present state. It has to base itself on the organisations of the working class. As the class which will gain from any changes made it is only the organisations of the working class that can be absolutely relied upon to carry out any changes needed. In short power for the working class lies in Whitehall, Sandhurst, and Scotland Yard. Power for the working class lies in its trade union organisations, councils of action, factory organisations, and staff stewards and factory committees up and down the country.

Organise in the factories and areas.
The immediate reaction of the militant working class to a situation of crisis is to hold demonstrations, strikes, occupations - not to go and see the local councils to see what can be done or to start writing letters to their M.P.s. The aim of real working class leaders in the Labour Party would be to strengthen and organise this response. The majority of Labour M.P.s should immediately return to their constituencies. Nothing of importance will occur in Parliament. M.P.s could tour factories calling for strikes. All the facilities of Labour headquarters with money, phones, buildings, duplicating and printing facilities could immediately be placed at the disposal of strikers. Labour controlled councils could vote money, offices, printing facilities, give transport and so on to strikers. The response of the working class instead of being weakly organised could be massive and immediate. But instead of this we get absolutely nothing. What have the Labour members been doing?

- Reg Prentice, Labour spokesman on Employment, said to the Guardian on Saturday: "I have no sympathy at all for Bernie Steer and the others goaled... They were wrong to defy the Court".
- Callaghan said that the law must be obeyed
- Tom Driberg, M.P. for Barking, said he was against the jailings but the only definite thing he said he was going to do was to visit the men in jail.

Of course, thousands of ordinary Labour Party members up and down the country will be right in the lead of strikes and demonstrations in support of the imprisoned dockers. But rank and file action is not nearly as effective if it is not co-ordinated centralised action. If the Labour leaders were serious in their attacks on the Act and on the Government, they would organise the



UNDER W
"ONE OF THESE TWO FLAGS
BE

The same applies to the TUC and the trade union leadership. Up and down the country thousands of trade unionists will be walking out in protest. Think how enormously more effective this would be if the TUC and the trade union leaderships threw their whole weight behind it. At once not tens of thousands but millions of workers would be drawn into the movement. Every employer, judge and capitalist politician in the country would quake. Instead nothing is done. Instead of fighting Heath, the TUC leaders decided to meet him on Monday evening to 'discuss the situation'. Again how can we take pledges of opposition to the Act, seriously when nothing is done in a situation like this. What the working class needs from a leadership is determined action and not Sunday School speeches.

What to do now
Most members of the Labour and Communist Parties think a Labour government, or at least a left one, would be able to take over industry in the interests of the working class. Thousands of ordinary trade unionists have not made up their mind. Nevertheless it should be possible to get all these people to agree on the aims of the struggle even if they differ as to whether it will ever be achieved through the Labour Party. What is needed is united action on agreed aims in which everyone can be allowed to put forward their own view on the Labour Party. In this way, provided there is no backsliding and compromise, we will see in practice who is right on the question of the Labour Party.

In a situation of crisis however the normal channels can't be relied upon to act swiftly. The trade union movement and Labour Parties can get so cluttered up with red tape that it is not possible to do anything. This is probably alright in periods when nothing much is happening. Then there is time for dozens of committees to meet. In a situation like now however that is far too slow. Events change from hour to hour. Men and women with new ideas which fit the situation come forward. Organisations which can reflect rapidly the decisions of the mass of workers are needed. In every factory a strike committee could be elected. Local Councils of Action could organise things on a local level. Finally, however,

For Support Committees!



THE FLAG?
GOT TO COME DOWN—AND IT WON'T

In any major struggle between the organised working class and the state, there are huge sections of the population which are outside the trade unions, or even outside the working class, who can be won to opposition to the state. It is quite clear that the present crisis of British capitalist society hits not only trade unionists but, in an equally severe way, students, tenants, the unemployed, unorganised workers, working class housewives etc. Any government of a capitalist Britain must attract a very deep hostility from all of these social groups. The defeat of any attack on the trade union movement by the state is very much in these people's interests, and the possibilities of organising them to take sides in the conflict are very real.

In any serious and prolonged struggle it is vital to win over and organise every sympathetic section of the population. Even if the struggle is a long one and white collar technical and professional workers cannot, as a whole, be drawn at once into the strike, then there are still many individuals who would place their talents at the service of strikers. Even in many areas of the trade unions support will not at first be complete and many factories and work places may do nothing. Even here however there are many individual workers who can assist in the struggle and, given support and material resources, would be able to carry out systematic agitation amongst their work mates.

A serious showdown with the capitalist state will require the full summoning of the power of the working-class — including women workers and working-class housewives. The state and the capitalist press, radio and television, will attempt to exploit to the hilt the difficult position which working-class women find themselves in during any strike period to weaken the resistance of the working class movement from within. The active involvement of entire working-class families in the struggle is an absolute necessity if these manoeuvres of the ruling class are to be blocked.

All these groups of the population, including the unemployed, students, professional workers, housewives, and workers isolated in right-wing work places, can be organised in support committees to aid the struggle. Winning over these groups is vital for the struggle because, ultimately, if they are not won to the side of the working class they will be won to the side of the state. In 1926, when faced with a united working-class movement and a General Strike, the government was able to use the forces of the middle-class — students, teachers, professional workers. By enrolling them as Special Constables and in the semi-official Org-

anisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, the government built up a powerful apparatus with which to break the strike. Now, however, the situation is very different: many of the same social groups who rallied round the government in 1926 can at the very least, be neutralized in this struggle; others (particularly the students — as was dramatically shown during the miners' strike) can be very active and useful allies. The struggles of May/June '68 in France, when strikers were supported by journalists, broadcasters, writers, lawyers, doctors, shows what can be done in this direction.

Support Committees

Having recognised the importance and possibility of a mass movement of solidarity being built with forces outside the ranks of the trade union movement, the question remains how do we organise it? Undoubtedly, strike committees, factory committees, and Councils of Action will be developed if the struggle is a long one. They can coordinate and extend local strikes and occupations. But these bodies will group together representatives of that section of the working class which is in the leadership of the struggle. They will necessarily be concerned primarily with tactical questions of the struggle; and it is perfectly correct that these matters should be decided by those who are most directly involved. Obviously, big questions on calling strikes, demonstrations and the demands to raise can only be done by workers organisations not by committees just representing individuals. Nevertheless, these individuals can play a very valuable role in aiding the struggle.

What can be Done

The role of support committees was vividly shown during the miners strike earlier this year. For example in Colchester, students, white collar workers, unemployed workers and others distributed leaflets, printed posters, watched the ports for scab coal, aided in pickets and performed a hundred and one tasks. In France recently similar actions were taken during the strike at a firm called Joint Francais. Here, housewives, students, tenants and even school children collected money, organised demonstrations, picketed and leafleted every house in the area to inform people of the aim of the strike. The solidarity built up was so tremendous that although the strikers were attacked by police armed with clubs and tear gas, the demonstrations of five and ten thousand plus the solidarity of the strike led to a great victory.

All these things can be done on an even bigger scale during the present struggle. All Labour Party offices for example could be placed at the disposal of such committees. The answer to anyone who wants to help in the struggle is simple. Contact local trade unionists and strikers and form a support committee in every area now.

The Big Con Trick

When the NIRC sent the five dockers to jail it insisted that beyond the immediate questions at stake was 'the issue...whether these men are to be allowed to opt out of the rule of law. Can they pick and choose, relying upon it for the protection of their homes and families but rejecting it when, even temporarily, it obstructs their industrial objectives? It is a very simple issue, but vastly important, for our whole way of life is based upon the acceptance of the rule of law'.

This judgement puts in a nutshell certain very important ruling class myths. They claim civilisation, 'our way of life', depends not on the collective labours of the working class but on the 'rule of law'. What is the crime of the dockers if not that of defending the livelihood of themselves and their families. And NIRC has the impudence to claim that it is their 'rule of law' which protects homes and families.

The rule of whose law? It could not be clearer that it is the rule of their law, the law which defends the rights and privileges of the owners and employers. In a thousand and one ways it ensures that the vast majority have to sell their labour to live while a

small minority own and control the fruits of that labour.

Faced with this blunt exercise of bosses justice what has been the reaction of the leaders of the Labour Party and TUC? Of course, they deplore the present situation but at the same time they uphold the sanctity of the law. Reg. Prentice, Labour's Shadow Minister of Employment, declared that he had 'no sympathy for Bernie Steer and the others goaled. They were wrong to organise picketing and blacking against the policy of their union. They were even more wrong to defy the Court. The Industrial Relations Act is a bad law, but it is the law and no one can claim to be above it'.

The myths of capitalist law are swallowed whole by the Labour Party just at the time when they are being challenged by masses of workers up and down the country. By taking action for the unconditional release of the dockers and the immediate smashing of the I.R.Act they confront the rule of law — the rules expressing the interests of capitalism. If the working class is to inflict a real defeat on the employing class then it must begin to organise itself having no truck with the ruling class's myths about law being above class struggle!

containerisation

The blacking of container lorries was started unofficially as a move against the stripping and stuffing of containers away from the docks by non-dockworkers. The last years have seen massive redundancies on the docks and a large increase in the number of men on the Temporary Unattached Register. One major reason for this, apart from the fact that containerisation itself requires less labour, is that numerous companies (including many which also employed men on the docks) realised that by employing non-dock labour at lower rates they could cut costs and thereby increase profits.

container work recognised as dock work, paid at dock rates, and was extended by the London dockers from simple blacking of container lorries coming into the docks to full-scale picketing of selected container depots such as Chobham Farm, the Midland Cold Store and the U.K. Cold Store. This has been extremely effective not only in driving away work from these depots but also in enabling the dockers to identify much more successfully those hauliers using containers packed by non-dock labour. For a full analysis of the situation on the docks, and the

FOR UNITED ACTION BY THE ORGANISATIONS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT.

A Statement by the Political Committee of the International Marxist Group.

The arrest of the five dockers and the massive response which it is likely to evoke from the working class throughout the country has opened up enormous possibilities for struggle against the Industrial Relations Act, the Tory government, and the entire capitalist system. In ordering the arrest of the dockers the state has openly challenged the entire trade union movement. A victory for the Government in this would be a colossal defeat for the working class. A defeat for the Government would disrupt the entire strategy of the British ruling class and damage the authority of all the institutions of the capitalist system. That is why the present situation calls for an organised and united response by the entire revolutionary left.

The greatest danger in the present situation is clearly the attempt to divert into reformist or parliamentary channels the struggle of the working class. This is, of course, always dangerous but it becomes particularly obvious and particularly dangerous in a period of upsurge. The complete failure of the traditional leaderships of the working class and the absence of a mass revolutionary party places a big responsibility on the small revolutionary organisations. If the TUC and the Labour Party leaders are able to control the working class and prevent a mass response then it is still vital for the revolutionary organisations to demonstrate to the mass of the working class that at a moment of great possibilities both for victory and defeat, the revolutionaries can pool their resources and response in such a way as to aid to the fullest extent the successful outcome of the struggle. We therefore call upon the International Socialists, the Socialist Labour League, the Communist Federation of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), the Militant group, the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist Leninist) and all other organisations of the revolutionary left to unite their activities to the greatest extent possible by establishing national and local joint co-ordinating committees. Secondly, we propose to seek the greatest possible agreement for a common political basis for intervention within the mass organisations of the working class and such organisations as the LCDTU. The Political Committee of the IMG therefore calls for an immediate meeting of representatives of organisations of the revolutionary left who agree with these proposals.

We suggest that the following questions are of prime importance for discussion and joint action by the revolutionary left.

- 1) The occupation of factories, the formation of elected strike committees and Councils of Action.
- 2) The fight to bring down the government through the direct action of the working class.
- 3) The formation of support committees in every area.
- 4) The immediate calling of an emergency LCDTU conference to work out a programme of mass action.
- 5) For workers action to smash the I.R. Act.

We do not propose that any such agreement should in any way restrict the freedom of propaganda of any organisation participating nor is it in any way to be counterposed to unity with any individuals or organisations, the Communist Party, the Labour Party, Chartists etc. in the working class movement.

STOP PRESS

As we go to press, two new factors have entered the situation. First, the TUC has openly declared to Heath that it has not the slightest intention of organising a fight. At their meeting in Downing Street on Monday night the TUC leaders merely expressed their regret at the present situation, and their expectation of (rather than their intention to organise) continued industrial disruption until the dockers are released.

Secondly, the report of the Jones-Aldington committee has been published. Its main proposals are the abolition of the Temporary Unattached Register, an increase in the amount of severance pay, and negotiated agreements for more jobs for dockers in container depots. It hopes to see the TUR abolished by September, by sharing out the 1,700 men presently on it among the docks employers and instituting a system of work-sharing. But the success of this proposal is also dependent on a larger number of men opting for voluntary severance on the basis of the increased payments.

These proposals leave many questions unanswered, and we shall be dealing with these at some length in the next issue of this broadsheet.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Tariq Ali, Robin Blackburn, Peter Gowan, Alan Jones, Martin Meteyard, John Weal, Judith White.

DISTRIBUTION: Phil Sanders

Published by Relgocrest for The Red Mole, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. 01-837 6954

Printed by F.I. Litho (T.U.) Ltd., 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1

conference of representatives of workers in factories, docks, mines and so on, must be held. Faced with a nationally organised government and state, the working class must organise itself nationally. The TUC and the Labour Party can't do this properly. Certainly, the TUC Congress should be recalled and there should be an emergency Labour Party Conference, but it is not possible simply to rely on this. What is needed is a national conference of men and women directly elected to decide a national policy for this struggle. Such a conference might be called by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. If it was it must be completely supported. However in the past the LCDTU has been too slow off the mark. It is necessary to call for such a conference, which could be sponsored by a big factory or union section, regardless of whether the LCDTU acts or not. These local and national organisations are needed whether the present government remains in office and continues its attacks on the working class or whether it is forced out of office and replaced with Labour. If any government which was really acting against capitalism found itself being sabotaged and threatened by the machinery of state, then the vital thing would be to demand that the government base itself on the nationally organised power of the workers organisations and not on the old state. Revolutionaries think that this is what will eventually be necessary, but it is not necessary to agree with that to support calling for Councils of Action, strike committees and a national conference of workers representatives. These can be used either to support a Labour government or, eventually, to base a new workers power on. Let the practice of the struggle decide which of these two is necessary. But now we need to organise the maximum number of people, whatever their other political views, to call for:

- *The Formation of Councils of Action in every area;
- *A National Conference of factory and workplace representatives;
- *Worker Action to Smash the Act;
- *Down with the Tory Government;
- *Nationalisation of industry, transport

CRISIS OF THE HEATH GOVERNMENT

Some newspapers have tried to paint a picture of the poor Tory Government being caught up in a legal tangle over the dockers. These newspapers have presented things as though the National Industrial Relations Court, being set up under the law of the land, made its decision to imprison the dockers and that consequently the government stood by powerless. Now it is trying to sort out the mess, the argument goes.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Not having a spy in the Cabinet we cannot say for certain whether or not the Tory Government gave orders for the Court to arrange the arrests. But what we can say for certain is that the arrests and the ensuing confrontation arose directly and logically from the policies and actions of the Government. Furthermore, we can state just as confidently, that the Tory Government has no other course of action open to it. Everyone knows that British capitalism is in a mess. Compared with its trading rivals, and especially West Germany and Japan, its industry is backward and uncompetitive. Its growth rate is only a fraction of that of the most important countries in the European Economic Community. British big business knows that unless something is done — and done quickly — its position will get worse and worse.

Of course, like all capitalists, when faced with such problems British big business tries to blame the working class for its troubles. Thus we get a lot of talk about "wages inflation" and how prone British workers are to go on strike. Actually, the roots of the crisis of British capitalism lie elsewhere. First and foremost, this crisis arises from the fact that, in general, capitalism is an out-moded social system. The individual ownership of the means of production based on the profit motive is, economically speaking, as out-dated as the age of dinosaurs.

Because production is not based upon the needs of mankind but on the maximum rate of profit we get such fantastic things as farmers in the United States being paid not to produce food whilst two-thirds of the world's population is hungry. Even in "prosperous" Britain we get the same kind of thing: miners are being sacked because the demand for coal is declining, whilst thousands of old age pensioners die of cold each year because they cannot afford coal. But over and above this general crisis of capitalism, British imperialism has a particular set of problems. For well over 150 years, British capital was able to exploit big sections of the rest of the world. First

through its industrial monopoly (when it was the workshop of the world) and then through the growth of the British Empire, which, with indirectly exploited countries, covered about a third of the world, huge profits were made. This, indeed, is one of the sources of the backwardness of British industry. British businessmen found it much more profitable to put their money into sucking the wealth out of the colonies than keeping British industry up to date. However, owing to the destruction of capitalism in one-third of the world, the rise of anti-imperialist forces and the development of British capitalism's rivals, this empire has been steadily disintegrating.

The present crisis of British capitalism can only be understood from this background — what successive Governments have done is to try to adjust British capitalism to its declining world position. They have tried to get the working class to make sacrifices to enable British industry to be modernised and they have tried might and main to hold back the disintegration of the British Empire. The two great problems, the industrial situation and Ireland, facing the Heath Government, are merely the latest expressions of those processes.

Far from the British working class being responsible for the crisis through its "greed" or "laziness", its weakness has been in not taking advantage of the weakened state of British capitalism to establish workers power. In 1945, British imperialism came out of the war in an extremely shaken condition. Instead of taking advantage of this, the British working class, because of the Labour Government assisted by the Communist Party (which stood for increased production and national unity), was kidded into rebuilding capitalism.

In Ireland, one of the last great battles is being fought in the epic of the destruction of the British Empire. Ireland is one of the last important countries to be completely dominated by British capitalism. Whilst the Stormont regime was a relic of the past and it would be better for British capitalism's economic interests to exploit the whole country via "neo-colonialist" (apparent political independence, but complete economic domination) means, it cannot allow the re-unification of Ireland to take place as a result of mass struggle. If this happened, the fight would go on to end the economic domination of the country.

The Tory Government's economic strategy is based upon British entry into the Com-

mon Market (which will get its goods inside the tariff walls, "modernise" big sections of British industry by subjecting them to competition from more efficient European firms and assist the creation of more and more multinational firms). But this can only work if British exports are competitive. If they are not, British imperialism could have more to lose than gain by entry.

British goods can be made more competitive in three ways:

- a) by modernising industry;
- b) by devaluation (thus lowering their prices in terms of the currencies of British capitalism's rivals); and
- c) holding down wage increases.

Each one of these methods or combinations of them involves an attack on the working class: modernising = sackings; devaluation = rising prices; etc. Once under attack the British workers use their organisations — the trade unions — to defend themselves and their standards. The difference between the policies of the Labour Government and the present Tory Government lies in the way they tackled that response. The Labour Government sought to take advantage of the Labour Party's historical and structural relationship with the trade unions to integrate the unions via their leaderships in capitalist planning. When this ran into difficulties through rank and file resistance, "In Place of Strife" was introduced to pressurise the unions. This attempt was beaten by the mass response of the working class.

The Tories, unencumbered by connections with the trade unions, chose a different method: that of a direct attack on the unions through the Industrial Relations Act. They have combined this with measures to weaken the working class through increasing unemployment, closing down concerns where the workers are well-organised (via the "lame-duck" policies) etc. Of course, when they also ran into big resistance, they too retreated and avoided a direct confrontation. However, they can only avoid the crunch for a limited time: entry into the Common Market draws closer. The recent floating of the pound (which is really a euphemism for devaluation) has caused a furore in the international monetary world and can be repeated only with the greatest of difficulty once Britain is in the Common Market. In addition, the Heath Government is experiencing an increasing credibility crisis with its class. British big business must be thinking that it has the worst of both worlds: the Heath Government

is unable to integrate even the TUC into planning and yet is also unable to stand up to the unions or even sections of the workers taking unofficial action, like the dockers.

The Heath Government is beset by crises of one kind or another: entry into the Common Market is becoming an agonising process as inter-capitalist rivalries intensify; the Maudling scandal is reminiscent of the Profumo affair; the world monetary crisis threatens convulsions which would reverse everything the Tories are trying to do, and, above all, the Irish crisis just goes on and on with no obvious solution.

Sooner or later, the Tory Government will be obliged to be completely decisive or it will have to go. So far as dealing with the unions and the workers determination to defend their living standards are concerned, the time-scale is extremely short. Failure to make real progress on this front before entry into the EEC will be extremely dangerous for British capitalism.

Thus we can say that even if they run away from this particular fight, or even if they manage to come to some temporary arrangement with the TUC, this will only be putting off the evil day. The Tories either have to try to inflict a decisive defeat on the working class or give up the ghost.

If the Tories did inflict a big defeat on the unions (say by getting away with enforcing the provisions of the I.R. Act or by smashing a strike) it would be extremely serious. In the present economic and political situation they are in, the Tories would undoubtedly go on to attack all along the line. Hence, even if we succeed in getting the five released we must immediately prepare for the next battle. The unplanned and sporadic, fragmented response to the jailing of the dockers shows how ill-prepared the movement is. Elsewhere in this broadsheet we give the IMG's ideas on how the challenge should be met.

But we should not just think in terms of defence. This attack on trade unionism is a sign of the weakness of British capitalism not its strength. In the struggle to free the five we should forge a strong movement, based upon the action and control of the rank and file and, in the process create new organisational forms, which will be able to take on British capitalism. The strength of the British working class has been demonstrated time and time again in the last period. The task is to unite that strength with the awareness that it can be used to get rid of British capitalism once and for all.

STATE AND DOCKERS

On 23 March the National Industrial Relations Court issued an interim order against the Transport and General Workers Union, restraining its members from blacking container lorries from Heaton's Transport of St. Helens. The T&G was not represented in court, in line with the TUC's then policy of non-cooperation with the Court. So began the confrontation between State and dockworkers which has now led to the jailing of the five London shop-stewards.

Heaton's application was only the start of a rapid move towards full-scale confrontation. Less than a week later the T&G was fined £5,000 for continuing the blacking in contempt of court. The president of the NIRC, Sir John Donaldson, stated that the contempt was "aggravated" by the Union's refusal to attend the Court. By this time a second firm, Bishops Wharf of Warrington, was also involved.

By mid-April there were already signs that the trade union bureaucracy was looking for a way out of this situation. The T&G decided to ask

the TUC whether or not it should pay the fine, and *The Times* reported that there were "instructions from Transport House to settle the dispute as quickly as possible". A further impetus in this direction was provided by the entrance of a third company, Craddock Brothers of Wolverhampton, into the fray.

On 20 April the crunch came for the trade union bureaucracy with a further £50,000 fine for the T&G. The retreat was immediate. Vic Feather announced on 24 Hours the next day that in future unions would be allowed to defend themselves in the Court, and on 26 April the TUC advised the T&G to pay the fines. At the same time the Union started making frantic appeals to its members to stop the blacking. But these were ignored by the rank and file, who knew only too well the T&G's role in producing the situation which led to the blacking. Instead, the campaign was extended outside Liverpool with dockers in Hull, London and Manchester voting unanimously to take similar action.

On 4 May a national docks delegates meeting of the T&G half-heartedly issued a 28-day notice of a national docks strike against the effects of containerisation, in an obvious attempt to seize back the initiative from the militants of the National Ports Shop Stewards Committee (NPSSC). Meanwhile, however, a further firm, Panalpina, was obtaining an order against the blacking of its lorries by Hull dockers, and a day later the NIRC ruled definitively that the Union was responsible for the actions of its shop stewards.

Against this, the T&G argued that unless it responded in some slight way to the demands of its members they might resign and join the more militant National Association of Stevedores and Dockers (the 'blue' union). Nevertheless it did decide to take a harder line, and David Shenton, T&G secretary for Humber-side, publicly denounced the NPSSC as "representing nothing but itself". However, the response was not encouraging. At a London meeting, a T&G official argued plaintively that, "We will carry out the law and the law says we will not black indiscriminately." But all that happened was that, "From behind him a voice roared: 'F — the law', and the dockers shouted in agreement." (*The Times*, 26 May)

On 13 June, however, came a new development with a ruling by the Appeal Court that the T&G was not legally responsible for the actions of its stewards; a clear sign of a move towards a limited accommodation of the retreating trade union bureaucracy. As *The Times* commented, "what the ruling does mean is that shop stewards calling industrial action without the authority of their union will be held individually and collectively responsible at law for the result of their actions". And just one day later, the NIRC committed the three London shop stewards to prison for breaching an order restraining them from blacking activities at the ICD depot at Chobham Farm.

mobilisation of the working class was already clearly under way. Suddenly, up popped the Official Solicitor to represent and win an appeal for the men in their absence. So the dockers went free, but far from defusing the situation the Appeal Court's ruling was quite rightly regarded as a victory by the NPSSC, which voted to intensify the campaign. Meanwhile, however, the T&G had managed to postpone for a further period a national docks strike by setting up the Jones-Aldington committee to investigate the situation.

On 5 July began the action by Midland Cold Storage which led to the jailing of the dockers. This was an extremely well-prepared action, and included an application to the High Court as well as to the NIRC. It also involved systematic activity by Eurotec, a private detective firm, in its collection of evidence for the case.

By the time this case had gone to the High Court and been referred back again to the NIRC the State's position also seemed to have been strengthened by a further development — the action against the dockers organised by the newly formed Drivers and Warehousemen Action Group. By Thursday, 20 July, this group had managed to bring the London docks to a virtual standstill, and such a situation threatened to produce widespread confusion and divisions within the working class as a whole. Now, so it seemed, was the time for the State to act, and this time the Official Solicitor could find no grounds for appeal against the committal of five dockers to prison.

As events rapidly showed, with the drivers and warehousemen coming out in support of the dockers, this was a mistaken assessment of the situation. But by then it was too late for any second thoughts. The Government has to win this one if it is not to lose the support of the bourgeoisie as well as the working class. And it can only be prevented from winning by united working class action to free the five.

INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

(British Section of the Fourth International)
182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

I would like more information about the IMG.

Name:

Address:

Occupation:

